The Tantra of Prabhāt Rañjan Sarkar:
Critical Comparative and Dialogical Perspectives

Chris Kang
Abstract

This book is a phenomenological-dialogical examination of the Tantric spiritual teachings of Śrī Prabhāt Raṅjana Sarkar, founder-preceptor of Ānanda Mārga (AM), as contained in English-language publications of Sarkar’s spiritual and philosophical discourses. The study also undertakes, in a preliminary attempt to identify possible connections and innovations, a critical comparison of Sarkar’s spiritual theory and praxis with selected ancient, classical, and medieval expressions of Indian spirituality.

The collection of Sarkar’s discourses falls into three main categories: (1) philosophical treatise (darśana śāstra), (2) spiritual treatise (dharma śāstra), and (3) social treatise (samāja śāstra). The focus of this study is on the philosophical and spiritual treatises, and its aim is to elucidate items of doctrine and praxis embedded in these texts with a view to correlating possible conceptual similarities or identities. A dialogical hermeneutic forms the background to this study and informs the tasks of phenomenological analysis and critical comparisons.

After presenting in Chapter 1, the overall picture of the structure and rationale of the study, and a brief biographical description of Prabhāt Raṅjana Sarkar, the thesis goes on to discuss the methodological issues of a study such as this. After setting the context and method of this study, the thesis examines, in succeeding chapters, the following major doctrinal topics: Sarkar’s ontology and cosmology, his theory of mind and biopsychology, practice frameworks, and soteriology in terms of spiritual disciplines and change dynamics. Chapters 7 and 8 critically compare, in a sequential manner, Sarkar’s spiritual ideology with several major Indian spiritual traditions: the Vedic and Upaniṣadic legacy, the classical Hindu darśanas of Sāmkhya, Yoga, and Vedānta, Pali Buddhism, medieval Hindu Tantra (namely Śaktism, Śaivism, and Vaiṣṇavism), and Bengali religion.

This phenomenological and comparative study of Sarkar’s texts reveals Sarkar’s AM ideology as a deep and comprehensive system of philosophy-praxis containing elements from a wide variety of sources rooted in the Indian tradition. The study also reveals major areas of agreement as well as disagreement between Sarkar’s AM and traditional discourses of Indian spirituality. More importantly, it supports the assertion that Sarkar, while overtly non-aligned with any specific or recognised disciplic lineage (sampradaya) of Hindu or Buddhist origin, is nevertheless an authentic interpreter, teacher, and guru of Indian Tantra for the contemporary audience.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deep appreciation for the people who have contributed to my doctoral effort from 1999-2003. Firstly, I deeply thank Associate Professor Rod Bucknell for his supervision and invaluable comments, which helped shape this work into its final form; and for the wonderful opportunity he has given me to tutor and lecture on Meditation in Eastern Religions at the School of History, Philosophy, Religion, and Classics, The University of Queensland. Rod’s intellectual guidance in the field of Buddhist Studies in general, and Buddhist meditation theory in particular, has been invaluable to me, as has been his fine scholarly example and generosity of spirit. I also thank Professor Michael Latkē for introducing me to the work of Dr Charles Ringma, whose thesis on Gadamer was inspiring and helpful; and Professor Martin Stuart-Fox, who guided my initial attempts in navigating the terrain of intellectual history and encouraged me to “cast a wide net” in my quest for methodological certainty. To Professor Sohail Inayatullah and Dr Shaman Hatley, I offer my thanks for their useful comments, inspiration, and foundational work in Sarkar and studies.

To my caring spiritual instructor, Dada Kamaleshvarānanda Avadhūta, I am profoundly grateful. His sterling example as a Tantric practitioner, and his practical support in more ways than one, have contributed tremendously to my research effort. My vipassanā teacher and kalyānamitta, Acharya Godwin Samararatne, taught me much about choiceless awareness and surrendering to what is, and I thank him with heartfelt love and respect. I thank His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, for his great warmth, humour, scholarship, and deep wisdom, whose inspiring presence gave a much-needed boost to my flagging enthusiasm after three arduous years of doctoral studies. I must also record my deep gratitude to Venerable Geshe Tashi Tsering, whose compassionate teachings on and wise exemplification of the bodhisattva way, give me hope and energy in practicing the “good heart”. I am grateful for the inspiration and wisdom of Lama Zopa Rinpoche: his pithy instructions on the path are invaluable. I thank Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, whose teachings on and transmissions of Dzogchen remind me of mirror-like presence, a quality much needed in a tedious doctoral career.

I am grateful to The University of Queensland for the grant of a Postgraduate Research Scholarship, which kept me alive as I plodded through dusty texts and computer screens in the pursuit of academic excellence. I thank my parents for being so patient with a son hopelessly immersed in the pursuit of intellectual expansion and spiritual wisdom. I am immensely grateful to my wife, Elaine, for her unstinting support, encouragement and confidence in me, especially at times when the journey was rough and my spirits low. I can never thank her enough. Finally, I am indebted to P. R. Sarkar himself, without whom this thesis, now a book, would never have materialised.

Chris Kang
Brisbane, April 2009
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td>Ánanda Mārga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMEP</td>
<td>Ánanda Mārga Elementary Philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMI</td>
<td>Ánanda Mārga Ideology and Way of Life in a Nutshell</td>
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<td>AMSSP</td>
<td>Ánanda Mārga Social and Spiritual Practices</td>
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<td>AS</td>
<td>Ánanda Sūtra</td>
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<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>Aitareya Upaniṣad</td>
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<td>AV</td>
<td>Ánanda Vacanāmṛtam</td>
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<tr>
<td>BG</td>
<td>Bābā ‘s Grace</td>
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<td>BU</td>
<td>Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad</td>
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<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Cārīcārya</td>
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<tr>
<td>CU</td>
<td>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DKG</td>
<td>Discourses on Kṛṣṇa and the Gītā</td>
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<td>DN</td>
<td>Dīgha Nikāya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOT</td>
<td>Discourses on Tantra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GHC</td>
<td>A Guide to Human Conduct</td>
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<tr>
<td>IU</td>
<td>Īśā Upaniṣad</td>
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<tr>
<td>KaU</td>
<td>Katha Upaniṣad</td>
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<td>KeU</td>
<td>Kena Upaniṣad</td>
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<tr>
<td>KsU</td>
<td>Kauśīṭaki Upaniṣad</td>
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<td>IAI</td>
<td>Idea and Ideology</td>
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<tr>
<td>LC</td>
<td>Light Comes</td>
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<td>MaU</td>
<td>Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad</td>
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<td>MN</td>
<td>Majjhima Nikāya</td>
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<td>MuU</td>
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<tr>
<td>MnV</td>
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<td>NKS</td>
<td>Nāmāmi Kṛṣṇa Sundaram</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRM</td>
<td>New Religious Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSS</td>
<td>Namaḥ Śivāya Śānti-yā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>Sāmkhyā Karika</td>
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<td>SPSSA</td>
<td>The Spiritual Philosophy of Śrī Śrī Ánanda Mārga: A Commentary on Ánanda Sūtram</td>
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<td>SS</td>
<td>Subhāṣita Samgraha</td>
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<td>SU</td>
<td>Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad</td>
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<tr>
<td>TM</td>
<td>Transcendental Meditation</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPRS</td>
<td>The Thoughts of P. R. Sarkar</td>
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<tr>
<td>TU</td>
<td>Taityrīya Upaniṣad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
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<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>Tattva Vaiśāradī</td>
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Bibliography
Introduction

The twentieth century saw a number of spiritual teachers from India rise to prominence and capture the imagination and allegiance of many followers from both the East and the West. One such figure was Prabhāt Ranjan Sarkar, also known as Śrī Śrī Ānanda Mārga Pracāraka Saṅgha (Ānanda Mārga, AM) in 1955. Before long, Sarkar had attracted a large following of disciples throughout India and later around the world, and by the time of his death in 1990, AM had spread to more than 160 countries. Currently adherents are estimated to number several million, though actual committed membership is likely to be much smaller.¹

There is a paucity of academic research into AM, which means that many questions of academic and common interest remain unanswered, such as questions about the style and character of Sarkar as a spiritual leader and the nature of AM as a New Religious Movement (NRM). In particular, there is at present no intellectually rigorous study on Sarkar’s spiritual teachings and their implications for spiritual practice. This thesis is intended to be such a study. In it, I aim, through an examination of AM primary sources and relevant secondary and tertiary material, to identify (1) the nature and content of Sarkar’s spiritual philosophy; (2) the spiritual practices that he taught; and (3) the way he has re-invented the Indian spiritual tradition of Tantra to suit the contemporary mind.² From this examination, I aim to argue the thesis that Sarkar was indeed an authentic, contemporary Tantric guru in spite of his non-allegiance, as far as can be ascertained by AM sources, to any specific disciplic lineage (sampradāya) of Tantra.

I investigate Sarkar’s texts through the lens of phenomenological exegesis and critical comparison, informed by and contextualised within the dialogical hermeneutic of Hans-Georg Gadamer (see Chapter 2).³ This I do by identifying essential and distinct concepts, categorising and cross-comparing them, and attempting to correlate distinct items of doctrine and practice on the basis of their apparent similarities. I also compare Sarkar’s concepts with those of earlier Indian traditions in an attempt to trace possible links and subsequent innovations.

The findings from this investigative process are presented in nine main chapters. Following a brief review of the life, times, and personality of Sarkar as portrayed by his followers and critics (Chapter 1), I provide a detailed discussion on my methodology, focusing in particular on the nature and process of textual understanding (Chapter 2). Then follows the main body of the thesis, with sequential treatment of Sarkar’s theories of cosmology (Chapter 3), psychology and biopsychology (Chapter 4), soteriology (Chapter 5) and spiritual praxis (Chapter 6). A broad comparison of Sarkar’s ideas and practices with early Indian thought and classical-medieval Indian systems –

Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Vedānta, Buddhism, Śaivism, Śāktism, Vaiṣṇavism, and Bengali religion – is then attempted in order to trace possible links and identify cases of conceptual synthesis or innovation on Sarkar’s part (Chapters 7 and 8). A synthesis of essential findings (Chapter 9) concludes the thesis.

This preliminary in-depth exploration of Sarkar’s AM and critical comparison with traditional Indian systems will reveal that Sarkar’s AM is essentially constructive, synthetic and innovative, drawing upon elements that already existed in the common Indian spiritual heritage. Nevertheless, it is found that Sarkar’s originality and creative vision is stamped onto the old concepts and practices, imbuing them with fresh vitality and a degree of rationality that is arguably more palatable to the contemporary mind. Sarkar’s synthetic appropriation of existing ideas, such as puruṣa, puruṣottama, mokṣa (in his teleological cosmology of brahmaṇacakra), and his philosophical abstraction of anthropomorphic concepts, such as Kṛṣṇa and Śiva, stand out as salient examples of his innovativeness and vision. An innovative and synthetic thinker, Sarkar can be justifiably regarded as a contemporary exponent and guru of Indian Tantra.

I suggest that such conceptual and practical reconstruction of traditional discourse, narratives, and practices, as demonstrated by Sarkar, may offer contemporary minds fresh understandings of human life and its ultimate purpose, in a way that is simultaneously rational, mythic, holistic, experiential, socially engaged and emancipatory. Such a new discourse may ultimately prove more satisfying to present-day consciousness than dogmatic alternatives of the past.
Chapter 1

Investigating Sarkar

In 1955, an obscure socio-spiritual organisation dedicated to the twin aims of individual spiritual realisation and social service, Ānanda Mārga Pracāraka Samgha (Ānanda Mārga, AM), literally translated as ‘Community for the Propagation of the Path of Bliss’, was formed in the state of Bihar, India. AM stands alongside other Hindu-based New Religious Movements (NRM)s\(^4\) which have captured the imagination and allegiance of substantial numbers of followers both in Asia and in the West. NRM.s such as the various institutions established by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi to disseminate Transcendental Meditation (TM) and Śrī Prabhupāda’s International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness (ISKCON) are examples of organisations in the same genre. The founder of AM was a charismatic spiritualist and visionary, Prabhāt Rañjān Sarkar. Sarkar died in 1990, but AM continues to thrive, with a current estimated membership of several million worldwide.\(^5\) Ward and Humphreys report that in the 1991 census, there were about 435 people in Australia who called themselves followers of Ānanda Mārga,\(^6\) though it is uncertain how this figure has changed in the 2001 census.\(^7\)

Through the 1960’s and on into the 1980’s, AM faced severe opposition from numerous Hindu groups, the Communist Party of India, and the Government of India. The controversial saga surrounding the Hilton bombing incident during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Sydney in 1978 placed AM in the centre of Australian media attention. While many of the charges against AM have since been overturned by the Supreme Court of India, and even though AM members

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\(^4\) For a review discussion on NRMs, see David G. Bromley, ‘New Religious Movements’, in William H. Swatos (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society* (California: Alt a Mira Press, 1998), pp. 328-332. Bromley writes: ‘Although some NRMs indeed are of recent origin, many others constitute contemporary rediscoveries or recombinations of cultural themes explored by predecessor groups. … The admixture of contemporary forms of technological innovation, therapy and medicine, economic enterprise, and global organization has given some NRMs a decidedly anomalous profile. … Finally, a great number of NRMs are cultural transplants, most often of Asian origin, new in the sense only that they are new to the West’ (p. 328).

\(^5\) An, 2000. The actual number of committed members may be several thousand, though a far larger number (up to several million) may have been initiated into AM and remain sympathetic to it. Bromley describes various ways of classifying NRMs offered by scholars, for example: (1) monistic versus dualistic; (2) integrative versus transformative; (3) devotee versus discipleship versus apprenticeship; or (4) world-affirming versus world-rejecting. AM can be provisionally classified as a monistic, transformative (but with an integrative element), devotee-discipleship, and a world-affirming (albeit with revolutionary designs) type of NRM (see Bromley, p. 329).

\(^6\) See R. Ward and R. Humphreys, *Religious Bodies in Australia: A Comparative Guide*. 3rd edition (Melbourne: New Melbourne Press, 1995), p. 397. The authors report that at the time of writing, there were ‘300 active members and an estimated several thousand Australians who have received meditation instructions through Ānanda Mārga’ (p. 397).

\(^7\) Online search of the Australian Bureau of Statistics data on religious affiliation in Australia based on the 2001 census reveals that there were 95,473 persons classified under the umbrella of ‘Hinduism’. Data breakdown for separate Hindu-based groups such as Ānanda Mārga, Hare Krishnas etc. was not available. See Australian Bureau of Statistics, ‘Religious Affiliation by Sex – Persons (CC37)’, *2001 Census of Population and Housing*. http://www.abs.gov.au/austats/censusal.nsf/log?openagent&Aust_Religious+Affiliation.zip&0&2001+Ce (3 Oct. 2002).
supposedly responsible for the Sydney Hilton bombing have since been found innocent.⁸ AM remains controversial in the public’s eye.

Many questions of academic interest remain unanswered. What was the philosophy that inspired so many people in India and elsewhere to join AM in the organisation’s earlier days? What were the spiritual practices that Sarkar taught – practices he considered central to the growth of the self and society? What sort of personality, ideals, and vision did Sarkar possess which endeared him to the many that came to him? What was the nature of his relationship to his disciples and to the organisation as a whole? What sort of leader was he? What was his intention in promulgating a socio-political philosophy (PROUT), which he deemed integral to his overall spiritual project? What was his theory of history and his forecast for the future of human civilisation? These and many more questions could be asked, and preliminary efforts to answer some of them have already begun.⁹ The present book aims to contribute to the hitherto meagre pool of knowledge regarding AM and its controversial founder, Prabhāt Rañjan Sarkar.

Through an examination of primary sources and relevant secondary material,¹⁰ I seek to answer three major questions:

1. What is the nature and content of the spiritual philosophy that Sarkar propounded?
2. What are the spiritual practices Sarkar initiated his followers into, and how do the theory and practice of AM spirituality relate to each other?
3. How has Sarkar re-invented the Indian spiritual tradition of Tantra, a claim that he obliquely makes?

To address these questions, I will analyse and systematically elucidate Sarkar’s life, spiritual teachings, vision and goals, and the symbols, myths, and meditative techniques he created or innovated. I will then identify, through critical comparison with selected primary, secondary and tertiary sources of the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, various concepts, themes and ideas that can be found in both AM and traditional Indian sources. I will examine how Sarkar may have drawn on several important strands of Hindu and Buddhist spirituality (especially that of Tantra), in the doctrinal, ethical, ritual, and experiential dimensions, to formulate his unique spiritual worldview and praxis.


¹⁰ AM’s transliteration of Sanskrit, as found in all its texts, is different from the standard transliteration. See Appendix A for a table of correspondences between the two versions. In this book, all Sanskrit terms and names quoted from AM sources are converted into the standard system except in the bibliography.
1.1 Structure and Rationale of Study

This report on my study is divided into nine chapters. The present Chapter 1 introduces the rationale, research questions, and literature review, together with a discussion on the personality, activities, and teaching methods of Sarkar. It also provides a concise overview of all the chapters, followed by a few words on the rationale for their sequential arrangement.

Regarding the rationale for conducting this study, as previously mentioned, the phenomenon of Sarkar and his AM movement has received very little academic attention. As a way of life, spiritual practice and platform for social activism, AM currently has a large following of several million people around the globe in more than 160 countries. It also operates over 2000 schools, orphanages, disaster relief, and medical and community development projects around the world. AM’s disaster relief and community development wing, the Ānanda Mārga Universal Relief Team (AMURT), has also been awarded observer status in the United Nations and is recognised as an affiliated non-governmental organisation (NGO).\(^\text{11}\) With its global reach and relatively large following, AM deserves to be more closely studied and understood, as does its founder and preceptor. While preliminary studies on Sarkar’s social vision, theories, and movements have recently emerged, there is as yet no known study on Sarkar’s spiritual teachings from an academically rigorous perspective. Through this study, I aim to fill this gap in academic knowledge and seek to understand Sarkar more deeply by means of a methodology that combines phenomenological intimacy and critical distance. Finally, I hope to highlight, through this study, the intellectual and spiritual legacy left by Sarkar and to suggest its potential for personal meaning and creative global renewal in this present era of insecurity, unease, and spiritual emptiness.

It is crucial to note here my definition of the umbrella term ‘Tantra’. In this book, the term ‘Tantra’ is used to refer to the Pan-Indian spiritual and religious movement that rose to prominence towards the middle of the first millennium of the Common Era. Specifically, and in a more limited sense, it refers to the Śaiva and Śākta traditions that have been influential on the Indian sub-continent for centuries. Note that the term ‘Tantra’ as used here excludes its Buddhist variants such as the Kālacakrāyāna (‘Wheel of Time Vehicle’) and Vajrayāna (‘Diamond Vehicle’).

Chapter 2 is a discussion of the methodology I employ in this study. I begin with a brief outline of the corpus of texts that delineates the scope of my investigation. I also explain the influence of Gadamer’s dialogical hermeneutic, coupled with the use of Connolly’s phenomenological exegesis, in the investigation of Sarkar’s texts and the texts of various Indian philosophical schools. The dialogical hermeneutic provides the underlying context for interpreting Sarkar’s discourses based on the essential concept of ‘fusion of horizons’ of reader and texts. Exactly what this ‘fusion’ entails is discussed more fully in Chapter 2. While the dialogical hermeneutic permeates the entire process of textual reading, phenomenological reduction supplies the specific tools for analysing and expounding the texts themselves. How Hüsserl’s phenomenology is adapted and employed in the service of

\(^{11}\) Manavendrananda, p. 5.
phenomenological exegesis within the interpretive space of Gadamerian dialogue is also discussed in Chapter 2.

Chapters 3 to 6 comprise the main body of the book, elucidating and critically examining the spiritual philosophy and praxis of Sarkar, which he calls Ānanda Mārga or the ‘Path of Bliss’. In these chapters, a progression of topics, from cosmology and ontology, through psychology and contexts for spiritual practice, and finally to spiritual practice and transformation, are systematically discussed. These topics are identified through applying a phenomenological ‘typing’ process on the diverse articulations and concepts of Sarkar as presented in his texts. The types so identified are used as categorical headings for the separate chapters, under which all statements of a relevant ‘type’ are collected and expounded. In this typing process, the horizons of both the reader and the texts themselves contribute to the production of meanings and categorical types.

In Chapter 3, ‘Sarkar’s Universe and Beyond’, I elucidate Sarkar’s teachings on: (1) the nature of the universe, the divine, and existence (ontology and theology); (2) the creation process and final goal of the universe (cosmogony and teleology); and (3) the structure and workings of the universe (cosmology). This chapter offers us a glimpse into Sarkar’s worldview, one that is essentially identical to the traditional Tantric and Yogic conceptions of the universe, differing only in the usage and meanings of common terminology and some technical details relating to cosmogony and teleology.

Chapter 4 is focussed around the theme of ‘Psychology and Biopsychology’ and brings together the essence of Sarkar’s ideas on: (1) the mind and its structure; (2) the types of knowledge possible to the mind; (3) the workings of mental and emotional tendencies; and (4) the intimate relationship between mind, cakras (‘psychic centres’), glands, prānāḥ (‘vital energy’), and kundalini (‘dormant psychospiritual force’) – a theory that Sarkar terms ‘biopsychology’. Again, Sarkar’s teachings on the topic of mind and biopsychology echo many traditional Tantric and Yogic concepts, but with modification of traditional terms and their meanings, and introduction of new terminology drawn from modern science. There appears to be an attempt on Sarkar’s part to blend traditional and modern concepts in his articulation of biopsychology. It can be suggested that such an attempt represents part of a larger project to re-invent Tantra in a manner that is appealing to contemporary consciousness.

Chapter 5 moves into a deeper discussion on Sarkar’s praxis under the topical heading of ‘Ānanda Mārga: Sarkar’s Frameworks for Practice’. The theories and principles underlying the overall context for spiritual practice are elucidated in this chapter. I discuss the ultimate goals, fundamental requirements, and guiding frameworks for spiritual practice as advocated by Sarkar. An analysis of Sarkar’s context for praxis reveals a reliance on traditional concepts of Indian soteriology, and in particular concepts of Yogic and Tantric praxis. Re-interpretations of some of these practices in line with Sarkar’s overall worldview render them simpler and less ritualistic than their traditional
forms. A degree of innovation can be seen in Sarkar’s encapsulation of the essentials of spiritual practice within the framework of his ‘Sixteen Points’.

Chapter 6 continues with the investigation into Sarkar’s praxis commenced in Chapter 5. The topical heading ‘Ānanda Mārga: Spiritual Practice and Transformation’ gathers within this chapter all essential details regarding the nature and processes of Sarkar’s spiritual practice. Themes covered are: (1) spiritual disciplines (of various forms); (2) neo-humanism as praxis (neo-humanism is a term coined by Sarkar to refer to a philosophy of universal benevolence for and indivisibility with all living and non-living things); and (3) mechanisms of spiritual change. In this chapter, we see that while some aspects of Sarkar’s praxis are terminologically and substantially not very different from classical Yogic, Tantric, and Vaiṣṇava devotional practices, others are new and innovative, perhaps unique to Sarkar alone. For example, Sarkar’s systematisation of the six meditative lessons of sahaja yoga and his concept of microvita redefine the boundaries of yogic spiritual practice.

Chapters 7 and 8 move away from discussion on Sarkar’s texts to comparison of his ideas with the traditional spiritualities and philosophies of India, in particular the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. More specifically, possible connections and disconnections are sought with concepts, ideas, and practices of: (1) the Vedas and Upanisads; (2) classical Sāṃkhya, Yoga, and Vedānta; (3) early Buddhism; (4) medieval Śāktism, Śaivism, and Vaiṣṇavism; and (5) Bengali religion. From the critical comparisons made in these chapters, it can be surmised that what is unique and different about Sarkar lies not in the actual content of his teachings but in the way he has packaged and integrated the spiritual and the social into a fresh cosmology aimed at eliciting a profound civilisational transformation. It can be argued that Sarkar’s understanding of spiritual theory and praxis is merely a reworking and synthesis of older and more established ideas – some well known and others less so. In the case of biopsychology, Sarkar may have deliberately blended some of these ideas with basic scientific concepts in an attempt to modernise traditional Tantra.

Thus, a preliminary in-depth exploration of Sarkar’s Ānanda Mārga coupled with critical comparisons with traditional Indian thought reveals that: (1) the nature and content of Sarkar’s spiritual philosophy is essentially a blend of Śaiva and Sāṃkhya elements, covered with an overlay of Vedānta and Buddhism; (2) the spiritual practices taught by Sarkar to his disciples are essentially a synthesis of Yogic, Śākta, and Bengali Vaiṣṇava elements; (3) Sarkar’s spiritual philosophy and praxis are both informed by an innovative and idiosyncratic theory of microvita, a concept with no precedent in Indian philosophy; and (4) Sarkar’s Ānanda Mārga is a modern re-invention of the existing tradition of Tantra through a process of sanitisations of Tantra (incorporating both Śākta and Śaiva elements) and blending with elements of Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Vedānta, Buddhism, and Bengali Vaiṣṇavism. This is essentially the conclusion I arrive at in Chapter 9.

A few words on the sequence of the book chapters are warranted. Following the introductory and methodology chapters (Chapters 1 and 2), Chapter 3 discusses on a macro-scale, the cosmological and ontological context of Sarkar’s ideology. This is an appropriate and logical starting point for an
examination of the entire structure of Sarkar’s thought, reflecting roughly the layout followed in two
of his three major philosophical texts: Ánanda Sūtram (AS)\(^{12}\) and Idea and Ideology (IAI).\(^{13}\) These
texts begin by discussing cosmology and ontology before attending to other topics. Chapter 4 follows
on with a discussion, on a micro-scale, of the psychological and personal aspects of Sarkar’s thought.
The importance of this micro-view of the human mind and body is supported by the structure of
Sarkar’s next major philosophical text: Ánanda Mārga Elementary Philosophy (AMEP).\(^{14}\) This text
begins by analysing the structure of the mind so as to infer from the analysis the nature of cosmic
consciousness. It also devotes a chapter to an analysis of the nature of the self and its relationship to
cosmic consciousness. From the preceding discussion, it can be surmised that a progression from
macro-scale discussion on the universe to a micro-scale discussion on the mind is a logical sequence
of investigation, one that follows closely Sarkar’s own order of presentation of his major ideas.

Chapters 5 and 6 explore the praxical aspect of Sarkar’s ideology and its relationship to the
philosophical aspect articulated mainly in Chapters 3 and 4. However, Chapter 6 also contains some
new philosophical material such as neo-humanism, on the grounds that this is a practical philosophy
that fits far better under praxis than pure philosophy. Chapter 5 explores the general framework for
spiritual practice while Chapter 6 probes deeper into the details of practice.

Chapters 7 and 8 critically compare Sarkar’s philosophy and praxis as discussed in preceding
chapters with comparable notions found in various Indian spiritual-philosophical traditions. This
discussion is placed near the end of the book so that Sarkar’s philosophy and praxis will be allowed to
adequately speak for themselves prior to being subjected to the comparative process. Since the
comparison attempted here is preliminary, broad, and general in nature, the relevant comparable
traditions are dealt with in just two chapters. Chapter 9 wraps up the study’s argument with some
suggestions for future research.

1.2 Literature Review

An exhaustive literature survey has revealed a paucity of research into AM in general, and no existing
study on the spiritual philosophy and practice of its founder. Published research has hitherto been in
the areas of (a) empirically observed effects of AM meditation;\(^{15}\) (b) personality traits in AM
members;\(^{16}\) (c) the experience of becoming members of AM;\(^{17}\) (d) Sarkar’s social, political, and

\(^{12}\) Ánandamūrti, Ánanda Sūtram (Second Edition), trans. by Manohar Gupta and ed. by Vijayānanda, Ánanda
\(^{13}\) Prabhāt Raijan Sarkar, Idea and Ideology (Seventh Edition), ed. by Vijayānanda, Acoutānanda, and Jayanta
\(^{14}\) Ánandamūrti, Ánanda Mārga Elementary Philosophy (Second Edition), trans. by Vijayānanda (Calcutta:
\(^{15}\) For two interesting psychophysiological studies on AM meditators, see Barry D. Elson, Peter Hauri, and
and James C. Corby, Walton T. Roth, et al., ‘Psychophysiological Correlates of the Practice of Tantric Yoga
\(^{16}\) Trula O’Haire and James E. Marcia, ‘Some Personality Characteristics Associated with Ananda Marga
Meditators: A Pilot Study’, Perceptual and Motor Skills, vol. 51 (1980), pp. 447-452; and Wolfgang Kuner,
‘New Religious Movements and Mental Health’, in Of Gods and Men: New Religious Movements in the West,
historical theories and his nascent social movements;\textsuperscript{18} (e) the application of Sarkar’s Tantric episteme in the fields of macrohistory,\textsuperscript{19} future studies,\textsuperscript{20} and disability studies;\textsuperscript{21} and (f) the history and characteristics of AM as a socio-spiritual organisation.\textsuperscript{22}

Inayatullah (1990, 1999),\textsuperscript{23} Sil (1988),\textsuperscript{24} Bussey (1998),\textsuperscript{25} Courtis (1991),\textsuperscript{26} Crovetto (2009),\textsuperscript{27} and Voix (2009)\textsuperscript{28} are the only studies that touch on the spiritual philosophy of Sarkar, and they do so only briefly and comparatively. Inayatullah seeks to contextualise Sarkar in traditional and medieval Indian, and contemporary cross-cultural academic discourse, with a predominant focus on his social philosophy, theory of history, and social movements. The poststructural stance taken by Inayatullah is fresh and sweeping, but does not attempt to elucidate comprehensively and systematically the content of Sarkar’s spiritual teaching.

Sil, in a less ambitious manner, attempts to critically compare AM’s ideals and practices with those of the 16\textsuperscript{th}-century Christian Anabaptists, with a view to situating AM within the broader framework of similar movements elsewhere. He describes the tenets of AM with some degree of historical insight albeit incompletely and superficially. The nature, size, and scope of his paper allows neither comprehensive nor in-depth exploration of Sarkar’s spiritual philosophy and practice.

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\textsuperscript{17} For an anthropological perspective on AM members and some analysis of AM texts, see Mary M. Courtis, \textit{Self Transformation and Gendered Experience Among Rajneesh Synnyasins and Ananda Margis} (University of Oregon: Unpublished PhD dissertation, 1991).
\textsuperscript{18} For an excellent and comprehensive survey of Sarkar’s narratives and social initiatives, see Inayatullah, \textit{Situating Sarkar, passim}; and Inayatullah, \textit{Understanding P.R. Sarkar, passim}. See also Timothy Jay Hamill, \textit{The Social Philosophy of Sri Sri Anandamurti} (California Institute of Integral Studies: Unpublished MA dissertation, 1974).
\textsuperscript{24} Sil, pp. 3-11.
\textsuperscript{25} See Bussey, pp. 709-711.
\textsuperscript{26} See Courtis, pp. 61-90.
\textsuperscript{27} See Crovetto, pp. 30-31 and 37-40.
\textsuperscript{28} See Voix, pp. 5-14.
Bussey provides a brief and general treatment of Sarkar’s spiritual philosophy in his article on the potential application of Sarkar’s Tantric episteme in the creation of a new-paradigm university. However, like Inayatullah, he does not seek to understand Sarkar’s thought from a textual-exegetical perspective.

Courtis discusses and evaluates the nature of AM philosophy and practice in comparison with the tradition of Tantra. She locates it in the context of ‘white Tantra’, one of two Tantric schools that emphasises personal restraint and self-discipline – in contrast to ‘red Tantra’, which emphasises freedom from all constraints and a non-exclusive approach to life and spirituality. Again, the account is brief and superficial, and does not attempt to investigate Sarkar’s ideas in detail.

Crovetta and Voix both describe the doctrinal basis for the use of force and violence within AM, surveying the various layers of discipleship and their related spiritual practices as well as alleged and often controversial instances of actual violence connected to Sarkar himself and his movement. While these studies provide interesting insights into one facet of AM as a movement of ‘revolutionary socio-utopians’29 arguably founded upon a spiritual philosophy that justifies violence, they neither exhaustively describe nor reflect on the entirety of Sarkar’s spiritual teachings in so far as they relate to earlier genres and ideas of South Asian or Indian spirituality.

In this book I do not attempt to understand AM as an NRM, nor am I interested in Sarkar as a religious leader. I am also taking a different approach from all the aforementioned studies, focusing primarily on Sarkar’s spiritual teachings, as identified by his English-speaking followers, and their links with older traditions. The present study appears to be the first of its kind and covers new academic territory as far as AM and Sarkarian research is concerned. Comparable studies have been done on comparable teachers and systems, such as Śrī Aurobindo Ghose and his Integral Yoga, and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and his Transcendental Meditation. Phillips (1982)30 critically examines the central concepts and claims of Aurobindo and argues that Aurobindo’s philosophy relies on broad ideas of earlier Indian thought. He raises the suggestion that Aurobindo may be more a Hindu apologist seeking to defend the ideas of Indian mysticism than an epistemologically neutral researcher of generic mysticism. Egenes (1985)31 examines the place of Vedic ideas in the thought of Mahesh Yogi, arguing that the experiential and philosophic elements of Transcendental Meditation have been derived from Vedic sources. Gaum (1988)32 investigates how the concept of mokṣa (salvation) is understood and expressed in the writings of Mahesh Yogi, especially in relation to Advaita Vedānta thought. In the present book, I do much the same for Sarkar. However, I aim to be more thorough in producing a systematic description of Sarkar’s ideas, an academic desideratum in view of the paucity of knowledge that currently exists.

29 Crovetto, p. 56.
1.3 Prabhāt Rañjan Sarkar: His Life and Times

Prabhāt Rañjan Sarkar was born on the full moon day of the lunar month of Vaiśākha (possibly 22 April) in 1921 in Jamalpur, Bihar, India, to Laksmī Narayan Sarkar (father) and Abharanī Sarkar (mother). He was originally named Arun, but in 1925 was renamed Prabhāt Rañjan by his parents so that he would have the same middle name as all the male Sarkars of his generation. Prabhāt Rañjan Sarkar grew up in a family steeped in ancient spiritual traditions and regional leadership, spending much of his school vacations in his family’s ancestral home in Burdwan, West Bengal. His early years were reportedly surrounded in miraculous events including mystical experiences, parapsychological events such as precognition, and near escapes from death. When he was about five years old, he was apparently the target of an assassination attempt by a religious sect that believed he was destined to destroy their religion.

Sarkar underwent his higher education in Vidyasagar College in Calcutta. He had frequent contacts with prominent social activist, Subhash Chandra Bose, who was a cousin of his maternal uncle, as well as with sociologist, M. N. Roy. By the 1950’s, Sarkar had become a well-known spiritual teacher in India. In 1955, following the founding of AM in Jamalpur, he became known to his followers as Śrī Śrī Ānandamūrti or Bābā. ‘Ānandamūrti’ literally means ‘embodiment of bliss’ and ‘Śrī’ is an honorific title given to a well-respected person. AM has rendered his spiritual name as ‘he who attracts others as an embodiment of bliss’. Sarkar is also affectionately known to his disciples as ‘Bābā’, a term of endearment and respect normally given to a male senior person such as one’s father or uncle. In the context of AM, ‘Bābā’ has come to mean ‘Beloved’. The historical context in which AM developed was, as rightly suggested by Sil, one of a newly independent India caught in an atmosphere of uncertainty, post-industrialisation dislocation, and breakdown of traditional customs.

AM and PROUT grew rapidly in the 1960’s and drew fierce opposition from many Hindu groups and the communists in India. This was due, in part, to Sarkar’s public rejection of the Hindu caste system and other social practices (e.g. the dowry system), his outward disregard for the plethora of Hindu rituals, and his criticism of orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy, and in part, to his iconoclastic stance toward both capitalism and communism. By the late 1960’s, Ānanda Mārgīs were

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33 Biographical information on Sarkar was obtained mainly from Sugatānanda, *Sambhavami* (Ydrefors: Prashikṣana Matha, 1992) and Vijayānanda, *The Life and Teachings of Śrī Śrī Ānandamūrti, Volume I* (Calcutta: Ažnanda Mārga Prācāraka Samgha, 1994) and complemented by information pertaining to Sarkar’s life scattered throughout other AM publications.
34 The actual calendar date of Sarkar’s birth is not given in any of the published biographies of Sarkar. The date given was based on the lunar calendar used commonly in India and other parts of Asia. Kṛpānanda, *With My Master* (Manila: Proutist Universal, 1990), p. 121, gives the date as 22 April 1921.
36 *TPRS*, p. 1, and *LC*, p. 1.
holding key positions in the Indian civil service. The Indian government came to regard AM as a politically subversive organisation, possibly because of AM members’ uncompromising anti-corruption stance, and civil servants were thenceforth banned from joining the movement.39

Sil reports that the first large-scale public outrage against AM occurred in 1967, when the organisation antagonised wealthy and powerful kurmi māhātos in the Bengali countryside over its reclamation of waste lands for productive agriculture. As AM had failed to secure protection from the government, it ‘fell an easy victim to the wrath of the kurmiś in an unfortunate fracas in 1967 which, to add insult to injury, brought widespread notoriety for the sect’.40

The 1970’s saw even greater trials for Sarkar and his followers. He was charged with the murder of some of his followers in 1971 and jailed without trial. AM was publicly labelled by the government as a terrorist organisation. When the Indian State of Emergency was declared in 1975, all of Sarkar’s organisations were banned. Sarkar himself had to face a trial conducted in an atmosphere of fear and coercion and was finally convicted in spite of protests by the International Commission of Jurists and other associations against the unfair judicial conditions.41 The Indian police and intelligence agencies continued their pursuit of AM, with numerous claims of police torture of Sarkar’s followers and an alleged poison attempt on Sarkar by the prison authorities.42 Sarkar, in protest against his unjust trial, the attempt on his life, and the human rights abuses committed against his followers, undertook a liquid-fast for five and a half years while in prison. It was not until the removal of Indira Gandhi’s government in 1977 that Sarkar’s case could be appealed and the verdict reversed. The illegal ban on AM activities was removed and Sarkar was released from prison on August 2, 1978, shortly after the Patna High Court had overturned all the charges against him and four co-accused.43 AM, having been reportedly persecuted from the late sixties to the early eighties, experienced the culmination of its persecution in the brutal public murder of eighteen of its members on April 30, 1982, by communists in Calcutta.44 According to Sil, it is ‘an irony that the Marxist regime of West Bengal, purportedly a government of the common people – peasants and urban workers – has chosen to smother another mass movement’.45

From his release until his death on October 21, 1990, Sarkar continued his spiritual and social activities in Calcutta, composing 5018 devotional songs called Prabhāt Samgīta or ‘Songs of the New Dawn’, giving spiritual talks, and teaching meditation to many disciples, especially to his senior monks (avadhūtas) and nuns (avadhūtikās).46 He gave lectures on linguistics, wrote children’s literature, and managed his various organisations, which had grown to include Renaissance Universal

38 Inayatullah, Situating Sarkar, p. 1.
41 Manavendraṇa, Ānanda Mārga: A Brief Summary, pp. 18-19.
42 Inayatullah, Situating Sarkar, p. 2.
46 Inayatullah, Situating Sarkar, p.2.
(a global network of intellectuals interested in spirituality and social change), Renaissance Artists and Writers Association, Aćānanda Mār̥ga Universal Relief Team, and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and Plants, to name a few.\textsuperscript{47} Sarkar’s most recent project was Aćānanda Nagar or ‘City of Bliss’, an alternative community based on PROUT principles situated in Calcutta. Many primary schools, as well as a university based on Tantric philosophy – Gurukul University, were established in Ānanda Nagar. Many other similar projects, including service and humanitarian projects in undeveloped and developing countries, have been started in Australia and around the world. They are all based on the principles of ecological and spiritual awareness, social progress, and integration with the local culture.

Since Sarkar’s death in 1990, AM has been led by one of his most senior disciples, Ācārya Śraddhānanda Avadhūta, who was to be its elected President for many years to come.\textsuperscript{48} The Central Executive Committee comprising the President and several other key posts is made up of purodhas, elite spiritual teachers within AM who have been taught the most advanced practices of viṣeṣa yoga. Inside information from various sources suggests that there may currently be a leadership crisis within AM, involving possible corruption and ethical breaches within the highest echelons of power.\textsuperscript{49} The organisation has its head office in Tiljala, Calcutta, and is supposedly managed according to the structure and guidelines laid down by Sarkar himself in the social treatise Cāryācārya (Parts 1–3). A splinter group known as the Ānanda Sevā Mission (ASM) was set up in 1992 by several of Sarkar’s senior disciples, who broke away from the parent organisation (AM) as a result of internal clashes. One of the leaders of ASM claims to receive ‘intuitive guidance’ (channelled instructions and teachings) from the ‘consciousness’ of Sarkar himself, and the splinter group has apparently managed to attract a number of ex-AM followers into its fold. The dispute between AM and ASM continues to be played out at the time of writing this book.\textsuperscript{50}

1.4 Sarkar as a Spiritual Master

Little is known of Sarkar’s life and his activities as a spiritual master (guru) apart from the stories and biographies written by his followers.\textsuperscript{51} While there is much information in these accounts that may be considered hagiographical, the accounts themselves do show relative consistency and coherence, sufficient for us to put together a condensed sketch of Sarkar’s role as a spiritual leader. It is not my intention here to ascertain the truth or falsity of the historical and biographical claims made for Sarkar; nor do I aim to account for the supernormal and mystical elements in those claims. Rather, I aim to reveal the picture of Sarkar that is portrayed by the AM organisation itself, so that we may be better

\textsuperscript{47} See Dharmavedānanda, p. 446.
\textsuperscript{48} See Dharmavedānanda, p. 414.
\textsuperscript{49} This and related information was gathered from an exclusive AM internet discussion list, senior AM ācāryas, and mārgīs.
\textsuperscript{50} This and related information was gathered from an exclusive AM internet discussion list, senior AM ācāryas, and mārgīs. For information on ASM, see their website http://www.anandaseva.org/.
\textsuperscript{51} The two main biographies of Sarkar are Sugatānanda (1992) and Vijayānanda (1994). Descriptions of Sarkar’s life and character can also be found in accounts written by his disciples, e.g. Vijayānanda, Ānandamūrtijī As I
able to contextualise him when discussing his spiritual teachings in the chapters that follow. The following account of Sarkar as a guru is necessarily brief and omits numerous details of his life and activity as documented by AM. It is nevertheless adequate for its modest stated purpose.

In the biographical stories written by his followers, the young Sarkar is portrayed as an extraordinary child possessing knowledge and abilities considered precocious for his age.\(^2\) He is said to have grasped and put a cotton wick dipped in milk into his mouth while he was still a newborn infant. Throughout his childhood and teenage years, he is said to have demonstrated a number of extraordinary abilities such as writing his own name in five different scripts when he was only five years old; accurately predicting future events and reading the future lives of his friends and relatives; and showing the fate of departed beings to their living relatives through a magic mirror. He is also described as a highly conscientious and helpful student, who spent much of his time assisting and tutoring those who were weaker in their studies. As the eldest male member of his family, after the death of his father Sarkar, then twenty, took up a job as a railway clerk, following completion of his college education at Vidyadara College in Calcutta. Two years earlier, at the age of eighteen, Sarkar had given his first Tantric initiation to a notorious local bandit, thereby creating a role for himself as a spiritual master (guru) and transforming the bandit into a spiritual practitioner (śādhaka). Since then, he had been secretly initiating different people, many of whom were later to form the nucleus of his global organisation, AM.

In late 1954 Sarkar called a meeting of all his initiates and on January 1, 1955 the AM organisation was formally established.\(^3\) As a spiritual master, Sarkar was very strict on the ethical foundations of spiritual life, uncompromisingly insisting that all his disciples follow the ten yogic principles of yama (‘conduct’) and niyama (‘restraint’).\(^4\) Yama consists of non-harm (ahimsā), non-stealing (asteya), truthfulness (satya), non-possessiveness (aparigraha), and living a divine life (brahmācārya). Niyama consists of contentment (santosha), cleanliness (saucha), penance (tapah), scriptural study (svadhyāya), and taking refuge in the Lord (jīvara pranidhāna). Sarkar is said to have regularly and consistently monitored his disciples’ adherence to these moral principles, sometimes meting out punishment for moral infringement during guru-disciple meetings. These meetings became increasingly frequent after the AM organisation was formed, when his disciples, both lay (family mārgī, also termed part-timers) and ordained (celibate monks and nuns, also termed whole-timers), would gather at his residence for ‘reporting sessions’. During these sessions, Sarkar evaluated the progress of different service projects of the organisation, while his disciples reported on the performance of their allotted duties. Published reports suggest that on numerous occasions, disciples

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\(^2\) See e.g. Sugatānanda, pp. 11-18; and Vijayānanda, pp. 7-13.

\(^3\) Vijayānanda, Ānandamūrtijī, p. 77.

\(^4\) Vijayānanda, Ānandamūrtijī, pp. 61-63.

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felt spiritually uplifted and benefited from Sarkar’s presence, words, or gestures, even if Sarkar had harshly rebuked or physically punished them for laziness, incompetence, or immorality.55

Sarkar was a consummate dramatist who involved his disciples in many an emotionally-charged scenario, interpreted by them as his ‘cosmic play’ or līlā enacted for the spiritual benefit of all concerned.56 On many occasions, Sarkar was known to have deliberately placed his disciples in extremely difficult social or emotional situations. This is said to have been done in order to convey certain spiritual truths or to spiritually awaken the disciples from conditioned habits and ego-identification. Another way in which Sarkar seemingly catapulted his disciples out of egocentric concerns was to set them impossible social service goals, such as building ten schools in a week for poverty-stricken village children in some remote part of India. In all these ‘dramas’, Sarkar’s disciples experienced great tension or humiliation, but are said to have been rewarded with mental lightness, bliss, and spiritual elevation once they could surrender themselves fully to their guru and to the reality of the situation. Sarkar’s idiosyncratic and sometimes harsh methods of instruction were regarded by his disciples as authentically ‘Tantric’ acts, designed to develop in them qualities of devotion, self-surrender, and mental liberation. Sarkar claimed that when he punished a disciple, it was never out of hatred or blame but out of love, just as a parent might discipline a wayward child. He made it a principle that the measure of punishment must always be less than the measure of love given to the person being punished, an attitude corroborated by his disciples.57 Paradoxically, accounts abound of Sarkar’s disciples feeling totally charmed by and lovingly attracted to their master by virtue of his sweetness, compassion, and power.58

In 1966, Sarkar resigned from his job as railway clerk in order to devote himself fully to the running and expansion of his AM organisation. As a spiritual and organisational leader, he is said to exhibit a paradoxical blend of qualities, including meticulous attention to detail and efficiency, philosophical acumen, a fiery and vigorous temperament, loving sweetness and charm, a sense of humour, child-like simplicity and straightforwardness, and a powerful presence. Sarkar’s earliest disciples, prior to the founding of AM, were lay people with careers and family responsibilities, many of whom went on to become his first cohort of grhī acārya or ‘family spiritual instructors’. He gave his early disciples much personal attention and imparted to several of them the most advanced Tantric meditation techniques, known as višeṣa yoga. As the numbers were small and manageable, Sarkar used to initiate his early disciples personally. As his popularity increased following the formation of AM, he gave his acāryas the authority to initiate new disciples on his behalf, making Tantric meditation and spirituality more accessible to the general public. Sarkar was very firm on the policy of not accepting any money for spiritual teachings and meditation instruction, and only accepted

55 For personal accounts of disciples’ experiences with Sarkar during reporting sessions, see for example, Shantatmānanda, Moving with Cosmic Will: A Story of Spiritual Struggle and Experiences (Davao City: Aznanda Marga, 1996), pp. 159-163; and Hamrahi, Namāmi, pp. 67-68.
56 See e.g. Vijayananda, Aznandamūrtijī, pp. 91-97.
57 Vijayananda, Ānandamūrtijī, p. 81.
sincere spiritual seekers willing to commit themselves to the required disciplines. He showed no interest in those who sought initiation or favours through bribery – be it in the form of cash or promise of continual financial support for the organisation – or those who behaved arrogantly on the basis of their wealth or social status. His clearly identified mission was to create spiritual-social leaders of the highest calibre for the twin purposes of personal enlightenment and universal service for the upliftment of humanity.59

Sarkar was relentless in the pursuit of his vision, as evidenced in his strict training regime for his disciples and the rapid expansion and diversification of his organisation structurally, functionally, and geographically. He saw himself in the twin roles of dharma guru (spiritual master) and samāja guru (social preceptor), and expressed himself deeply concerned with elevating the socio-economic conditions of all oppressed peoples in India and the world. To him, spiritual development was not possible in an environment of poverty, deprivation, hunger, and insecurity, since outer and inner development were inextricably linked and essentially inseparable. For him, spirituality was not a privilege reserved only for the elite and the wealthy, but a basic right of every human being. He thus made AM an organisation that taught spiritual philosophy and practices while simultaneously promoting a new socio-political theory and vision through various initiatives. One such initiative was Proutist Universal – a wing of AM focussed on studying, propagating, and implementing the ideas and strategies of Progressive Utilisation Theory (PROUT). While Sarkar saw structural change in global society as a long-term solution to collective suffering, he ensured that short-term disaster relief and community development work were provided to the most needy through the Ānanda Mārga Universal Relief Team (AMURT and AMURTEL). AMURTEL was the ladies’ and children’s wing of the team. He personally oversaw the creation and growth of an ecological sanctuary to house and nurture the diverse species of plants in the world at the headquarters of AM in Calcutta. There are stories describing Sarkar speaking to and caring for his trees, shrubs, and flowers even on very busy days.60

As a spiritual master, Sarkar is said to have demonstrated profound care and concern for the physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing of all his disciples. He often personally intervened in their lives to ensure that they had sufficient food, adequate shelter, a means of livelihood, a stable and happy family environment, and access to medical and health care.61 All his disciples were entitled to personal contact (PC) with him, during which Sarkar would teach, enlighten, scrutinise, chastise, inspire, or bless them in one way or another. Individual PC was given only to male disciples while small group PC was organised for the female disciples. This was a rule that Sarkar instituted to circumvent any potential allegation of sexual impropriety on his part toward his women disciples.

Some time in 1981 or 1982, Sarkar conducted dharma samikṣā – a massive program of analysing, with

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58 For a sample of these, see Prasiddānanda, Bābā’s Love for South America: Mystical Experiences with a Spiritual Master Volume 1 (Sao Paulo: Ānanda Mārga Publications, 1996).
59 See e.g. Hamrahi, Namāni, pp. 75-76 and 107-110; and Narada Muni, Bhagavān Ānandamūrti: Ānanda Katha (Katoomba: AMPS Suva Sectorial Publication, 1990), p. 75.
60 See Vijayānanda, Azēndamūrtijī, pp. 72-77.
his ‘yogic perception’, the conduct and health of each of his many disciples who came from all over the world to see him. Following the analyses and occasional chastisement of the disciples for breaches of morality, he gave them instructions necessary for their total well-being and further spiritual growth.62

On a daily basis, Sarkar would give short, informal teachings known as darśans (‘holy glimpses of the guru’) to small groups of disciples, during which various spiritual topics would be discussed. Twice a year, he would give long, formal teachings to large gatherings of disciples known as dharma mahācakra or DMC held at various locations. These gatherings were popular amongst disciples for their philosophical depth, deep inspiration, and ‘spiritually vibrating’ qualities, with many reporting extraordinary realisations and mystical experiences. At the conclusion of each DMC, Sarkar would bless the congregation by assuming the varābhaya mudrā (‘gesture of auspiciousness and fearlessness’) with his hands in front of his disciples, eliciting spiritual awakenings and heightened spiritual energy in large sections of the audience.63 For Sarkar, the varābhaya mudrā display was a means through which he emanated and spread a shower of ‘positive microvita’ (a concept to be discussed in Chapters 3, 4 and 6) to facilitate the spiritual progress of his disciples. During both DMCs and general darśans, he gave demonstrations of various forms of samādhi, effects of tanmatras (‘waves of sound, form, touch, taste, and smell’), knowledge of past lives, distant occurrences, and various spiritual realisations to his disciples by direct display or by using several selected disciples as his subjects.64 Sarkar never openly displayed his occult powers in public, eschewing all forms of self-propaganda or media publicity; he is said to have reserved the use of such powers only for the skilful and necessary assistance or inspiration of his disciples.

Sarkar’s personal lifestyle is reported to have been simple and spartan, avoiding the extremes of glamorous indulgence on one hand and ascetic deprivation on the other.65 He insisted on being kept away from the media and the public limelight, reserving his time and attention unstintingly for sincere spiritual seekers and those who needed his help. He married at the age of 38, in 1959, and later had a son. This aspect of Sarkar’s personal life was seen by AM as an exemplary demonstration that family life was not an impediment to spiritual enlightenment. Little mention is made of Sarkar’s wife and son in all the stories and biographies written by his followers. Some sources indicate that Sarkar’s wife and son eventually left him following a power struggle initiated by his wife, Uma Sarkar, in collusion with several top-ranking ācāryas including Sarkar’s personal assistant of that time, Viśokānanda.66 The silence surrounding this event and the lives of his wife and son may indicate a reticence, perhaps

62 Vijayānanda, Ānandamūrtijī, p. 95, dates this event to July 1982. Dharmaivedānanda, p. 430, dates it to 1981.
63 See e.g. Alister, pp. 232-233.
64 See e.g. Ānandamūrti, Ānanda Vacanāmṛtam Part 23 (Calcutta: Ānanda Mārga Pracāraka Samgha, 1999), pp. 91-108.
65 Vijayānanda, Ānandamūrtijī, pp. 9-22.
66 N. K. Singh, ‘Anand Marg’, Seminar Vol. 151 (1972), p. 25. This information has been corroborated through conversations with several senior ācāryas of AM.
embarrassment, on the part of AM in relation to Sarkar’s apparent abandonment by his wife and AM’s factional infighting.

Be that as it may, Sarkar was known as a very diligent, conscientious, and controversial guru. He worked tirelessly for about twenty hours every day – giving teachings, initiating and overseeing projects, disciplining his acāryas and mārgīs, caring for his plants, composing songs, receiving news and progress reports from AM workers around India and the world, and giving personal help and instruction to those who needed them. As part of his daily routine, he went on field walks in the mornings and evenings, during which he dictated numerous stories, spiritual teachings, and factual information on topics as diverse as history, farming, botany, culture, and music to disciples, who carefully recorded them. On the public front, he was highly critical of the Hindu caste system, brides’ dowry, costly Hindu sacrifices and rituals, capitalist exploitation, government corruption, and religious hypocrisy and dogma. In rural communities where AM had a presence, members of different castes including those stigmatised as untouchables, would often sit, eat, and meditate together, sharing food from a common plate. Sarkar tolerated no caste barriers amongst his disciples, and for this and other disagreements with the status quo, he was much hated, opposed, and persecuted by both secular and religious authorities.67 Even in jail, Sarkar is said to have exuded a fearless and commanding presence, which caused some surprise and perhaps awe amongst the jail authorities.68

Sarkar was a complex figure with many facets to his personality, and a man of many interests. He was reputed to know more than 200 languages, and was known to have demonstrated such knowledge to his followers on several occasions. He designed and created a spiritually and ecologically-oriented approach to education that he called neohumanistic education. He wanted to inspire a new generation of children and young people through a holistic educational program based on profound personal experience of universal love and interconnectedness. To achieve such a global transformation, he set up more than 700 neohumanistic schools around the world through his dedicated disciples and volunteers. Apart from his role as an educator, he was also an inspired musician and artist, composing more than 5000 song lyrics in several languages including English, Hindi, Bengali, and Urdu. He set these lyrics, expressing a range of spiritual sentiments, to melodies and tunes derived from a variety of cultures. These songs, known as Prabhāt Samgīt, were meant to inspire, enrich, and sweeten the spiritual lives of all who were and are walking the path of AM. Sarkar also demonstrated a keen interest in the arts and sciences by establishing the Renaissance Artists and Writers Association (RAWA) and Renaissance Universal (RU), two clubs aimed at revitalising the arts and sciences respectively from a spiritual and ethical perspective.

The narratives of AM portray Sarkar as a guru who not only sought spiritual transformation of the individual and society, but also made cultural and social renewal an essential part of his project. He was regarded as an all-round Renaissance man, someone who sought to create a new civilisational discourse through a multifaceted approach that was rooted in spirituality.

67 Manavendraṇanda, pp. 16-17.
However, some external non-AM sources cast Sarkar in a completely different light.⁶⁹ They are generally less optimistic about Sarkar’s intentions and actions, some being openly critical of both the man and his organisation. In particular, Singh (1972) describes Sarkar as a ‘pseudo-sannyasin’ who had ‘no regard for democracy’.⁷⁰ He is portrayed as a tyrannical figure who organised AM like a parallel government with both executive and judiciary powers ultimately resting in his person. Punishment of dissidents and offenders of AM’s code of conduct is said to range from caning to the death sentence. Disloyal members of AM were supposedly ordered by Sarkar to be shot on sight. Singh speculates that at least fifty former AM members may have been shot on sight and since become ‘traceless’. He describes how Sarkar punished his wayward disciples:

Anand Murti (Sarkar), the ‘chief judge’, used to penalise avadhuts with a heavy hand for every little act of omission and commission. Partly to keep them in terror and partly in the belief that only in this way could he fulfil his dreams, he imparted the most brutal and primitive punishment. The ex-avadhuts narrate in unbelievable terms how they used to take up to five hundred canings at a time and pass urine and stools in their clothes. There are instances of solitary confinement and regular beatings for days together.⁷¹

According to Singh, Sarkar established a para-military wing of AM, the Volunteer Social Service, whose overt purpose was organisational and self defence but which may have covertly served as AM’s execution squad for dissidents. In addition, Singh accuses Sarkar of being ‘an incorrigible practitioner of homosexual intercourse with his own disciples after having convinced them of their girlhood in previous lives.’⁷²

Sil (1988) comments that while ‘almost all accounts of the organisation written by its leader and other members (not easily available in the market) are too specious and sanctimonious to be credible’, he nevertheless disputes Singh’s caricature of Sarkar as a lewd homosexual guru who sexually exploited his disciples:

… Ananda Murty appears to lead a perfectly moral life as contrasted with the leaders of several global spiritual organizations. It is absolutely unfounded that the leader of the Ananda Marga is a homosexual who is in the habit of persuading his male recruits whom he desires that “they had been girls in previous lives.”⁷³

According to Sil, Sarkar has never directed worship towards himself as a divine figure, though paradoxically he may have allowed a personality cult to form around him for reasons we can only guess:

⁶⁸ Vijayānanda, Āṇandaśīrī, pp. 22-28.
⁷⁰ Singh, p. 22.
⁷¹ Singh, p. 25.
⁷² Ibid.
… it must be noted that no Margi actually worships his bābā, whereas devotees of other spiritual personalities, especially the followers of … Sai Baba, have little qualms in publicly worshipping him as a god.\textsuperscript{74} …

Interestingly enough, Sarkar himself has disavowed any divine connection and confessed: “I do not belong to heaven. What I am, I am to express this truth in a single sentence – I am yours.” Yet he has painstakingly elaborated a raison d’être of a guru.\textsuperscript{75} …

Admittedly, the man never claimed divinity himself whereas many other spiritualists in India and abroad have announced themselves as self-styled gods. Yet, quietly and quite consciously, the Ananda Murti has allowed himself to be described as a superhuman personality and thus his organisation, like most other spiritual associations, has developed a personality cult around its leader.\textsuperscript{76}

While Sil seems to have based his conclusions on AM writings and other independent sources, it is not clear where Singh derives his information from or whether there is any factual basis for his accusations. No source references are provided in Singh’s short article on AM. It is equally unclear whether AM’s attempts at self-portrayal and portrayal of Sarkar are entirely factual and grounded on solid evidence. Common sense suggests that both supporters and critics of AM would each have a vested interest in portraying the case in a way that supports their separate and opposing agendas. It is not the aim of this book to sort out these competing claims but merely to highlight some of the controversies surrounding the personality of Sarkar and his AM organisation. With these historical discussions on Sarkar and AM as background, we are now ready to examine Sarkar’s spiritual ideology and praxis more closely in the following chapters.

\textsuperscript{73} Sil, ‘Anatomy’, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{74} Sil, ‘Anatomy’, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{75} Sil, ‘Anatomy’, p. 8.
Chapter 2
Methodology

2.1 Introduction

My purpose is to examine the primary and secondary texts of AM published in English, in an effort to systematically and rigorously elucidate the spiritual philosophy and praxis of Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar (1921-1990). In doing so, the writings of AM scholars and practitioners are investigated and cross-referenced. As this study aims to give a comparative perspective, relevant comparisons with ancient and classical systems of Indian philosophy-cum-praxis are made. In this comparative task, the English versions of primary and secondary texts are consulted, as are academic studies on these texts.

The methodological issues that arise out of this proposed study include: (1) deciding on the most suitable and fruitful approach for understanding and explication of Sarkar’s texts; (2) establishing the boundaries of the study in terms of textual corpus; (3) probing into the possible translation and redaction biases inherent in the texts themselves (as many of Sarkar’s works were originally in languages other than English, and have been translated and edited by the publications committee of AM). The first of these three concerns will be tackled by the discussion in the next section. The second concern is resolved by selecting all of Sarkar’s discourses currently available in English as the primary corpus for my research. Discourses transcribed or tape-recorded in Bengali and Hindi will not be investigated due to my current limitations in these languages. To attempt to read these untranslated manuscripts or understand these untranslated tape-recordings would require an investment of time and effort beyond the permitted timeframe of this thesis. Similarly, the source texts of other Indian systems of thought and praxis are consulted using their known English versions, as are the academic papers on these relevant topics. The third concern involves consideration of possible translation bias, or deliberate or unintentional errors of omission and/or commission in the translation, editing, and publication of the texts. Such consideration would necessitate a proficiency in Bengali and Hindi far beyond my current ability. This preliminary study aims to present Sarkar’s philosophy and praxis as understood and propagated by AM through its English-language publications. The justification for this is that AM currently propagates its message and activities almost exclusively through its English-language publications. Indeed, this is the face of AM encountered by all except Indians, who had been exposed to the live discourses of Sarkar himself or his published writings in either Bengali or Hindi. In fact, the Chinese translations of AM materials are made from their English counterparts, underscoring the importance and centrality of the English-language publications of AM.

77 Relevant comparisons are made with Vedānta, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, the Śaiva, Śākta, and Bengali forms of Tantra, Vaiṣṇavism, the Vedas and Upaniṣads, and Buddhism.
Related to the issue of possible translation and redaction bias is the manner in which both Sarkar and AM translators have rendered key Sanskrit terms. An example is the term ‘citta’, which Sarkar translated as ‘objectivated I’\textsuperscript{78} while AM translators have rendered it ‘done I’\textsuperscript{79}. Neither of these is the usual translation nor the commonly understood sense of the word, citta, which most frequently means mind or mental state. Such idiosyncratic rendering of Sanskrit terms\textsuperscript{80} may relate to Sarkar’s attempt at reconceptualising and reconstructing key ideas and doctrines from the common Indian stock as an essential part of his overall transformational project. Discussion of Sarkar’s worldview and spiritual disciplines will reveal frequent use of familiar Hindu terms such as pu\textit{ru}ṣ\textit{a}, prak\textit{rti}, ku\textit{ndalini}, and cakra. In the chapters that follow, I will simply translate these Sanskrit terms according to the rendering by Sarkar and AM translators. I will also reveal any special new variants of meaning Sarkar gives to these concepts, including any unique understandings of the relationships amongst them. However, I will not attempt to do that in any detail until Chapters 7 and 8, where I will critically compare Sarkar’s translations and interpretations with existing conceptual understandings.

Throughout this thesis (in both text and footnotes), I am replacing the AM transcription system for Sanskrit with the standard system, for the sake of clarity and ease of understanding. The only exception is in the bibliography, where the book titles and authors’ names are in their original form. Sanskrit word divisions in the original version (as used in Sarkar’s texts) will be retained for the sake of clarity (e.g. ‘Parama Pu\textit{ru}ṣ\textit{a}’ is rendered ‘parama pu\textit{ru}ṣ\textit{a}’). In Sarkar’s texts, certain key Sanskrit terms denote both proper names of deities and essential philosophical concepts. In the case of proper names, I write these terms with initial capitals and no italics (e.g. Kṛṣṇa and Śiva) to indicate that they are being used in an anthropomorphic sense. In the case of concepts, I will write them in lower-case italics (e.g. kṛṣṇa, śiva, brahma) to denote that they are being used in an abstract philosophical sense.

2.2 Textual Sources and Scope

Sarkar, whose mother tongue was Bengali, delivered his discourses in Hindi, Bengali and English. He divides the texts of AM into three collections, namely the darś\textit{a}na sā\textit{stra} or philosophical treatises, the dharma sā\textit{stra} or spiritual treatises, and the samāja sā\textit{stra} or social treatises. The key texts of the darś\textit{a}na sā\textit{stra} are the Ānanda Sū\textit{t}ram (AS: ‘Aphorisms on Bliss’), and Idea and Ideology (IAI). Sarkar himself designated these two texts as the official philosophical texts of AM. The AS consists of a collection of terse and pithy sayings composed in the style and form of traditional Indian sū\textit{tras} or aphorisms. Sarkar delivered AS, in a series of night sessions in 1961 in the solitude of the Tiger’s Grave in Jamalpur, to a devotee who duly recorded the teachings under the faint glow of candlelight.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{78} IAI, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{79} See e.g. SPSSA, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{80} The issue of accuracy and validity of existing translations of Sanskrit terms is pertinent but outside the scope of the present discussion.
Sarkar provides an auto-commentary to AS by means of a brief purport to each of its terse verses. For the purpose of this thesis, I consulted both the AS verses and their corresponding explanations given by Sarkar in order to clarify ambiguous points. IAI is a series of discourses given to a group of advanced trainees during the early days of the movement in 1959, collected and transcribed into a small volume. Together, AS and IAI provide the kernel of and overall framework for Sarkar’s vast edifice of spiritual concepts and practices.

Both AS and IAI follow a semi-systematic structure, detailing the concepts of cosmology, psychology, soteriology, and social philosophy in a roughly sequential manner. However, a certain amount of conceptual wandering can be observed in both these texts, more so in AS than in IAI. For example, AS (which comprises five chapters) begins with a terse discussion on ontology and cosmogony followed by the same on soteriology. Chapter 2 of AS continues with the discussion on soteriology but then turns its focus to ontology, psychology, and finally to cosmogony again. Chapter 3 begins by returning to the discussion on psychology and ends with another five short expositions on soteriology. Chapter 4 of AS returns to the topic of cosmogony while the final chapter is solely devoted to a skeletal but essential exposition of Sarkar’s social philosophy of PROUT. As such, in reviewing Sarkar’s ideas I will not go through AS verse by verse. Rather I will quote the relevant verses as and when necessary while discussing the various aspects of his philosophy in the chapters that follow. Apart from the fact that any one of Sarkar’s texts may wander over different topics, it is also pertinent to note that Sarkar’s presentation of his ideas is scattered over many sources and is not to be found fully in any one text. Thus, it is necessary to quote from many varied sources in order to gain a complete and fair understanding of Sarkar’s entire ideology. In fact, the process of collecting, sorting out, and discussing various aspects of Sarkar’s teachings in one piece of work is a large part of my task.

An important preliminary text that serves as an informative and hermeneutical key to the entire AM ideology of Sarkar is Ānanda Mārga Elementary Philosophy (AMEP) (1992). In AMEP, Sarkar explains what he means by consciousness (puruṣa or caitanya) and mind (manas) by appealing to experience, and argues for the existence of cosmic consciousness (bhūmacaitanya) using formal logic. As such, although AMEP was not formally designated by Sarkar as part of AM’s darśana śāstra, it remains an indispensable source-text for an accurate understanding of his complex terminology and worldview.

The dharma śāstra of AM consists of the multi-volume collections of discourses delivered by Sarkar to his disciples over the many years of his career as AM’s spiritual preceptor. The first of these collections is the Subhāṣīta Saṃgraha (SS) or ‘Collection of Well-Spoken Sayings’. There is, to date, a total of 24 volumes published in English, each volume containing a set of chronologically ordered discourses. Work is continuing on the collation, transcription and publication of further volumes. The SS series is meant to contain all Dharma Mahācakra (DMC) discourses given by Sarkar in cities and
towns throughout the world, but mostly in India. DMC’s were large public spiritual gatherings addressed by Sarkar and were an important feature of AM throughout most of his life. Since the first DMC, held on 1 January 1955, the discourses have been transcribed, translated, and published in a roughly chronological fashion by the AM publications committee. This chronological sequence was, however, broken by the onset of the State of Emergency in India in 1975, during which discourses were published in the order that they happened to be recovered by AM archivists. The State of Emergency ended in 1977.

Another collection of texts known as Ānanda Vacanāṃrtam (AV) or ‘Immortal Words of Bliss’ groups together all the known General Darśana (GD) discourses given by Sarkar throughout his career. GD speeches were teachings given to AM members, often as part of the daily routine, in whatever locality Sarkar happened to be staying in at the time. These speeches were lighter in tone and briefer than DMC discourses, and often intimately delivered to relatively small groups of AM members. The AV series started in 1978 with the GD discourses given by Sarkar at that time; it kept pace with the subsequent GD discourses spoken by Sarkar over the next six years. Beginning with Part 23, the AV series has included GD discourses delivered prior to 1978. These discourses have been recovered either from the typed notes of devotees or from established magazines of AM in the form of summarised approximations of original discourses. Some were transcribed from tape recordings of the original discourses and translated by the publications committee in cases where English was not the medium of instruction. Sarkar himself designated both the SS and AV series of discourses as the dharma śāstra of AM.


Sarkar was a prolific writer and teacher, who not only concerned himself with spirituality, but also gave extensive teachings on social philosophy. He created a new political-economic theory and

social movement called the Progressive Utilisation Theory (abbreviated as PROUT), which was meant to represent an alternative “third force” to the dominant ideologies of capitalism and communism. Sarkar’s discourses on PROUT have been assembled into a series known as Prout in a Nutshell (Parts 1-21) (1987–1991). Other original publications in the field of social philosophy include Proutist Economics (1992), A Few Problems Solved (Parts 1–9) (1987-1988), Human Society (Parts 1 and 2) (1987), Prama, Problems of the Day, and To the Patriots. Finally, AM’s samāja śāstra or social treatises consists of the three volumes of Čaryācārya, which basically provide guidance on personal conduct, social relationships and gatherings, organisational matters, and to a lesser extent, spiritual practices. These texts do not concern the present thesis and will not be investigated.

There is just one secondary text of AM. It is a commentary on the AS by a senior AM nun, Ānandamitra, and attempts to elaborate on the AS with teachings found scattered in the vast collection of original discourses. This commentary, known as ‘The Spiritual Teachings of Śrī Śrī Ānandamūrti’ (STSSA), has proven to be of great assistance in the current study. All tertiary AM sources consist of writings by scholars and followers of AM that have a bearing on the history or spiritual philosophy of the movement. Often they shed light on certain obscure doctrinal points and help clarify the accepted interpretation of Sarkar’s ideas by the AM tradition.

All the above-mentioned texts and a small number of articles that have not been hitherto published in book form are available on a recently released electronic edition of Sarkar’s works. This CD-ROM collection contains all of the books by Sarkar originally in English or translated into English as of May 1, 2001. It includes over 1200 articles (from 125 books) and several texts that have been recently out of print, such as Tattva Kaumudi, Tattvika Praveśika, Karma Samnyāsa, and Karma Yoga.\(^{85}\) I have reviewed and consulted this CD-ROM mainly for purposes of cross-referencing and cross-comparison of key terms and concepts.

In addition to AM sources, this study also investigates the essential texts and non-primary sources of several Indian philosophical and soteriological systems for comparative purposes. Here again, limitations in my command of Sanskrit necessitate the study of only English translations of primary texts and English academic papers relevant to the selected systems. The major systems of thought and praxis that will be compared with AM are:\(^{86}\)

1. The Vedas and Upaniṣads

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\(^{84}\) At this stage, the dates of some AM publications (currently out of print) are unknown to me.


\(^{86}\) One of the best-known comparative approaches to the study of religion is the ‘dimensional model’ of Ninian Smart, whose seven dimensions of religion – doctrinal, ritual, mythic, experiential, ethical, social, and material – characterise religions as they exist in the world. See Ninian Smart, The World’s Religions: Old Traditions and Modern Transformations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Ninian Smart, Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World’s Beliefs (London: Fontana Press, 1997). In this study, I am not attempting a comparison using Smart’s typology; rather I am making thematic cross-comparisons mostly from within the doctrinal, ritual, and experiential dimensions of AM and these separate Indian traditions. See also Frank Whaling, ‘Comparative Approaches’, in Frank Whaling (ed.), Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion Volume 1: Humanities (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1983), pp. 165-295.
2. Śānkhya
3. Yoga
4. Vedānta, in its Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and Dvaita variations
5. Buddhism
6. Hindu Tantra, in particular its Śaiva and Śākta variations
7. Vaiṣṇavism
8. Bengali Vaiṣṇavism and Tantrism

These systems have been selectively highlighted by Sarkar for comparison throughout his extensive collection of teachings, and bear either loose or close similarities to his own ideology. In Chapters 7 and 8, the similarities and differences between Sarkar’s thought and these traditions are critically elucidated, and a theoretical exposition is offered on how Sarkar may have articulated his spiritual ideology through creative synthesis and reconstruction of ancient and classical Indian discourse.

The comparisons made are not meant to be exhaustive or detailed. (Such a project would entail several separate works, each focusing on one particular tradition in comparison with AM; only then could one do justice to both the subjects of comparative discourse.) The present work is a preliminary study of Sarkar’s spiritual and soteriological discourse and is not meant to have the final word on its relation to other comparable systems of thought.

2.3 Historical Considerations

It is important to note that this study does not aim to present the life and times of Sarkar from a historical-critical point of view. Its primary objective is to explore and delineate the various ontological, cosmological, epistemological, ethical, psychological and soteriological concepts and practices of AM, as well as their links to ancient and classical sources of Indian spirituality. As far as is practicable, reliable sources have been consulted for the relevant historical information, but the rigour and technicality of historical research is left to historians and scholars trained and competent in that field. While modern historical criticism of texts generally seeks to uncover objective meaning within the texts themselves, paying close attention to historical ‘facts’ that surround the composition of the texts, postmodern exegesis seeks meaning in the play of language between the reader and the texts. From a postmodern viewpoint, the entire ‘multiverse’ of discourse in which exist both the texts and the reader needs to be taken into account in any textual interpretation. This field of discourse

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87 See Fred W. Burnett, ‘Postmodern Biblical Exegesis: The Eve of Historical Criticism’, *Semeia* 51 (1990): 51-80. Burnett argues that it is possible for historical criticism to accommodate postmodern styles of textual reading by a metamorphosis of both the critic and the method. Postmodern reading styles include post-structuralism, reader-response criticism, semiotics, psychoanalytic criticism, Gadamerian hermeneutics, and deconstructionism. Cf. F. Gerald Downing, ‘Historical-Critical Method’, in *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. by R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden (London: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 284-285. Of the historical-critical method, Downing writes: ‘The procedures and their logic remain very much akin … to what goes on in and before a trial at law. Documents are scrutinised to check whether they are what they purport to be, emanating from the authors claimed for them, un-tampered with; if they seem to be copies, the quality of the copying must be ascertained. Witnesses are examined for the coherence of their account, and for its match with others’ testimony’ (p. 285).
is not limited to textual sources but includes cultural practices, customs, social norms and is essentially indeterminable. In other words, for the historical critic, the notion of the ‘text’ becomes ‘macrotext’ or ‘genotext’, ‘all of the discursive space of (both verbal and non-verbal) for both the text and the subject’. Also, from a postmodern perspective, every text is always grounded in another text, and thus can be described as an ‘intertext’, wherein the ultimate origins and sources of the texts are impossible to trace. In this study, I seek to trace Sarkar’s texts not in a quest for their ultimate origins but in an exploration of their discursive multiverse, or at least one crucial element in that multiverse – certain major written texts of the Indian religious civilisation and subsequent Western academic interpretations of these texts. Thus, precise historical dating and a search for objective evidence of intertextual connections are not significant concerns of this study.

In analysing the texts of Sarkar, I have discovered that while AM editors have dated many of his discourses, there are others that remain undated due to either inability to retrieve the actual date of the discourse from original handwritten manuscripts, or perhaps lack of concern for chronological dating. Whichever may be the case, I have found, in examining Sarkar’s dated texts, that a historical stratification of these texts is possible based on prima facie evidence of the historical development of Sarkar’s key ideas. It is possible that throughout his teaching career, Sarkar may have developed and remoulded his earlier ideas or added new dimensions of meaning to earlier conceptualisations for reasons unclear to us. For example, early in his career he expounded a cosmology revolving around the theory of brahmacakra (first articulated between the years 1955 and 1961), but later on, between the years 1986 and 1989, he expounded a new cosmology based on microvita theory, which cast the earlier cosmology in a new light. The issues surrounding this historical change will be discussed fully in Chapter 3. For now, I merely state my policy with regard to such historical stratification found in the texts: I will not be tracing such changes in Sarkar’s texts as a whole due to the difficulty of such a task. At best, any historical tracing performed would be partial, possibly biased, and inadequate since many of the discourses are undated. Besides, from a postmodern perspective, such tracing would ultimately prove futile due to the inherent indeterminacy of the texts (or intertexts) themselves. In the main, therefore, I will be presenting Sarkar’s ideas as if they were a fixed system (which is probably how the AM publications committee sees it), highlighting only certain conceptual changes that are obvious and noteworthy, such as the above-mentioned development from brahmacakra to microvita cosmology.

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90 This study is informed by Gadamerian hermeneutics rather than by post-structural criticism based on the thought of La Capra, Derrida and Foucault. According to Phillips, post-structural criticism is ‘agonistic, contestatory, and multi-voiced’, problematising the power structures and political control underlying knowledge
2.4 Gadamer’s Dialogical Hermeneutics

Approaches to textual reading and interpretation are many, some of which include form criticism, holistic interpretation, literary criticism, narrative criticism, redaction criticism, and source criticism. In this study, the process of exegetical analysis and understanding of Sarkar’s and other texts is informed by the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer, otherwise termed dialogical hermeneutics. Dialogical hermeneutics, while taking into account the historicity and reader-response bias of the reader when reading texts, does not offer concrete practical guidelines on the exegetical act itself. Its aims are directed to a philosophical discussion of the dynamics and problematic of the act of textual reading and in fact of all acts of interpretation. The practical guidelines for reading the texts are derived from Connolly’s appropriation of Hüsself’s ‘phenomenological reduction’ in the service of textual exegesis. Hüsself’s phenomenology and its application in textual exegesis will be discussed in the next section.

Hans-Georg Gadamer and Stanley Fish are instructive in their argument that all exegeses necessarily involve presuppositions on the part of the reader. The accumulated life-experience of the exegete will inevitably influence, and in fact determine, the way texts are read. Gadamer’s notions of ‘effective-historical consciousness’ (wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein), the dialogical nature of the ‘fusion of horizons’ (Horizontverschmelzung), the critical interplay between the reader’s ‘prejudice’ (Vorurteile) and the text’s ‘topic of conversation’ (die Sache selbst), as well as his emphasis on


For a philosophical discussion, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics, trans. and ed. by David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976). As mentioned in footnote 11, Gadamerian hermeneutics is considered a postmodern reading style.


Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics.

Stanley Fish, Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980).
application (*Anwendung*) as an ‘essential moment of all understanding’;\(^{103}\) are highly relevant in approaching the present study.

Gadamer’s central thesis is that all understanding takes place in the context of dialogue, between text and reader, person and person, object and observer. He sees his hermeneutic not as a particular methodology for textual interpretation or a specific methodology of the human sciences. Rather, Gadamer’s hermeneutics is aimed at understanding all that can be understood, and inquiring into the nature of such human understanding. It is based on the notion that all human understanding is fundamentally historical and linguistic, and that understanding is arrived at dialectically. Gadamer posits that in all acts of understanding, effective-historical consciousness is inevitably operative; that is, the historical phenomenon that the reader seeks to understand is, together with its effects, already incorporated as part of the interpreter’s consciousness or horizon. In this sense, the reader is never a blank slate approaching an external phenomenon that exists in its pristine primordial and objective state. The reader brings into the hermeneutical situation a culturally and historically conditioned consciousness that has imbibed the effects of the phenomenon in question. This leads to the corollary notion of fusion of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*), wherein the reader and the text are each located within a particular situation or horizon (*Horizont*) of its own, which is never static. In Gadamer’s words, ‘the horizon of the past, out of which all human life lives and which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion’.\(^{104}\) The meeting of the reader and the text entails a to-and-fro movement of conversation, dialogue, question-and-answer between the two horizons. Ringma describes this fusion of horizons as the production of textual meaning through the reader’s ideas and preunderstandings, while at the same time allowing the reader’s present horizon to be risked ‘in listening to the claims of the text.’\(^{105}\)

In emphasizing the crucial importance of the reader’s horizon in any act of understanding, Gadamer critiques the Enlightenment’s total rejection of tradition and authority while guarding against the uncritical acceptance of tradition. He stresses the fundamental role of the tradition in which we are embedded, and consequently our prejudice (*Vorurteile*) in the act of textual understanding. The very questions and issues we bring to the text constitute our *Vorurteile*, our being-in-the-world, that enables us to engage the text and produce meanings relevant to our time. Thus, an objectively-neutral, value-free, and ahistorical reader simply does not exist, according to Gadamer. This does not, however, imply that the reader’s prejudices remain unchallenged by the topic of the text, *die Sache selbst*. Rather, these prejudices may need to be discarded or changed as the text is allowed to speak for itself.

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One last characteristic of Gadamer’s hermeneutic is the crucial role of application (Anwendung) in the defining moment of understanding. Application in Gadamer’s sense does not mean that the reader first understands and then applies that knowledge in reality, but rather that the very act of understanding itself, as mediated through our historicity, questions and issues, that is, our Vorurteile, implies an application of knowledge. In other words, as we engage the text in dialogue through our Vorurteile, we actually apply who we are and what we know in the very act of understanding and interpretation. The other side of Anwendung is that of the claims that the text makes on us as readers, that is, the application of the subject matter of the text on the horizon of the reader. As Ringma suggests, this second dimension of Anwendung is as important as the first in Gadamer’s hermeneutic, and it is this possibility of the text making its claims on the reader that enables subjectivity to be overcome. Ringma concludes:

Gadamer’s notion of Anwendung is an essential outworking of his hermeneutic concept that the Vorurteile of the interpreter’s horizon need to be brought into dialogue with the claims of the text in such a way that neither the one nor the other dominates but leads to a mediation… This dialectical dimension in the fusion of horizons, rather than simply the application of the text to the present, constitutes for Gadamer an argument for overcoming subjectivity. The interpreter does not simply read the text, the text also reads the interpreter.\(^\text{107}\)

Fish (1980), the pioneer of reader-response theory, emphasises the contextual nature of all interpretations, in that they necessarily occur within interpretive communities.\(^\text{108}\) Such interpretive communities see and understand the same text in ways different from one another as a result of the different presuppositions each brings to the situation. Each community shares common interpretive strategies which predispose its members to seeing and understanding any text in the way peculiar to that community. A given text may even appear to be clearly different to members of the same community over time.

It is pertinent to acknowledge my own reader-response bias, especially in light of the foregoing discussion. This study of Sarkar’s AM is approached with a specific viewpoint conditioned by eighteen years of experience and study as a practising Buddhist, in the traditions of Sri Lankan and Thai forest vipassanā, Vietnamese Zen, and Tibetan Lam-rim and Dzog-chen. From 1995 to 2002, I have also been a committed practitioner of AM meditation and lifestyle as taught by Sarkar. This implies that the presuppositions and questions I bring to the texts are a product of my spatio-temporal location within the dynamic synthesis of two interpretive communities – that of practising AM devotees and that of contemporary Asian Buddhist meditators. In addition, my four years of Western academic and professional training in a secular university has a notable contribution to make to my

\(^{106}\) I am indebted in Ringma (1991, pp. 59-65) for his clear and critical exposition of Gadamer’s concept of Anwendung.

‘reader’s horizon’. 109 In reading the texts of AM and other Indian traditions, I am necessarily influenced by this life experience in the way I respond to the writings. This response is not the result of a deliberate, conscious process of thought and argument, but is rather a given background to the entire hermeneutical enterprise. This totality of life experience, and issues and questions arising therefrom, constitute my Vorurteile – the horizon of the reader that engages in a game-like dialogue with the horizon of the texts under study. Such an approach may engender enriched readings of Sarkar’s texts and create new epistemological spaces for a fresh understanding of Sarkar and his visionary teachings.

Dialogical hermeneutics, as an attempt to understand what constitutes textual reading and interpretation, is open to several criticisms. Davey (1985) 110 describes two substantial charges coming from Jürgen Habermas, the major proponent of German critical theory, namely (1) that the allegedly universally-valid pre-understandings, which are essential to the entire hermeneutical effort, could logically be the product of distorted communication and false consensus and thus open to doubt; and (2) that hermeneutics is unable to reflexively critique itself or the reader’s pre-understandings for any ideological distortion or prejudice. Ringma (1999) 111 makes a clear and broad survey of other significant critics including Betti (1962; 1980), Hirsch (1965; 1967; 1975; 1976), Ricoeur (1976; 1981; 1986), and Caputo (1987). In summary, these criticisms are subsumed under the charge of relativism on one hand, and the charge of ‘perpetuating an uncritical assimilation of tradition’ 112 on the other. Betti and Hirsch have both extensively criticised Gadamer’s hermeneutics; here, it suffices to say that they see Gadamer’s hermeneutics as suffering from ‘loss of objectivity’, ‘subjective arbitrariness’, and ‘a root form of critical scepticism’. 113 Ricoeur also charges Gadamer with having too weak an idea of objectivity, and ‘seeks to strengthen the notion of objectivity by developing a theory of language and the utilisation of structuralism in the interpretive process’. 114 On a more radical note, Caputo, following Derrida’s deconstructionism but without going as far, charges Gadamer with holding on to a unified conception of tradition suggestive of metaphysical presence, and for failing to accept the ‘rupture, discontinuity, and disruption’ of all traditions, that is, ‘the flux in which we are caught up’. 115

109 From the point of view of intertextuality, the multiverse of discourse in which I, as reader, am embedded is indeterminable. I can only highlight certain significant facets of this discursive field. It may be that, as Inayatullah suggested, this discursive field can transcend itself through spiritual practices into a space of meta-discursive silence, engendering subsequent fresh readings of the texts. But that is another story.
113 Ringma (1999), pp. 74-77.
Without going too deeply into counter-arguments in Gadamer’s favour, the charge of relativism can be safely countered by noting that Gadamerian hermeneutics by no means privileges the interpreter’s subjective understandings over the text. In actuality, the text is deliberately allowed to make its claims on the interpreter; and though ‘the text’s meaning is evoked by the questions of the interpreter … those questions are also modified by listening to the text.’\(^{116}\) As for the charge of conservatism with respect to tradition, and the failure to see texts as characterised by ruptures rather than continuity in understanding, it can be said that Gadamer’s fusion of horizons contains within itself the necessary potential for ‘the present to hear afresh the horizon of the past to the point where both the present and the past can be critically appropriated anew.’\(^{117}\) This kind of reappropriation constitutes for Gadamerian hermeneutics its in-built critical reflexivity. In addition, the very awareness of and insight into one’s Vorurteile constitutes, in however limited a way, a kind of reflexivity with respect to the dialogical hermeneutic and, as such, acts as a mechanism against uncritical assimilation of tradition.

Ringma also includes some other critics who are basically sympathetic to Gadamer’s central position but critical of some aspects of his hermeneutic, namely Bernstein (1983; 1985; 1986), Warnke (1987), Weinsheimer (1985), and Tracy (1981; 1984). In summary, these charges relate to (1) Gadamer’s ambiguity with respect to what is truth and how it can be discerned; (2) his ‘non-critical synthesis’ of tradition;\(^{118}\) (3) his inadequate treatment of method; and (4) his ‘too sanguine notion of tradition and his polemic against all method.’\(^{119}\) With respect to the first charge, it can be argued that, for Gadamer, truth emerges when the reader’s horizon, ‘in the dialectic of question and answer, is brought into dialogue with the horizon of the text.’\(^{120}\) Both the claims of the text and the reader’s Vorurteile have to be risked in the ensuing conversation, and are by no means absolute givens. As for the second charge, Ringma asserts that:

> Not only does Gadamer explicitly deny the charge of conservatism …, but his entire thesis is that through Anwendung we appropriate tradition in new ways as we approach the past with our particular Vorurteile. Thus while the text may press our Vorurteile to possible re-evaluation, our Vorurteile also press the text of the past with new concerns and issues. Thus there is always a new and critical appropriation of tradition.\(^{121}\)

This counterargument can be similarly applied to the charges of Habermas described previously. It is possible that in the applicative moment of understanding, the reader’s Vorurteile, informed by the Habermasian stance of ideological critique, are able to press the text with issues of power, knowledge, and communication, and thus appropriate the textual tradition in critically new ways. Thus
Gadamerian dialogue between reader and text still holds because Habermasian critique can be applied as an integral component of the reader’s Vorurteile. The third charge can be sustained, as Gadamer does not aim, by his hermeneutics, to prescribe a specific technique for studying texts; rather he seeks to question the very foundations of what understanding is and how one is to approach the understanding of the human sciences, arts, and culture. It remains possible to supplement Gadamer’s hermeneutic with methods of textual exegesis that are applied within the context of Gadamerian dialogue, as will be discussed later. Finally, it remains to be said that Gadamer is not against all methods per se, but against sole application of ‘objectivistic methodologies’. Gadamer’s hermeneutic is based on the argument that:

… all knowledge, including scientific knowledge, is subject to effective-historical consciousness and the radical nature of our “thrownness in the world”… No method can eliminate this reality and as such all knowledge requires hermeneutical reflection.

Inayatullah (1999) discusses seven epistemological approaches to the study of Sarkar’s texts, in particular his texts on PROUT. These will now be reviewed in turn. What Inayatullah calls the **applied approach** consists in ‘taking the categories of PROUT as a given and applying them to various historical events.’ As this approach, according to Inayatullah, fails to question the very categories themselves, there can occur a self-selection bias in the use of those categories to interpret socio-historical events. This approach may be suitable, though not particularly objective, for the study of PROUT, but is in any case unsuitable for the present study.

The **empirical approach** is based on the operationalisation, measurement, and analysis of so-called data or indicators in order to prove or disprove a hypothesis. Philosophical objections to this approach include the assumed but not necessarily valid distinction between language and extra-linguistic reality, instrumental and rationalistic reductionism, and denial of theory as deeper myth, action, or vision. This approach may be suited to a social-scientific study of religion but not to the expository nature of the present study.

Thirdly, the **comparative approach** is mentioned by Inayatullah as a way of comparing PROUT with other social movements in terms of various categories, which themselves are embedded within a specific discourse. While this approach allows for a taxonomy of PROUT to be created, it does pose problems of ahistoricity and non-reflexivity with regard to the categories of comparison. However, in relation to the present study, the comparative approach undertaken in the context of

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123 Ringma (1999), p. 73.
125 Inayatullah, *Situating*, p. 137.
127 Inayatullah, *Situating*, p. 139.
dialogical hermeneutics may shed new light on the spiritual categories of Sarkar and others, and even facilitate deeper appreciation of links and divergences, historical or otherwise.

The translation approach, the fourth of Inayatullah’s seven methods, attempts to take the language and categories of PROUT and translate them into another tradition. The problem with this is that

… any attempt to translate involves not just a problem of syntax, but a problem of discursive practices, that is, a problem of the deeper values and structures embedded in various ways of thinking, or ‘language’, such that a translation may miss not only the entire structure of a perspective but critical categories as well.\(^\text{128}\)

The framing approach closely resembles the translation approach, but applies the categories in question within the framework of various disciplines (such as systems theory, future studies) rather than that of historical and cultural traditions. The problems of this approach are similar to those of the preceding one.

The phenomenological approach is upheld by Inayatullah as a way of examining how Sarkar sees himself and how his theory creates its structure in its own terms. While Inayatullah argues that the phenomenological process ‘reduces the distances between author, text, and audience’,\(^\text{129}\) and creates a ‘multi-layered dialog’,\(^\text{130}\) it fails to critique the subject matter itself and to uphold a historical perspective. However, from the previous discussion on Gadamer’s dialogical hermeneutics, it is clear that typological phenomenology in the context of Gadamerian dialogue has the potential for self-critique and for partaking in effective-historical consciousness.

Lastly, the postmodern/poststructuralist approach is postulated by Inayatullah as an examination of Sarkar’s ‘linguistic discourse, the way that it is constructed, the monuments of language and power in front of us.’\(^\text{131}\) While this approach reveals how power, knowledge, and reality inter-exist, and creates a richer understanding of the texts in question, it is more suited to a global and higher-order analysis of Sarkar’s discourses than to a preliminary and intimate understanding of the overall structure and content of his spiritual concerns. Accordingly, this approach will not be adopted in the present study.

Sarkar himself has something to say about the use of language in communicating and understanding the spiritual:

That which comes within the orbit of the mind is but a relative truth, not an eternal truth, and so it will come and go. Scriptures and mythologies are like stacks of bricks: they are only arranged in layers, bearing no significance or intrinsic value. How can they describe or explain that ultimate entity which is beyond the scope of the mind? … the best metaphor to describe this profound mystery is the soundless communication

\(^{128}\) Inayatullah, *Situating*, p. 140.

\(^{129}\) Inayatullah, *Situating*, p. 142.

\(^{130}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{131}\) *Ibid.*
between a deaf and dumb person for this intuitional science is so extremely subtle that
the mind or the senses cannot adequately express it.\textsuperscript{132}

By implication, even as I engage in dialogue with Sarkar’s texts, conditioned by my Vorurteile and applying the method of phenomenological exegesis to them, it can be argued from Sarkar’s perspective that the final and direct understanding of the spiritual can only take place through that which is beyond mind and language. Inayatullah describes Sarkar’s hermeneutical effort as ultimately ‘to transcend mind through activities such as meditation, or through koans … [whereby] the practitioner is forced out of mind; the self then no longer is constituted in ego, but in itself, in unmediated, inexpressible consciousness.’\textsuperscript{133} Thus, ‘through action commitments, spiritual practices, more of the real can be accessible to the spiritual aspirant.’\textsuperscript{134} Short of such complete and transcendent knowledge, a historically-sensitive phenomenological exegesis embedded within the space of dialogical hermeneutic will suffice for the present.

\section{2.5 Hüserrl’s Phenomenology and Textual Exegesis}

While Gadamer’s dialogical hermeneutic articulates the underlying dynamics of textual exegesis, it is silent on specific methods that can facilitate the actual work of examining the texts. For such a method, I turn to the tool of phenomenological exegesis proposed by Connolly.\textsuperscript{135} Before discussing Connolly’s method of exegesis, it is necessary to mention the origins and principles of phenomenology espoused in the philosophy of Hüserrl.

Hüserrl’s phenomenology advocates that human consciousness is necessarily intentional and that all ‘appearances’ to the mind are inevitably related to the ‘objects of appearance’.\textsuperscript{136} In other words, the intentional nature of consciousness determines that consciousness is always consciousness of something, never consciousness \textit{qua} consciousness \textit{per se}. To gain access to phenomenological data experienced within one’s consciousness, Hüserrl argues for the use of ‘phenomenological reduction’ as method. According to him, phenomenological reduction has two aspects: noetic and noematic. The \textit{noetic} aspect is the practice of a methodical and rigorously consistent bracketing, or \textit{epoche}, of the objects of consciousness from the prejudices, assumptions, and interpretations of the observer. The \textit{noematic} aspect of phenomenological reduction, according to Hüserrl, consists of ‘… methodically practiced seizing and describing of the multiple ‘appearances’ as appearances of their objective units and these units as units of component meanings accruing to them each time in their appearances’.\textsuperscript{137} This aspect is also termed eidetic reduction, or in the terminology of Smart,

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{inayatullah_1} Inayatullah, \textit{Situating Sarkar}, p.144.
\bibitem{inayatullah_2} Inayatullah, \textit{Situating}, p. 145
\bibitem{connolly} Connolly (1994).
\bibitem{husserl} Hüserrl, p. 15.
\bibitem{husserl_2} Hüserrl, p. 18.
\end{thebibliography}
typological phenomenology. Typological phenomenology, as applied to the study of religion, involves ‘… a systematic typology of forms of religious belief and practice.’\textsuperscript{138}

The noetic aspect of \textit{epoche}, where all subjective biases are ideally bracketed from the object of investigation, implies a presuppositionless exegesis when applied to the reading of texts. This is, however, impossible from the standpoint of Gadamer’s dialogical hermeneutic, since the reader and the text are inextricably enmeshed in a fusion of their respective horizons. Thus, reflexivity of consciousness can never successfully bracket subjective bias from objective phenomenological data. At best, reflexivity can indicate the presence and characteristics of the reader’s horizon and allow for the interplay of text and reader without steering into the Scylla of uncritical textual authority or the Charybdis of subjective fantasy.

The present thesis accepts Gadamer’s dialogical hermeneutic as its primary dynamic but utilises the second \textit{noematic} aspect of Hüsself’s phenomenological method – eidetic reduction – for the purpose of enabling a typology and comparison of dialogically produced textual meanings. Connolly suggests that, while the principle of eidetic reduction cannot be directly applied to textual exegesis, it nevertheless offers valuable guidelines. The principle of typological phenomenology seeks to remove the exegete outside the worldview of the author without falling into reductionism. In constructing a typology, the phenomenologist derives, from specific phenomena uncovered through the initial investigation, more general and abstract categories called ‘types’. In the context of textual exegesis, this involves, in addition to the ‘content-filled, large-scale identification of “types”’, the discernment of ‘formal patterns and structures’ within the text. Connolly expresses it thus:

\begin{quote}
Thus, when interpreting a text the phenomenologically-guided exegete will seek to ‘step into the shoes of the author(s)/compiler(s) and consider their aims in creating it (empathy), and to supplement this with an analysis of the more formal aspects of the work such as recurring constructions and patterns in the organisation of information (typology).’\textsuperscript{139}
\end{quote}

In the process of type identification and pattern discernment, a dialogical movement between text and reader naturally occurs. The horizon of the reader affects how this happens and what types and patterns are extracted, while the horizon of the text simultaneously and dialectically presses the reader to enter into its field of meanings.

Criticisms levelled against phenomenological study of religion include its extremely subjective approach, the questionable nature of its supposed value-free examination of religious phenomena, and its interpretive bias when selectively focussing on certain items out of the vast


\textsuperscript{139} Connolly, p. 208.
multiplicity of religious phenomena. Donald Wiebe argues that the phenomenological approach fails in its uncritical and relativist stance towards its subject of study, creating a situation where multiple truth claims can be made and no conclusive knowledge is possible:

… the descriptive approach to the study of religious phenomena that would attempt to evade the truth question is bound to achieve a meagre result … one can … draw the modest conclusion that even though ‘religious truth’ is something more than mere propositional truth and so, in a limited sense beyond the observation and critical analysis of the ‘objective’ observer, it is nevertheless intimately connected with propositional truth thereby making it subject to objective discussion, analysis, and criticism.

Russell McCutcheon critiques the phenomenology of religion as ahistorical and essentialist, a self-justifying logic that posits the existence of some religious ‘essence’ recoverable from historically embedded and culturally conceptualised fields of meaning:

Until the assumptions and claims that form the very basis of this discourse are questioned and critiqued, a form of circular logic, or what could be termed a feedback loop, ensures that the discourse continues functioning. For example, the phenomenological method assumes that a transhistorical essence ultimately is the object of the study, and the fact that it is presumed that such an object exists in turn sanctions the phenomenological method.

Timothy Fitzgerald concurs with McCutcheon that the phenomenological method reifies and essentialises what can be seen as processes of “ … the social, understood as the values of a particular group and their institutionalisation in a specific context, including the way power is organised and legitimated …”

These problems mooted by Wiebe, McCutcheon and Fitzgerald, however, are largely sublated by the inherently dialogical nature of textual reading, as discussed in this chapter. Counteracting the slide into either postmodern relativism or traditionalist objectivity, Flood suggests that a dialogical phenomenology of the kind that is “critical”, strong on “reflexivity”, and engages both reader and textual material in mutual “dialogue” is a way out of the extremes of ontological nihilism and ideological objectivism in religious studies methodology. Flood’s approach concurs well with the textual approach of dialogical hermeneutic and phenomenological exegesis I present here. What I aim

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to do in this study is to make use of Connolly’s phenomenological exegesis as a pedagogy of conceptual discernment and identification, allowing for the fields of meaning located in the texts and the reader, within which are embedded a critical reflexivity informed by the structure of power relations and discourse formation, to dialogically fuse in the production of truth that forms the findings of this study.

In relation to the reading of classical South Asian texts as descriptions of universally valid meditative states, Robert Sharf criticizes this ‘rhetoric of experience’ as an essentially modernist project of religious self-definition, justification, and polemics. This polemical effort is reflected in the tradition-specific ideological framework that is imposed upon the reader through the medium of textual description. In other words, when texts purport to speak of meditative experience, they are in effect broadcasting the ideological biases and concepts of the religious authors that compose them, rather than objectively describing inner states that are actually experienced. In this book, I argue that while ideological preservation and promulgation plays a definite role in any textual construction, the mere observation that not many religious proponents actually experience the meditative states described in these texts does not automatically obviate the states’ existence and validity. Both textual and practical traditions would assert that these meditative states are by no means easy to achieve and though rare (and often extremely so both within traditional and modern contexts), can, nevertheless, be proven to exist for those who do attain them through the soteriological algorithm prescribed by the texts and oral tradition.

In the case of the present study of AM, the aim is, through the use of the techniques of typological phenomenology or eidetic reduction within the context of dialogical hermeneutics, to discover and delineate the essential concepts in the spiritual narratives of Sarkar. I attempt to explain and elaborate on the themes and concepts using corroborative evidence from within the texts themselves, and through cross-references to identical or related concepts in secondary and tertiary material. In other words, various ‘types’ of concepts are first identified and classified into an overall framework, which is in turn used to further extract similar and/or related concepts that are then placed within that very framework. These concepts are systematically analysed and elucidated with the aim of gaining a clearer and more decisive understanding of Sarkar’s world. In short, a systematic and coherent picture of Sarkar’s philosophy-praxis as presented by AM emerges from this oscillating process of form/content identification and discernment of patterns and relationships, practised in the dialogical space between texts and reader.

144 For a seminal work on the need for a dialogical phenomenology, where the legitimacy and indeed possibility of positing a isolated, detached observer apart from a reified and essentialist subject-matter is questioned, see Gavin Flood, Beyond Phenomenology: Rethinking the Study of Religion (London: Cassell, 1999).
Chapter 3
Sarkar’s Universe and Beyond

3.1 Introduction
This chapter begins the journey into Sarkar’s conception of the ultimate and his vision of the origin and destination of the universe. Sarkar’s conception of the ultimate is clearly theistic but combined with a strong monism, so that it may be best described as ‘cosmotheistic’. In other words, in this chapter, we are exploring simultaneously Sarkar’s theology, ontology, and cosmology. The seamless whole of the Indian worldview tends to be divided into several separate domains when conceptual categories derived from Western philosophy (which assumes clear demarcations between various fields of study) are applied to it. Nevertheless, such categorisation does provide a useful means of analysing and perhaps better understanding some salient aspects of Sarkar’s ideas, provided the total picture is not lost sight of. In the application of such categories, and in the attempt to understand Sarkar’s thought, the dialogical fusion of horizons becomes obvious. The categories, being a part of the ‘horizon’ that I, as a reader/researcher, bring to the texts, dialectically engage with the texts’ ‘topic of conversation’ to produce meanings that form the textual understanding we seek.

In the sections that follow, Sarkar’s understanding of the process of cosmic and biological evolution is delineated, with special attention to the terminology, both traditional and new, that he applies in his discourse. Old meanings, new re-interpretations, and conceptual innovations are explored. As Sarkar’s interpretation of many philosophical concepts is common to the general Indian heritage (e.g. his interpretation of oṁ), the statements that I present as his interpretation do not necessarily imply that he alone holds this view. In this and the next three chapters, I merely present Sarkar’s thought as it is, leaving the task of sorting out what is old and what is new in his thought to Chapters 7 and 8.

Sarkar’s reconciling of creation and evolution in his cosmology, and his concept of God as the tri-aspect cosmic consciousness – nirguṇa brahma, saṃguṇa brahma, and tāraka brahma – are explored in detail, as is his philosophical interpretation of kṛṣṇa and śiva. Sarkar’s ontology of pure consciousness as the co-emergent ground of all animate and inanimate entities, together with his understanding of the nature of the ‘self’ (ātman) are discussed. Finally, his ideas of cosmic and spiritual evolution are linked to his theory of acoustics, saṃskāra, death and rebirth. A concluding summary of Sarkar’s spiritual cosmology then follows.

3.2 Ontology and Theology
The Indian mind has for millennia preoccupied itself with ideas of the ultimate and the divine, the development of which has reached heights of sophistication unique in the religious history of

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humankind. Sarkar, born and bred on Indian soil, participated in this Indian quest. What is exceptional about his contribution is the way in which he has redefined many of the terms used in traditional Indian systems of thought, expanded their meanings, and in some cases broken away totally from ancient and classical modes of Indian thinking. Sarkar's range of interests is not limited to spiritual and social philosophy, but includes a critique, both intellectual and practical, of Indian forms of spiritual praxis and both Indian and global socio-political realities. The entire edifice of his thought rests, directly or indirectly, on his view of what constitutes the ultimately real – the very ground of our existence and the universe.

3.2.1 Śiva and Śakti

Sarkar begins the first verse (śloka) of his AS with the pronouncement, ‘śivaśaktyātmakam brahma’, translated as ‘The Cosmic Entity is the composite of Consciousness and Operative Principle’. For Sarkar, the ultimate is brahma or ‘cosmic entity’, and it has two aspects, śiva or ‘consciousness’ and śakti or ‘operative principle’, much as a single piece of paper has two sides. He emphasises that śiva and śakti, while distinct in function, are nevertheless indivisible and singular in essence, comparable to fire and its ability to burn, or milk and its whiteness. In his auto-commentary on this verse, Sarkar equates śiva with puruṣa and śakti with prakṛti, while stating that the term ātmā or ātman (‘soul’ or ‘Self’) – a more common designation – can be used in the same sense as śiva or puruṣa. Sarkar sees śiva/puruṣa and śakti/prakṛti as two inextricably-linked aspects of one indivisible whole:

The two factors, Puruṣa and Prakṛti, though dual in theory, are singular in spirit. Their collective body is just like that of fire. One cannot think of fire without its special thermal value; in the same way, one cannot think of Puruṣa without Prakṛti in the collective body of Brahma.

He defines śiva as the ‘witnessing consciousness’, puruṣa as the ‘the ship that lies quiescent in every entity’ (pure śete yah saḥ puruṣah), and ātman as ‘that which is omni-telepathic’. Elsewhere, he defines śiva as ‘welfare’ and as ‘cognition in its zenith status … the Supreme Non-Attributional Process, the Supreme Non-Attributional Entity beyond the faculties of all existential

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147 AS 1.1, p. 1.

148 Brahma here is akin to the more familiar and gender-neutral concept of brahman.


150 AS 1.1, p. 1.

151 Ibid.

152 Ibid.
bondages. In essence, these three concepts of śīva, puruṣa and ātman share the same meaning. Sarkar explains ātman as the subllest and ultimate ‘mirror’ upon which all sensory perceptions and mental events (such as cognition, emotion, and intuition) are ‘reflected’. This mirror-like ātman is essentially pure consciousness of infinite wavelength upon which all physical and mental waves are ‘telepathized’ or ‘received from a distance’. He sees puruṣa as the ultimate witness substantiating the existence of all activities and prakṛti as the act of witnessing and that which is witnessed. Śīva (or ātman/puruṣa) is said to function as (1) a ‘non-doing witnessing entity’ (akarṭā phalasāksībhūta) of actions and reactions, and as (2) controller of the activity of the guṇas (guṇayantrākā), while simultaneously existing as ‘nucleus of the created universe’ (bhāvakendrasthita). As the cosmic nucleus, śīva/puruṣa is known as paramaśīva or puruṣottama. This concept of consciousness as cosmic nucleus is closely linked to the personal concept of kṛṣṇa, (to be discussed in section 3.2.3).

Puruṣa (or śīva), or in its nucleic form as puruṣottama (or paramaśīva), manifests and radiates itself throughout the universe by its power of cognisance (citiśakti). This citiśakti reflects on, connects, and associates with its mental objects in the universe, much as rays of the sun shine equally on all planets in the solar system and on all planetary life-forms. Sarkar describes citiśakti (synonymous with puruṣa) as possessing five qualities: (1) ‘absolute purity’ (śuddhā) – untainted by the three guṇas of prakṛti; (2) ‘infinitude’ (anantā) – the final witness that can never come within the periphery of the mind; (3) ‘immutability’ (apariṇāmi) – not subjected to change in its original, unqualified state; (4) ‘non-extroversion’ (apratisamkrama) – not differentiated into internal or external as it is self-contained; (5) ‘witness of the reflected object’ (darśitaviṣayitva) – knows all physical objects, events, and aspects of the mind as the mind’s subjective counterpart. Hence, puruṣa or śīva can be said to be both the ultimate ‘mirror’ that reflects all activities and objects, and the ultimate ‘light’ that enables everything to exist and be known. As the controller of the guṇas (the three forces of prakṛti to be discussed later), puruṣa (or śīva) indirectly controls the creation and evolution of the universe, including the spiritual progress of human beings.


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154 SPSSA, p. 4, defines telepathy as ‘to act over a distance’ and states that ātman is ‘telepathic’ because it receives mental waves over a distance’.
155 AS I.7, p. 7: drk puruṣaḥ drāśanam śaktiṣca.
156 AS I.4, p. 4 and II.15, p. 24.
157 IAI, pp. 40 and 47.
158 Sarkar sees all created entities of the universe as thought-projections of puruṣa, a topic to be discussed in section 3.3.
159 AMI Part 9, pp. 664-667.
160 These terms are applied throughout Sarkar’s discourses in the SS and AV collections. For example, see Ānandamūrti, SS Part 12, trans. Vijayānanda and Ānanda Mitra (Calcutta: Ānanda Mārga Pracāraka Saṅgha, 51
purusa (‘supreme cognitive principle’).\textsuperscript{162} In contrast, he uses only a few synonymous terms to refer to the operative aspect (śakti) of the ultimate, namely ‘cosmic creative principle’ and ‘causal matrix’.\textsuperscript{163} This seems to suggest a privileging of the consciousness aspect of brahma over its operative or energy aspect. Incidentally, Sarkar consistently refers to the consciousness principle in masculine terms and the operative principle in feminine, a practice commonly found in Hindu philosophical/religious traditions.

Regarding the subtle relationship between śiva and śakti, Sarkar consistently maintains the pre-eminence of śiva over śakti in several ways. First, he regards śiva as the ‘shelter’ of śakti, and as such as containing and controlling it. Sarkar makes it clear that śakti cannot function without the expressed permission of śiva, and that no matter how vast or seemingly powerful śakti is, it still falls within the spatio-temporal and effective jurisdiction of śiva. Second, in terms of cosmic causation, śiva (purusa) is the ‘material cause’ as well as the ‘primary efficient cause’ of the universe, while śakti (prakṛti) is the ‘subordinate or secondary efficient cause’ as well as the ‘conjunctive agency’ (the linking factor between the material and efficient causes). Sarkar says:

The distortions or expressions which are taking place in the material cause through the efficient cause and which we call worldly manifestations, are effected by the three guṇas (attributes or binding principles: sattva, rajah and tamah) of Prakṛti. This accounts for Prakṛti being the linking force between the efficient cause and the material cause. So the firmness or feebleness of the object-body fully depends upon the degree of the influence of Prakṛti.\textsuperscript{164}

Third, śiva retains the authority to bestow on or withdraw from śakti the power to act in the creation and evolution of this universe. In other words, it is śiva that decides when and whether its ‘body’ is to be acted upon by śakti, and when and whether it is to be freed from śakti’s influence. Sarkar comments:

In the process of evolution, Puruṣa gives Prakṛti the authority to work, and She goes on working. The subtle Puruṣa goes on attaining crudity gradually due to the bondage of the three guṇas of Prakṛti. In the ultimate state of His crudity, Puruṣa slowly and gradually keeps shrivelling up the opportunity and liberty of Prakṛti previously given to Her, and thus the crudified Puruṣa, gradually regaining His subtlety, returns to His own ultimate characteristic state...It is now abundantly clear that even though Prakṛti is free to make honest use of Her acquired power, the attainment or non-attainment of this power depends on Puruṣa, or Citiśakti (Cognitive Principle), and so we have to say, Prakṛti is but the characteristic of Puruṣa Himself - śakti sā śivasya śaktih.\textsuperscript{165}

\textsuperscript{163} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{164} For example, see AV Part 33, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{165} AV Part 23, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{166} AV Part 33, pp. 3-4.
Whether this pre-eminence of śiva is indicative of patriarchal subordination of the female, a not implausible proposition considering India’s traditional male-dominated culture, is a question beyond the scope of this thesis. At this stage, it is sufficient to notice Sarkar’s apparent preoccupation with the consciousness aspect of the ultimate at the expense of the operative aspect, a fact that will later prove to be significant in Sarkar’s overall soteriological praxis. The causal relationships between śiva, śakti and the universe can be diagrammed as follows:

Śakti is also termed prakṛti, which Sarkar defines as the ‘force creating objects’ (prakaroti iti prakṛti). Prakṛti is a composite of three guṇas, namely sattvaguna or ‘sentient force’, rajoguna or ‘mutative force’, and tamoguna or ‘static force’, in order of decreasing subtlety. Sarkar defines guṇa as ‘the cosmic force whereby the universal consciousness is bound to various shapes or ideas’. This definition implies that pure consciousness can be transformed into both physical objects (‘shapes’) and mental objects or thoughts (‘ideas’). This observation will later prove to be instructive when interpreting Sarkar’s model of teleological cosmogony, brahmacakra.

Sattvaguna, the sentient force, is the most subtle of the three, and its function is to bind or qualify infinite, pure consciousness to form the macrocosmic mahat, the feeling of ‘I exist’ on a macrocosmic scale. This macrocosmic mahat is theoretically but not practically different from the original state of unqualified consciousness. This is a stage in evolution when consciousness has a subtle feeling of ‘I exist’, in other words, self-awareness. In the individual mind, the sentient force creates the feeling of ‘I exist’ or self-awareness on a microcosmic scale, imparts a sense of happiness and relief, and awakens the desire for spiritual liberation. Rajoguna, the mutative force, further binds or qualifies the macrocosmic mahat to form the macrocosmic aham, or the sense of ‘doer-I’ on a macrocosmic scale. This stage of consciousness is characterised by the feeling of ‘I do’ or the reflexive sense of agency within the field of consciousness. It is a stage cruder than the preceding one. In the individual mind, the mutative force creates the microcosmic aham, and imparts a sense of activity, restlessness and personal agency. Finally tamoguna, the static force, binds consciousness to form the macrocosmic citta, ‘done-I’, also known as the macrocosmic ‘mental plate’ or ‘mind-stuff’.

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166 SS Part 1, p. 7.
167 These translations and definitions of guṇa are taken from SS Part 1, p. 8.
This mental plate is the objective portion of the cosmic mind or brahmamanas\textsuperscript{169} (which is the composite of mahat, aham, and citta). Further action of the static force on the macrocosmic citta results in the formation of the five fundamental factors – ethereal, aerial, luminous, liquid, and solid factors – that ultimately combine to form the inanimate universe. In the individual, the static force causes a portion of the mind to assume the objective forms that it perceives or thinks. This objective portion of the mind is the citta. The static force also imparts a sense of inertia, dullness, and heaviness, and is responsible for the accumulation of reactions to individual actions. The preceding description is a highly condensed version of sañcara, the first half of the brahmacakra, ‘cosmic cycle of creation’. (A fuller discussion of brahmacakra is given in section 3.3.)

Apart from its composition as the three guṇas, śakti has another role to play. In the creative phase of the cosmogonic process and throughout biological and human evolution, śakti is also known as māyā, usually rendered ‘illusion’.\textsuperscript{170} In the Sarkarian sense, however, māyā denotes a real force that influences pure consciousness and its derivatives rather than an illusory quality of the created world. Māyā exists in several forms: (1) viṣṇumāyā is the aspect of māyā that creates the universe out of the raw material of pure consciousness (by definition, this may be equated to the three guṇas during the cosmogonic phase); (2) yogamāyā is the force which attracts the individual mind toward brahma and motivates it to act (most probably identical to samvit and hlādinī śakti, to be discussed later); (3) viśvamāyā is the force responsible for the mind’s inability to perceive created objects as fundamentally consciousness (may be akin to the ‘concealing’ effect of āvarāṇi śakti – see discussion below); (4) anumāyā is the force that produces an incessant whirl of thoughts, weaving an imaginary world in persons’ minds and distancing them from the realities of life (may be akin to the distorting effects of mental propensities due to vikṣepī śakti – see discussion below). The totality of these four forms of māyā is termed mahāmāyā or ‘great illusion’.

Māyā can be classed into two key categories in terms of its effects on the individual mind. These two categories of māyā act on the mind in two directions – centripetal and centrifugal. The centripetal force is known as vidyā māyā (‘force of knowledge’); its action is to lead the aspirant progressively inwards into final merger with brahma. Vidyā māyā has two aspects: samvit śakti (‘force of spiritual awakening’) – the force that awakens in the aspirant the urge to move beyond mundane existence and to seek a more meaningful life; and hlādinī śakti (‘force bestowing happiness and bliss’; also known as rādhikā śakti) – the force that inspires the aspirant to undertake a concrete path of practice towards the highest spiritual goal.\textsuperscript{171} Such spiritual practice then confers upon the aspirant increasing happiness and the bliss of brahma. The centrifugal force is known as avidyā māyā (‘force of ignorance’); its action is diametrically opposed to that of vidyā māyā and functions to lead the aspirant away from brahma into the multiplicity and cruelty of the world. Avidyā māyā also


\textsuperscript{170} Discussion on māyā based on SS Part 19, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{171} SS Part 24, pp. 6-7. Also SPSSA, p. 13.
consists of two component forces: āvaranī śakti (‘force of concealment’) – the force that conceals the individual mind from pure consciousness, making it falsely believe that brahma neither exists nor witnesses its activities; and vikṣepī śakti (‘force of repulsion’) – expressed in the degenerating propensities and ideas that drift the individual away from brahma.\(^\text{172}\)

Based upon my hermeneutic and phenomenological analysis of Sarkar’s multiple descriptions of śakti, correlations between the variant terminologies can be made in order to further clarify Sarkar’s thoughts on śakti. Macrocosmically, in the process of cosmogony, the three forces of prakṛti can be equated with viṣṇumāyā as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guṇas (Prakṛti)</th>
<th>Māyā</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sattvaguna</td>
<td>Viṣṇumāyā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajoguna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamoguna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rough correlations between various elaborations of śakti/prakṛti in relation to the individual mind (microcosm) may be diagrammed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guṇas (Prakṛti)</th>
<th>Śakti</th>
<th>Mahāmāyā</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sattvaguna</td>
<td>Samvit śakti</td>
<td>Vidyā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hlādinī śakti</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajoguna</td>
<td>Vikṣepī śakti</td>
<td>Avidyā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamoguna</td>
<td>Āvaranī śakti</td>
<td>Anumāyā</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The forces of vidyā and avidyā māyā exist in and act on all living entities in the universe and engage in a struggle for supremacy within the minds of these entities. This constant dialectical struggle between vidyā and avidyā is termed the divine or cosmic sport (līlā) of the infinite brahma. On the one hand, a human being who has a measure of free will can choose to accelerate his/her spiritual evolution by aligning with and strengthening vidyā māyā in his/her mind. On the other, he/she can allow avidyā māyā to gain predominance and thus stagnate spiritually. Thus, there is both cosmic and personal agency in the movement of life and the universe. When a spiritual aspirant sincerely and humbly undertakes spiritual practice, and surrenders his/her ego before the divine, he/she experiences more fully the kṛpā or ‘grace’ of brahma that shines equally on all entities. This divine kṛpā is expressed in the action of hlādinī śakti, which guides the aspirant in the proper direction and imparts joy and bliss as he/she progresses along the path of practice towards mukti, ‘liberation’. Another expression of kṛpā is the vibrational force generated by the spiritual master, otherwise known

\(^\text{172}\) SS Part 24, p. 5. Also SPSSA, pp. 13-14.
as the guru šakti. The guru is the human embodiment of tāraka brahma and has the capacity to lead the aspirant to final mokša, ‘salvation’.

In summary, the concepts of śiva and šakti can be tabulated as follows in order to highlight the variant terminology, components and functions of each:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Śiva</th>
<th>Śakti</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variant names = puruṣa, ātman</td>
<td>Variant names: prakṛti, māyā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive faculty.</td>
<td>Operative principle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Masculine’ and pre-eminent.</td>
<td>‘Feminine’ and subordinate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material and primary efficient cause of creation.</td>
<td>Secondary efficient cause and conjunctive agency of creation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirror-like witnessing and controlling entity in macrocosm and microcosm.</td>
<td>Comprises three guṇas – sattvaguṇa, rajoguṇa and tamoguṇa – that progressively bind śiva to form created universe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of pure, unborn, and liberated consciousness.</td>
<td>Has vidyā (centripetal) and avidyā (centrifugal) aspects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manifests and associates with created entities/mental objects as citišakti (‘power of cognisance’).</td>
<td>Manifests as grace (krpā) via hlādinī and guru śakti.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.2.2 Tri-aspect Brahma

Sarkar conceives of the ultimate not only functionally, in terms of the consciousness and operative principles, but also ontologically, as existing in three characteristic states, namely nirguṇa, sāguṇa, and tāraka brahma. Nirguṇa brahma is the ‘metempirical state’, or the ‘non-qualified supreme entity’, defined as ‘the state of Brahma where puruṣa is not influenced or qualified by prakṛti’. In other words, this is the wholly transcendent and unmanifest aspect of the ultimate, wherein no attributes or qualities exist, completely beyond the mind and the universe. Sarkar also calls nirguṇa brahma the ‘non-attributional state’ of brahma that is ‘beyond the cycle of subjectivity and objectivity (saṁkalpa-vikalpa)’ and thus śūnya or vajra-śūnya (absolute void). Sāguṇa brahma is the ‘empirical state’ of brahma, or the ‘qualified supreme entity’, defined as ‘that stage of Brahma where puruṣa is influenced and qualified by prakṛti’. This is a less subtle state of the ultimate wherein attributes and qualities have begun to emerge as a result of the activated influence of the operative principle. The final stage in the metamorphosis of sāguṇa brahma results in the formation of the created universe. Linking the above two states of the supreme entity is Sarkar’s tāraka brahma, which he defines as ‘the common point bridging the empirical state of sāguṇa and the metempirical

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173 Main sources are AS I.21-25 (pp. 14-17), II.1-5 (pp. 18-19) and 12-14 (p. 23); JAI, pp. 24-26, 41-46, and 58; AMEP, pp. 1-64. Supplementary sources comprise texts and discourses scattered throughout AMI, NSS, SPSSA, SS as well as one tertiary AM publication, The Wisdom of Yoga.
174 AS I.25, p. 17.
175 AMEP, p. 22.
176 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 384.
177 AS I.25, p. 17.
state of *nirguṇa*. He goes on to say that ‘tāraka brahma appears in *sagūṇa* (embodied) form as *mahāsambhūti*. Sarkar translates the word *mahāsambhūti* as [an entity] ‘well-created …to fulfil a very great purpose’ and as the ‘special manifestation’ of the ‘Supreme Entity’. The relationships among *nirguṇa*, *sagūṇa*, and *tāraka brahma* can be represented as follows:

![Diagram](image)

From the above descriptions, it appears that *tāraka brahma* is that aspect of the cosmic entity that functions as the intermediary between its transcendent, non-attributional state (*nirguṇa*) and its immanent, attributional existence (*sagūṇa*). In addition, this intermediary supreme existence is able to assume an embodied form in the created universe to perform its necessary role, which, as will be discussed later, is primarily soteriological and revolutionary in nature. Sarkar describes *tāraka brahma* as the personal liberator of the universe:

> The liberator is that lofty ability which helps to keep open every small or large vista of sentient existence – that vigorous capability which fuses the hard reality of existence with the ultimate reach of the visionary world.

Elsewhere he characterises *tāraka brahma* as a personal entity that ‘guides, loves and favours His affectionate sons and daughters’, and as a ‘concept of Tantra’ that is ‘not a figure of philosophy’ but ‘a creation of devotional sentiment’. This ambiguous statement describing *tāraka brahma* as a devotional creation seemingly implies that ‘He’ is not so much an ontological fact as a psychological reality for those who believe and have faith in ‘Him’. In other words, *tāraka brahma* may be a pedagogical device that is used for the therapeutic and soteriological benefit of devotees, one that is

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178 AMEP, p. 22.
179 AS 1.25, p. 17.
180 AS 1.25, p. 17.
181 SPSSA, p. 71.
184 *TPRS*, p. 148.
paradoxically efficacious if and only if taken to be an ontological reality. Such an interpretation may, however, be criticised for its reductionist overtones – an attempt to reduce an existentially real object of devotion to a mere concept of psychological truth for believers. An alternative reading could be that tāraka brahma as a concept is not a mere intellectual product derived from pure logical deduction and argumentation, but is rather an idea resulting from an emotive-intuitional experience of ultimate reality. Seen in this light, the statement that tāraka brahma is a creation of devotional sentiment in no way suggests that ‘He’ does not exist ontologically. Instead, ‘His’ ontological existence, as realized through devotion, can then be expressed linguistically as the concept of tāraka brahma. Sarkar seems to suggest that tāraka brahma may indeed grant salvation to those who seek the ultimate with devotion:

… those who aim at mokṣa, where sādhanā is the complete surrender of self into That (Nirguṇa Brahma, the objectless consciousness), get out of this Brahmacakra by a tangential touch. At this point of tangential touch is the abode of Tāraka Brahma (who resides within the scope of both Nirguṇa and Saguṇa Brahma).  

Tāraka brahma manifests in the created order as the sadguru, the ‘perfect spiritual master’, who has the capacity to lead all beings to salvation and to renew human civilization through his/her revolutionary ideas and projects. The sadguru is described as mahāsambhūti, ‘an entity well created to fulfil a very great purpose’, who has undergone the entire evolutionary journey to become an extraordinary human being with a soteriological task to perform. Sarkar differentiates his concept of mahāsambhūti from the more familiar Indian notion of avatāra:

Incarnation is an illogical hypothesis. The whole universe being created out of Him and by Him is His incarnation. The term avatāra means a “derivation”, and the application of this term to individual units who are far advanced in the process of pratīṣṭhaṇḍara is a misleading misnomer. It is illogical to consider that the Macrocosm metamorphosed Himself directly into some unit structure, in most cases, a human being. Human beings are the most evolved individual units as a class in His creation, and every stage of the … Mahāpurusa [elevated psychic beings] is the result of saṅcara and then pratīṣṭaṇḍara. It is a gradual elevation and not an abrupt descent or occurrence... The incarnation theory, or avatāra-avāda, however, hypothesises that the incarnated being is the direct descent of the Almighty, the rest of His creation remaining unexplained as to its source of origin... In Tantra the whole creation is known as saṁbhūti. When Tāraka Brahma by His own will takes the help of the five fundamental factors (the pāṇcabhūtas), His physical entity comes within the scope of Saguṇa Brahma, otherwise He is Nirguṇa Brahma. When Tāraṇa Brahma takes the assistance of the five fundamental factors, according to Tantra, it is called His mahāsambhūti.  

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185 IAI, p. 46.
186 IAI, p. 45.
187 IAI, pp. 43-46.
Sarkar has elsewhere identified, as the two historical manifestations of tāraka brahma, Sadāśiva, a great yogi who supposedly existed seven thousand years ago, and Kṛṣṇa, the great charioteer of the Indian classic Bhagavad Gītā who is said to have lived three and a half thousand years ago.\textsuperscript{188} AM followers claim that Sarkar is the most recent human expression of tāraka brahma, though Sarkar himself did not categorically affirm or deny this claim.

In summary, the composition and functions of saguṇa, nirguṇa, and tāraka brahma can be tabulated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Brahma</th>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nirguṇa</td>
<td>Infinite, pristine consciousness (puruṣa) with dormant prakṛti.</td>
<td>Ultimate source of universe &amp; ground of existence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Saguṇa         | (1) Consciousness qualified into:  
|                | - Mahat  
|                | - Aham = Cosmic Mind  
|                | - Citta > created universe  
|                | (2) Puruṣottama (nucleus cosmic consciousness) witnessing (1). | Creates, controls & witnesses the entire universe collectively and each entity individually. |
| Tāraka         | Consciousness that is simultaneously qualified & unqualified by prakṛti. | Attracts, loves & guides all entities individually and collectively towards liberation (mukti) & salvation (mokṣa). |

Apart from the most commonly used schema of saguṇa, nirguṇa, and tāraka brahma, Sarkar also categorizes the cosmic entity or consciousness in several other ways. First, he describes brahma as having the ‘joint bearing’ of kṣara (‘perishability’), aksara (‘imperishability’), and niraksara (‘perfect placidity or objectlessness’).\textsuperscript{189} Kṣara brahma is the stance in which brahma is metamorphosed into the multitude of created objects, lifeforms, and ideas (equivalent to the cosmic mind of saguṇa brahma). Aksara brahma is the stance in which brahma remains as the ‘witness of all psychic metamorphoses’ (equivalent to puruṣottama or witnessing consciousness embedded as nucleus of the cosmos within saguṇa brahma). (The concept of puruṣottama will be discussed in subsection 3.2.3.) Niraksara brahma is the stance in which brahma remains unmanifested and where ‘there is no question of subjectivity or objectivity’ (equivalent to nirguṇa brahma).

Secondly, Sarkar divides brahma into vyakta (‘manifest’) and avyakta (‘unmanifest’),\textsuperscript{190} phenomenologically equivalent to saguṇa and nirguṇa brahma respectively. Thirdly, three philosophical bearings are said to exist within saguṇa brahma: (1) bhoktybhāva (‘microcosmic

\textsuperscript{188} See NSS (Third Edition); and Ānandamūrti, NKS.
\textsuperscript{189} AMI, pp. 401-403.
\textsuperscript{190} AMI, p. 402.
bearing’ or ‘enjoyer’), (2) bhogyabhāva (‘object of enjoyment’ or ‘enjoyable’), and (3) prerayitrabhāva (‘controlling authority’).\(^{191}\) Phenomenologically, bhokṛybāva appears to be the combination of mahat and aham (qualitative phases or aspects of the self to be discussed in subsection 3.3.3), while bhogyabhāva may be synonymous with the totality of physical and mental objects (i.e. thoughts, ideas) of enjoyment. Prerayitrabhāva is puruṣottama, the ‘supreme controlling entity’ and witnessing consciousness of each individual mind and every created object. It is brahma in prerayitrabhāva that is said to inspire microcosmic minds to attain the ultimate stance of non-attributional consciousness (nirguṇa brahma). Fourthly, Sarkar divides brahma (or parama puruṣa) into liṅga (‘qualified’ or ‘attributional’) and aliṅga (‘unqualified’ or ‘non-attributional’) types. He equates liṅga puruṣa with saguṇa brahma and aliṅga puruṣa with nirguṇa brahma.

Correspondences between the various categorisations of brahma can be summed up in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schema 1</th>
<th>Schema 2</th>
<th>Schema 3</th>
<th>Schema 4</th>
<th>Schema 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saguṇa brahma</td>
<td>Kṣara</td>
<td>Vyakta</td>
<td>bhokṛybāva bhogyabhāva</td>
<td>Liṅga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aksara</td>
<td></td>
<td>prerayitrabhāva</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nirguṇa brahma</td>
<td>Nirakṣara</td>
<td>Avyakta</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Aliṅga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tāraka brahma</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.2.3 Krṣṇa and Puruṣottama\(^{192}\)

Sarkar’s conception of Krṣṇa has two levels: on one level, Krṣṇa is the historical personality who is said to have been involved in the great Mahābhārata war in north India about three and a half thousand years ago. On another level, krṣṇa is a philosophical and religious concept that refers to the supreme consciousness existing as the nucleus of the entire universe. In the second sense, krṣṇa is synonymous with puruṣottama (‘highest consciousness’) – the macrocosmic witnessing entity at the centre of the universe.\(^{193}\) Sarkar defines puruṣottama thus: ‘Supreme consciousness at the nucleus of the universe is known as Paramaśiva or Puruṣottama.’\(^{194}\) The intimately personal characteristic of Krṣṇa is also ascribed to puruṣottama in many of Sarkar’s discourses.

According to Ānanda Mārga, krṣṇa literally means ‘He who attracts’.\(^{195}\) Sarkar defines the term krṣṇa as ‘an Entity who leads others towards fulfilment, towards the perfect attainment – One who cannot tolerate destructive ideas or destructive elements.’\(^{196}\) He describes Krṣṇa/krṣṇa as having the two aspects: Vraja Krṣṇa and Pārthaśārathi Krṣṇa. These two aspects represent two facets of the

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\(^{191}\) AMI, pp. 405-406.

\(^{192}\) Main sources are AS I.1-4, II.10 and 15; NKS, pp. 1-12 and 48-76; and SPSSA, pp. 12-17, 29-30, and 103-105.

\(^{193}\) NKS, p. 52 and pp. 67-76.

\(^{194}\) AS I.4, p. 4: paramaśivaḥ puruṣottamah viśvasya kendram.

\(^{195}\) SPSSA, p. 30.

\(^{196}\) NKS, p. 2.
personality of the historical Kṛṣṇa. Vraja Kṛṣṇa is the sweet and affectionate aspect of Kṛṣṇa blended with spirituality, Kṛṣṇa in the role of loving friend and admired hero amongst his circle of devotees. Pārthasārathi Kṛṣṇa is the firm and tough leader who, imbued with spirituality and dynamism, protects and guides the human collective towards nobility and perfection. From the viewpoint of the spiritual aspirant, Vraja Kṛṣṇa is the focus of loving devotion and sweet surrender, one who teaches the path of devotion and imparts aparokṣa anubhūti, ‘direct experience’. Similarly, Pārthasārathi Kṛṣṇa is the focus of veneration and worship, one who teaches the paths of knowledge and selfless action that give parokṣa anubhūti, ‘indirect experience’. The practices of Pārthasārathi Kṛṣṇa that give parokṣa anubhūti are seen as steps leading to the ultimate experience of aparokṣa anubhūti - a state of direct and intimate experience of divine sweetness and bliss. In Sarkar’s soteriology, the essential practice leading to aparokṣa anubhūti is the cultivation of devotion (bhakti yoga), while practices leading to parokṣa anubhūti include leading a moral life (through principles of yama and niyama), acquiring spiritual knowledge (jñāna yoga), and performing selfless service to society (karma yoga).

On a more philosophical level, vraja kṛṣṇa is that aspect of the cosmic nucleus which attracts all animate and inanimate entities in the universe towards itself. It is the source of the attractive force of vidyā māyā (‘knowledge force’) that exerts an introversive pull on all minds, individually and collectively, causing them to move towards the centre of their being, which in essence is the centre of the cosmos. The metaphor of Kṛṣṇa’s enchanting flute that captivates the cowherd girls of Vrindāvan is used to describe this attractive power of pure consciousness as the cosmic nucleus. This attractive power of kṛṣṇa is otherwise known as love, the creative force, the sustenance, and the culmination of the entire cosmogonic and evolutionary process. Through this love, kṛṣṇa guides and finally leads all entities back into itself. In this sense, kṛṣṇa is synonymous with tāraka brahma, an intensely personal entity who inspires, guides, and blesses all spiritual aspirants with the ultimate realisation of brahma.

Similarly, in the philosophical vein, pārthasārathi kṛṣṇa is the guiding aspect of the cosmic nucleus that directs all entities on to the right path and who gives order to the universe and society. It is the intellectual and leadership faculty of the supreme consciousness which expresses itself in the world, and which acts by inspiring and creating an ethically-based social order. Sarkar says:

He is Pārthasārathi because He envelopes up the intellectual level of microcosms. That is, human intellect gets its supply of intellect from His intellect... From the microcosmic point of view, Pārthasārathi is a tremendous personality, a fiery personality, a vigorously active personality, who brings about radical changes in the lifestyles of human beings and gives them proper, healthy guidance.

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197 Vrindāvan is the mythological land of Kṛṣṇa’s childhood, where he is constantly sporting with his devoted gopīs with his playful, divine actions and melodious flute.

198 NKS, p. 59.

199 NKS, p. 60.
Pārthasārathi krṣṇa, in other words, is that power of the cosmic nucleus that energetically promotes the welfare of all - humans, animals and plants – through the establishment of virtue and righteousness in the world. The nature and functions of Krṣṇa/kṛṣṇa can be tabulated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of Krṣṇa</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vraja Krṣṇa</td>
<td>▪ Gives aparokṣa anubhūti (direct realisation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Sweet, charming facet of the historical personality who enchants and loves all his followers impartially (personal interpretation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Nucleus of both macrocosm and microcosm that attracts all entities/thought projections to itself through love (philosophical interpretation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pārthasārathi Krṣṇa</td>
<td>▪ Gives parokṣa anubhūti (indirect realisation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Tough, dynamic facet of the historical personality who protects and guides human society towards moral and spiritual perfection (personal interpretation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Nucleus of both macrocosm and microcosm that guides and orders society/mind through firmness and discipline (philosophical interpretation).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both the Vraja and Pārthasārathi aspects of Krṣṇa are meant to be understood on both historical and philosophical levels. Philosophically, they refer to the cardinal qualities and powers of brahma as the nucleus of the cosmos. Historically, these qualities and powers are manifested in the personality of Krṣṇa, the cowherd of Vrindāvan and later King of Mathura. As mentioned previously, the historical Krṣṇa is regarded by Sarkar as the second advent of tāraka brahma (the first being Sadāśiva), who has come into the world as a perfect guru. In other words, tāraka brahma, who is also the philosophico-religious kṛṣṇa, manifests as the historical Krṣṇa to attract devotees to himself and to create a new social order based on morality.

Puruṣottama, a term that Sarkar often uses synonymously with kṛṣṇa and tāraka brahma, is the pure consciousness that impartially and omnisciently witnesses all phenomena in the universe, from the spinning of the electron to the pulsation of quasars; and all activities of the mind, from fleeting emotions to the incessant bubbling of thoughts. According to Sarkar, puruṣottama is the ultimate witness of all physical, chemical, biological, as well as social and psychological phenomena, and can see and know every thought and feeling of every living organism in the universe. Puruṣottama is said to have an associative relationship with all the entities in this universe, both individually and collectively. The associative relationship of puruṣottama with the universe as a collective is termed prota yoga, while the same relationship with each and every individual entity is termed ota yoga.200 Similarly, although Sarkar does not state this explicitly, it can be postulated that puruṣottama’s association with the totality of mental processes and events is prota yoga, while the

200 IAI, p. 40.
same relationship with each and every thought or feeling is *ota* *yoga*. In other words, *puruṣottama* (or *tāraka brahma* or *krṣṇa*) is not a passive, inert, and alienated witness of the drama of life, but is able to relate to and affect every living and non-living entity (or mental object on the microcosmic level) both individually and collectively. The relationship between *puruṣottama* and the universe can be diagrammatically represented as follows:

![Diagram](image-url)

In keeping with the style of many classical and contemporary Indian *gurus*, Sarkar quotes, in Sanskrit, verses from the *Bhagavad Gītā* when attempting to explain and justify his philosophy of *tāraka brahma*. Two of the most commonly quoted passages are verses 7 and 8 from Book 4 of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, translated by the AM publications committee as follows:

O Bhārata, at a time when *dharma* is distorted and *adharma* is ascendent, I create myself out of my own fundamental factors.\(^{201}\)

I incarnate Myself in this world from age to age for the protection of the virtuous, the destruction of the wicked, and the restoration of *dharma*.\(^{202}\)

He borrows the traditional concept of recurrent divine incarnation during periods of profound human crises to account for the advent of *tāraka brahma* on earth. In this way, it can be argued that Sarkar does not reject outright the traditional notion of *avatāra*, but adapts it within the context of his *brahmacakra* theory (see section 3.3), in the form of a personal liberator standing as a bridge between manifest (*sagūṇa*) and unmanifest (*nirgūṇa*) consciousness. It is possible to read such adaptive borrowing on Sarkar’s part as an attempt to legitimise and contextualise his personal ideology of AM within the overall project of the Indian religious quest.

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\(^{201}\) *DKG*, p.44. Sanskrit: *yadā yadā hi dharmasya gluāṇir bhavati bhārata abhyutthānam adharmasya tadā ’mānaṃ srjāmyaham*

\(^{202}\) *DKG*, p. 46. Sanskrit: *paritṛṇāya sādhūnāṁ vināśāya ca duṣktām dharmasamsthāpanārthāya saṁbhavāmi yuge yuge*
3.2.4 Ātman and Paramātman: Nature of the Self

Sarkar’s concept of ātman has been discussed briefly in section 3.2.1, but is such an important concept in his overall ideology that it warrants a separate discussion here. Sarkar explains ātman as ‘that which is omni-telepathic’ and as the ‘nucleus consciousness’. It exists in two functional forms: paramātman and jīvātman. In AM literature, paramātman is often written as ‘Ātman’ (with upper case ‘A’) for short, which implies that the term Ātman can be used in a more general sense to denote the omni-telepathic entity, or in a more specific sense to refer to the paramātman. In this thesis, however, I will write the word ‘Ātman’ in lower case italics (i.e. ātman) so as to be consistent with my transcription policy stated in Chapter 2. I use the short-form ‘ātman’ to refer to both paramātman and jīvātman when discussing the concept in a general sense.

Paramātman is the supreme consciousness in the role of witness of his own macrocosmic creation, the ultimate ‘mirror’ that receives and reflects all the physical and psychic vibrations of his entire universe. Structurally, paramātman consists of: (1) purusottama, the macrocosmic nucleus; (2) purusottama’s association with all creation in his extroversion movement (prota yoga); and (3) purusottama’s association with each unit creation individually (ota yoga) and (4) with all collectively (prota yoga) in his introversion movement. The extroversion and introversion movements of purusottama are the two halves of the cosmic cycle of creation (brahmacakra or srṣṭicakra), which purports to explain the whole process of cosmogony, evolution, the emergence of mind and consciousness in living organisms, and the final journey of conscious life towards the omega point of supreme consciousness. (A more detailed discussion of the brahmacakra will be offered in section 3.3.) The nature of paramātman is more clearly elucidated in the tabulation below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paramātman (as supreme witnessing entity) comprises:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pratīṣṭhāca (Introversion cycle)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Saṅcara (Extroversion cycle)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Purusottama witnessing &amp; associating with each object or being singly (ota yoga).</td>
<td>1. Purusottama witnessing &amp; associating with all objects or beings collectively (prota yoga).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Purusottama witnessing &amp; associating with all objects or beings collectively (prota yoga).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jīvātman is the microcosmic replica of the paramātman in the sense that it is the witness of each individual mind, in whose light are reflected all the physical and psychic events in that individual being. As opposed to paramātman, the jīvātman is often written in AM literature as ‘ātman’ (with lower case ‘a’) for short, to refer to the unit witnessing entity. Structurally, the jīvātman is the reflection of purusottama on each individual mental plate (synonymous to the unit mind) and, as such,

203 Main sources are AS I.1 (pp. 1-2), II.8-9 (pp. 20-21); AMEP, pp. 65-67; IAI, pp. 11-16, 39-45, and 63.
204 AS I.1, p. 1.
205 IAI, p. 41.
is not essentially separate from the *paramātman*. It can be seen as structurally continuous with the macrocosmic witnessing entity even though its field of action is circumscribed by the boundaries of the unit mind. As the *jīvātman* is contiguous with the unit mind through its witnessing and associative action, it can affect, and in turn be affected by, the dynamics and activities of the unit mind. Sarkar uses the analogy of the stainless, pure mirror that can be coloured according to the colour of the flower that is reflected on it, to illustrate how the *jīvātman* can be ‘coloured’ by the different impressions, emotions, thoughts, and propensities of the mind. However, the essential nature of the ‘mirror’ of *jīvātman* remains intrinsically pristine and pure. On a deeper level, it can be seen that the essence of *jīvātman* is ultimately no different from the essence of unit mind, since they are both derived from the same ‘material’ of pure consciousness. This is another example of the non-dualistic perspective of Sarkar’s Tantra. *Jīvātman* and *paramātman* can be diagrammatically represented as follows:

A crucial issue that relates to the discussion on *ātman* and *paramātman* is that of the nature of the self in Sarkar’s thought. He devotes the whole of chapter 4 in *AMEP* to discussing this issue, while providing hints on his understanding of the *ātman* in various discourses dispersed throughout the AM literature. (We have already mentioned his definition of *ātman* in the *AS* in subsection 3.2.1.) A superficial look at Sarkar’s terminology and conceptual framework suggests that he understands the ‘self’ in much the same way as older Hindu traditions, namely the *upaniṣadic* notion that a permanent, substantial ‘Self’ stands at the core of every individual being – a personal essence that is simultaneously the essence or ‘Self’ of the entire cosmos. However, a deeper examination reveals some ambivalence, suggesting that while Sarkar may have appropriated terms from the *upaniṣadic* legacy, he has given them new shades of meaning that serve to highlight his own unique insights. In the case of *ātman*, Sarkar emphasises that it is a mirror-like and pristine cognisance that exists auto-reflexively within the very nature of the mind. He describes the *ātman* as ‘Self-radiant’ or

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206 *IAI*, p. 84.
‘Autophanous’, meaning that ‘His effulgence is not derived from any other source.’

He illustrates his understanding of the \( \text{ātman} \) with this example:

Suppose you are thinking of Monghyr internally. Now a part of your consciousness is changed into mind-stuff, and this mind-stuff takes the form of Monghyr. The remaining part of your mind-stuff remains as the witness of your mentally created Monghyr. Now the part of your consciousness which plays neither the role of a witness nor of being witnessed [italics mine] and yet remains as the knower of your observation, that subtle part or bearing, if taken in the Brahmic or theistic context, will be regarded as \( \text{Puruṣottama} \).

According to him, the \( \text{ātman} \) (which is indivisible from \( \text{paramātman/puruṣottama} \)) is the faculty that makes it possible for the experiential sense of self to arise in the mind, for without the luminosity and knowing that is \( \text{ātman} \), the mind will have no experience of itself as a ‘self’. He says:

In human beings consciousness is fully and clearly reflected in a physical body … This clear reflection of consciousness is unit consciousness (\( \text{ātman} \)) … The pure feeling of “I” is only an abstract idea. A little introspection would show that this feeling of “I exist” is an idea. It comes about as a result of thinking. This feeling of “I” can come only when there is consciousness; and it is with consciousness or \( \text{jñāna} \) that one can take an idea and think or perform some action. The feeling of “I” is, therefore, a mental projection of consciousness; or to be explicit, it can be said that without consciousness, or \( \text{jñāna} \), the knowledge of existence and thereby the idea of the feeling of “I” cannot be formed … It is by this idea of existence that the feeling of “I” is formed, and hence the individual’s identity as “I” is this idea only … This feeling of “I” is, therefore, not \( \text{ātman} \) or unit consciousness. The human beings’ individuality or their feeling of “I” is not unit consciousness.

In other words, the sense of ‘self’ or ‘I feeling’ is a projection of the mind, an idea resulting from the thinking process (which is itself said to be a metamorphosis of \( \text{ātman} \) and essentially non-dual with it). This ‘I feeling’ within the mind is experienced by and in the light or cognisance of the \( \text{ātman} \). Thus, for Sarkar, the \( \text{ātman} \) is not a personal and empirical ‘self’ or ‘I’ that owns or possesses the mind but the clarity of cognisance that makes experience of self or any experience at all possible. Another hint of Sarkar’s process view of the nature of consciousness lies in his definition of \( \text{brahma} \) (to which \( \text{ātman} \) is ultimately identical) as \( \text{akhaṇḍa cidaikaraṇa} \) (‘an unbroken flow of Consciousness’).

Elsewhere, he defines \( \text{ātman} \) as ‘a continuous flow (\( \text{pravaha} \)) of \( \text{jñāna} \) or knowledge.’ Seen from this perspective, Sarkar’s notion of the \( \text{ātman} \) may have less substantialist overtones than its traditional \( \text{upaniṣadic} \) counterpart, perhaps approaching closer to the Buddhist and constructivist conceptions of the ‘self’.

\[208^\text{SS Part 2, p. 27.}\]
\[209^\text{SS Part 2, p. 34.}\]
\[210^\text{AMEP, pp. 65-66.}\]
\[211^\text{AMI, p. 502.}\]
\[212^\text{AMP Part 3, p. 182.}\]
Sarkar’s somewhat non-substantialist definition of the notion of ātman (variously termed puruṣa and śiva) needs to be borne in mind when reading the remaining chapters of this thesis. The key concept of ‘consciousness’, ambivalently expressed by Sarkar in both substantialist and non-substantialist terms, is the quintessential building block and foundation of his entire ideology. It is to be carefully interpreted by taking into account all sides to the concept, when seeking to understand Sarkar’s cosmology and praxis.

3.3 Cosmogony

Sarkar’s cosmogony and cosmology are encapsulated in his theory of the brahmacakra or srṣṭicakra, the ‘cosmic cycle of creation’. The brahmacakra purports to explain the ultimate origin, the ongoing evolution, and the final destination of the entire universe, with all its animate and inanimate entities. The origin and destination of the universe are not located at two separate specific points in linear space-time. Rather, the cosmos is an ongoing cycle of transformation and change, with new matter being constantly generated and advanced life-forms ever merging their unit existences back into their source. Hence the brahmacakra is said to be occurring at each and every moment in a continuous, dynamic, and self-organising fashion. As previously mentioned, this source and destination is the infinite pure consciousness termed brahma, the cosmic entity. Sarkar sees the multiplicity of the universe as produced by a gradual and ongoing metamorphosis of subtlest consciousness first into the cosmic mind (having the three levels of citta, aham, and mahat), and then into five fundamental factors that finally combine to form the myriad inanimate structures. From Sarkar’s viewpoint, this material universe is but one of the many possible worlds in the multi-layered cosmos, worlds that are in essence the various layers of the cosmic citta.

This process of cosmic metamorphosis, resulting in the formation of multiple inorganic substances, forms the first half of the cycle, termed sañcara, translated as ‘proper movement’. The emergence of life from these inorganic substances marks the second half of the cycle, termed pratiṣañcara, or ‘reverse proper movement’. When, due to clash and struggle in the process of evolution, life-forms reach a certain level of structural complexity, the various levels of mind progressively emerge. The human structure and mind represent the current apex of evolution and have the potential to develop further in expansiveness and subtlety. The expansion of the human mind into unit consciousness and finally into the vast expanse of cosmic consciousness represents the final phase of the cosmic journey.

Central to Sarkar’s cosmology is the role of spiritual knowledge and practices (which Sarkar terms intuitional science and praxis) and the perfect spiritual master or sadguru in the further evolution of the mind and consciousness. In particular, Sarkar’s theory of microvita – ‘mysterious

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213 Main sources are AS I.3-20 (pp. 4-14), II.21-24 (pp. 26-28), and IV.1-8 (pp. 36-40); AMEP, pp. 16-64; IAI, pp. 9-24, 32-43, and 58-62; MvN, pp. 1-28, 50-75, 78-81, and 138-158; supplemented by relevant sections in SPSSA corresponding to above AS ślokas and sections scattered throughout AMI and SS.

214 Translations for sañcara and pratiṣañcara given in SPSSA, pp. 18 and 27.
emanations of the Cosmic Factor’ – plays a central role in this higher evolution of humanity. Microvita are regarded as ‘cosmic seeds of life’ and have been implicated in the genesis of life-forms and mutative changes in evolution.

Sarkar bases his cosmogony on the Upanisadic notion of a singular source, matrix, and destination of the universe, a source he calls brahma – a plenitude of infinite happiness or ānanda (bliss). For him, it is the inherent desire or pulsative movement of bliss of brahma that creates, operates, sustains, and finally withdraws the universe and its beings. He contrasts his cosmogonic vision with that of the Buddha and appropriates the structure of the Buddha’s four noble truths for his ideology, stating that: (1) the universe is not full of suffering but full of joy; (2) the source of this joyful universe is ānandam or supreme bliss; (3) the universe culminates in ānandam; and (4) the way to ānandam is through sādhanā (spiritual practice), especially the practice of pure devotion. (A comparison between Sarkar’s and the Buddha’s views on the world will be undertaken in Chapter 7. We now explore in detail Sarkar’s cosmogonic speculations.)

3.3.1 Before the Beginning

Sarkar’s Tantric theory of creation is most clearly explained in the first and fourth chapters of the AS, a review of which follows. There are four initial phases in cosmic genesis: (1) the primordial phase, which is a transcendent state of supreme peace; (2) the first phase, which is a theoretical, pre-evolutionary stage when the forces of creation are in balance; (3) the second phase, which is an actual and most initial expression of the universe in the form of cosmic sound; and finally (4) the vibrational phase, which is the formation of the three layers of the cosmic mind – mahat, aham, and citta, in that sequence. The formation of the material universe starts only after the vibratory waves of cosmic citta have metamorphosed themselves into the five fundamental factors of ethereal, aerial, luminous, liquid, and solid factors.

In the primordial phase, the three forces (gunaś) of prakṛti (the operative principle) are sheltered in the ‘body’ of puruṣa (the cognitive principle), where they flow linearly, haphazardly, and in multiple directions with limitless momentum. Countless numbers of hexagonal, octagonal, and other many-sided figures are formed as a result of the contact of these flowing forces, but a resultant force is yet to be generated. In this phase, prakṛti remains unexpressed or dormant (anucchānya) while puruṣa is objectless since there is as yet no differentiation of itself into subject and object. Objectless puruṣa is said to be unqualified by prakṛti and thus beyond all attributes or ‘nirguna’. This transcendent state prior to all qualification and metamorphosis of puruṣa is known as a state of supreme peace (parāśānti). There is as yet no desire for cosmic creation in the supreme

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216 AS 2.3-4, pp. 18-19: sukhām anantam ānandam ānandam brahma ityayah
217 SS Part 11, pp. 89-98.
218 AS, pp. 1-17 and 36-40.
219 See SPSSA, pp. 238-252.
220 See IAI, p. 58.
consciousness. Correspondingly, the three forces of prakṛti flow in a chaotic way with no clear sense of demarcation among them, and thus they do not yet fully exist as sentient, mutative, and static forces. This stage can be represented as follows:

Anucchūnya prakṛti:
all its forces flow haphazardly in all directions

Nirguṇa Puruṣa:
unqualified objectless consciousness

In the next phase, termed the first phase or pre-evolutionary stage, the polygonal patterns of force form themselves into the more stable geometric forms of triangles. These triangular patterns of forces exist in many dimensions and planes in the ‘ocean’ of puruṣa. They collectively form the causal matrix or the ‘mother of creation’, the cosmic ‘womb’ from which the entire created universe will eventually flow.221 In this phase, a localised portion of puruṣa has been encircled and qualified by triangles of forces of prakṛti, thus rendering puruṣa no longer beyond the guṇas (guṇātiśa) but instead the controller of the guṇas (guṇāḥśiṣa). Qualification of these localised portions occurs due to the lesser density of consciousness at those portions than at other points in the infinite ‘body’ of puruṣa. According to Sarkar, puruṣa is not uniformly condensed throughout and possesses areas where consciousness is ‘weaker’.222 Upon encircling portions of puruṣa, the forces of prakṛti are now clearly identified as sentient, mutative, and static, whereby each force constantly transforms into another in a process termed ‘homomorphic evolution’ (svarūpa-parināma).223 Puruṣa now exists as a witnessing entity (puruṣottama or paramāśiva) in the nucleus of the causal matrix, much like a ‘thread wherewith the midpoints of these triangles are interwoven’.224 The pre-evolutionary stage can be diagrammatically represented as follows:

Causal matrix:
equilateral
triangle of
forces threaded
& controlled by
cosmic nucleus
(puruṣottama)

Svarūpa-parināma

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221 See SPSSA, p. 239.
222 AMEP, pp. 24-25.
223 AS, p. 36.
224 AS, p. 37.
Sarkar describes this pre-evolutionary stage as a purely theoretical stage, since the creative forces exist in a state of dynamic equilibrium and no creation has yet occurred. He further states that ‘there is a theoretical difference between the Puruṣabhāva [‘stance of consciousness’] in the first stage when Prakṛti was anuccānā, and the Puruṣabhāva in the second stage when Prakṛti has shaped Herself into a triangle of forces.’ Sarkar gives different names to both puruṣa and prakṛti at various phases in the cosmic creative process, and in the case of the first phase, the witnessing puruṣa is known as śiva, while prakṛti as the causal matrix is known as śivānī or kauśikī (see table below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Stage:</th>
<th>Puruṣa</th>
<th>Prakṛti</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a. Pre-evolutionary phase</td>
<td>Śiva</td>
<td>Śivānī or Kauśikī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Basic phase (bindu)</td>
<td>Śambhūlinga</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Evolution:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Primordial phase (nāda)</td>
<td>Bhairava</td>
<td>Bhairavī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Vibrational phase (kalā)</td>
<td>Bhava</td>
<td>Bhavānī</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second phase of practical evolution, following the initial pre-evolutionary stage, marks the beginning of the extroversial process of brahmacakra, the cosmic cycle of creation. This extroversial process, known as saṅcara or saṅkrama, will be discussed in the next section.

3.3.2 Saṅcara: The Extroversial Process

In the second phase of creation, the stability of the triangle of forces is shaken as the three forces, being belligerent by nature, compete with one another for dominance. A resultant force bursts out from one of the vertices of the triangle. The point out of which the force emanates, termed the ‘seed of desire’ (kāmabija or icchābija), marks the precise starting point of the extroversial process of saṅcara or saṅkrama. Saṅcara or saṅkrama is a process of analysis whereby the singular consciousness transforms itself into the multiplicity of the universe. According to Sarkar, the starting point of saṅcara ‘… is static and is dominated by avidyāmāyā and rests within its scope of activity. This is the point wherein lies the cosmic desire.’ Puruṣa at this point of kāmabija or icchābija is known as śambhūlinga, where śambhū is translated as ‘self-created controller’ and linga as ‘mark, sign, or symbol’. In other words, kāmabija marks the location of puruṣa in the bearing of a self-created controller, whose positive resolve for creation sprouts forth from that very point. As the positive source of the entire flow of saṅcara, puruṣa at this point is also termed the ‘root-point of fundamental

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225 AS, p. 37.
226 IAI, p. 59.
227 See IAI, p. 9.
228 IAI, 60.
229 SPSSA, p. 251.
positivity’. According to Sarkar, śambhulinga exists not only on a macrocosmic scale as the starting point of creation, but also on a microcosmic scale as the ultimate controlling point of the individual mind. Such macrocosmic-microcosmic homologisms occur frequently throughout Sarkar’s spiritual philosophy. (How Sarkar’s cosmology is linked to his theory of mind and bio-psychology is discussed in Chapter 4.)

The first force to emanate from kāmbiṇa is the sentient force (sattvaguna) - the most powerful of the three forces. At this point, the mutative force (rajoguna) is also active but remains subordinate to the sentient force. The first expression of creation is a sentient-dominated wave termed jñānaśakti nāda that flows forward in a straight line. As in the first phase, puruṣa and prakṛti have distinctive names in this particular phase: the witnessing puruṣa is called bhairava and the creative prakṛti is called bhairavi sakti (see table on p. 54). This phase is the expressed state of puruṣa and prakṛti, where puruṣa, having been acted upon by prakṛti, is saguna or qualified. Here, the difference between puruṣa and prakṛti is no longer purely theoretical (as in the first phase) but is tending towards the practical.

Associated with these straight-line waves (nāda) is the acoustic expression of the primordial sound, the omkāra or the syllable om. Sarkar sees the script depicting omkāra as consisting of three-and-a-half sound units – ‘a’, ‘u’, ‘ma’, and the ‘bindu’ or dot – which respectively represent the creation, maintenance, and dissolution of the universe within saguna brahma (qualified consciousness), and the objectless, transcendent nirguna brahma. In other words, the sonic expression of the omkāra first resounds throughout the universe at the time of the straight-line phase of cosmic creation. The omkāra subsequently forms the basis for the myriad vibrations (including sounds, sights, feelings, and thoughts) of the universe, which are primarily different harmonic modifications of this most subtle, primordial sound. Sarkar explains:

… I emphasise that omkāra does not denote the whole Brahma in the first three syllables; it also has a fourth letter. This very fourth letter or half-letter represents Purusottama with His witness-ship. From this it follows that “a”, “u”, “ma” and the half-letter respectively represent creation, preservation, destruction, and this witness-ship … Omkāra is not a sound for utterance but for hearing. The human voice cannot give proper form to that (mystic) sound, and so it is futile to attempt to pronounce it. … Whatever you see, whatever you think or you feel, whatever is beyond your vision, thought and perception – all are saguna Brahma or omkāra …

Following the second phase, the third phase of creation signifies the period when brahma undergoes a series of metamorphoses and a process of gradual crucification to become the multitude of inanimate and animate entities in the universe. It can be described as the One becoming the many.
In this phase, *puruṣa* is given the name *bhava* while *prakṛti* is called *bhavāṇī* (see table on p. 54). The early phases of the creation process can be detailed diagrammatically as follows:²³³

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names:</th>
<th>Šambhūlinga</th>
<th>Puruṣa &amp; Prakṛti Distinction:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Śiva</td>
<td>Šivānī/Kausikī</td>
<td>theoretical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhairava</td>
<td>Bhairavī</td>
<td>basic principle (<em>bindu</em>) becoming practical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhava</td>
<td>Bhavāṇī</td>
<td>primordial principle (<em>nāda</em>) practical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>vibrational principle (<em>kalā</em>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sarkar gives specific terms to signify the three phases of the controversial process of creation. He calls the first phase, when the linear wave is about to emerge from the vertex of the triangle of forces, the phase of the ‘basic principle’ or *bindu*. He calls the second phase, when the linear wave has already emerged, the phase of the ‘primordial principle’ or *nāda*. When the linear wave becomes transmuted into multiple curvatures, the creation process enters its third phase, which he terms the phase of the ‘vibrational principle’ or ‘*kalā*’.²³⁴

We have seen that as a result of the clash of the three *gunas*, the sentient force (*sattvaguna*) emerges as the first predominant force out of one vertex of the triangle of forces. This force results in the qualification of *puruṣa*, during the linear or primordial phase of evolution, to give a straight-line wave called *nāda*. With continued dominance of the sentient force, a localised portion of *puruṣa* is transformed into the cosmic *mahattattva*, which is the sense of existence or ‘I am’ in the previously objectless pure consciousness. This cosmic *mahattattva* is made up of infinite straight-line waves and manifests as the primordial sound of *om*. As the process continues, the sentient force gradually wanes in power and the mutative force starts becoming dominant. The impact of the mutative force on the cosmic *mahat* (a transformed state of a part of *puruṣa*) results in the emergence of a sense of doership or agency called the cosmic *ahamśtatva*. The cosmic *ahamśtatva* can be said to comprise the first expressions of vibrational or curved waves, called *kalā*. The mutative force (*rajaguna*) then wanes in strength and the static force (*tamoguna*) becomes dominant in its place. The static force acts on the cosmic *ahamśtatva* to form the cosmic *citta*, which is the ‘cruelest objective counterpart of the subjective Cosmos’.²³⁵ With the formation of the cosmic *citta*, the cosmic *aham* and *mahat* are able to perceive the *citta* as their mental object. The cosmic *citta* is hence comprised of multiple vibrational waves of varied wavelengths. These three portions, *mahat*, *aham*, and *citta*, comprise the cosmic mind,

²³³ Adapted from *SPSSA*, p. 251.
²³⁴ *AV* Part 30, pp. 16-17.
²³⁵ *AS*, p. 6.
otherwise known as bhūmānas ('macrocosmic mind')\(^{236}\) or brahmānas ('mind of brahma').\(^{237}\) These three portions of the mind can be depicted diagrammatically as follows:

All these stages of transformation of the subllest pure consciousness into the different layers of the cosmic mind begin with the onset of desire within that very consciousness. This original cosmic desire, and the tendency of the three forces to emerge from a state of equilibrium and assume their separate identities, are termed 'pravṛttimukhi'. Sarkar describes the nature of cosmic desire thus:

The devotee … defends God thus: “My Lord was utterly alone before the creation. A man becomes mad if he is alone for a long time in a big vacant house. God was restless before creation. He could neither love nor feel angry with anyone. So creation was a compulsion. He has created all these forms by multiplying Himself. When God was alone, He had the power to see, but there were no objects to be seen. Now that He has started creation, He sees whatever He thinks. If we who are His own forms feel a little restlessness in His creation, we are blessed, for we are saving our Lord from the restlessness of utter loneliness.”\(^{238}\)

The static force continues to act upon the cosmic citta and sequentially transforms the ‘mind-stuff’ of citta into the five fundamental factors (pañcamahābhūta). Sarkar uses the term ‘bhūta’ to refer to all created entities in general and to the five fundamental factors in particular. As a result of the external pressure of static prakṛti, the various bhūtas are formed from gradual decrease in intermolecular and interatomic spaces and gradual increase in chemical affinity between the bhūta particles. All bhūtas are perceivable by the senses and combine in varying proportions to form a variety of physical matter, both inanimate and animate.

The first and most subtle bhūta to form is the ethereal factor (ākāśatattva or vyomatattva), which, out of the five factors, has the largest interatomic and intermolecular spaces between its basic

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\(^{236}\) AMI, p. 401.
\(^{237}\) AMP Part 3, p. 198.
particles, and is said to pervade the entire universe. While the term ‘particles’ is used to describe the components of the ethereal factor, it is important to note that Sarkar often switches between a particulate and a wave-like description of these factors. It may be the case that a ‘wave-particle’ duality is implied here.\textsuperscript{239} The ethereal factor transmits the subtlest inferential waves (\textit{tanmātras}) of sound, which are said to be subtler than audible sounds. The conceived subtlety of auditory waves and the ethereal factor will later be seen to be of significance in the soteriological praxis of Ānanda Mārga, to be discussed in Chapter 5.

\textit{Tanmātra} is, in Sarkar’s definition, a microscopic fraction of a \textit{bhūta} and essentially comprises ‘waves produced by the objects concerned as a result of reflection of the subtler \textit{bhūta} on the cruder ones.’\textsuperscript{240} Hence, the sound \textit{tanmātra} is nothing other than a microscopic fraction of the ethereal factor, the first and most subtle \textit{bhūta}. Sound \textit{tanmātras} or waves are produced as a result of the ethereal factor colliding with and reflecting off other \textit{bhūtas} that are less subtle, such as the solid factor.

The second \textit{bhūta} to form, out of the sustained impact of the static force on the ethereal factor, is the aerial factor (\textit{vāyu} or \textit{marutattva}). The increasing static force causes the particles of ether to come closer to one another, which in turn increases inter-particle attraction and internal friction. Out of these processes emerges the aerial factor, which is denser than the ethereal factor and carries both auditory and tactile \textit{tanmātras}. Just as auditory \textit{tanmātras} are microscopic reflections of the ethereal factor, tactile \textit{tanmātras} are similarly microscopic, wavelike reflections of the aerial factor.

The third \textit{bhūta} to emerge is the luminous factor (\textit{tejastattva}), which is denser than the aerial factor and transmits visual or light waves (\textit{tanmātras}), in addition to sound and tactile waves. With continuing bondage of the static force, the luminous factor condenses to form the fourth \textit{bhūta} of the liquid factor (\textit{āpatattva}), which transmits the \textit{tanmātras} of sound, touch, sight, and also taste. Finally, the crudest \textit{bhūta} - the solid factor (\textit{ksītattva}) - is formed from the sustained action of the static force on the liquid factor. The solid factor is able to carry all the \textit{tanmātras} of sound, touch, sight, taste, and also smell.

All the matter in the universe is composed of these five fundamental factors in varying proportions. The total quantity of \textit{bhūtas} in each material body is constant but the relative percentage of each \textit{bhūta} in that body can vary freely. Hence, an almost infinite variety of physical matter of every shape, size, and quality is possible. These \textit{bhūtas}, as well as the layers of the cosmic mind existing before them, are ultimately vibrational waves of progressively shorter wavelengths (and thus ‘denser’ particles), caused by the incessant flow (\textit{dhārā}) of the three \textit{guna}s or forces. Sarkar sees these vibrations as transitory, ever-changing expressions of pure consciousness.

In this progressive change of wavelength, the shift from one curvature (\textit{kalā}) to another occurs gradually and contiguously. Sarkar calls this process of change \textit{sadrśa pariṇāma}, meaning

\textsuperscript{239} Sarkar often speaks of matter in terms of inferential waves, which he terms \textit{tanmātra}.

\textsuperscript{240} \textit{LAI}, p. 20.
‘homogenesis, or similitude’.\textsuperscript{241} This results in the second-generation wave being very, but not exactly, similar to the first, the third-generation wave being similar but not identical to the second and so on. Hence, the sixth generation wave or curvature may be very different from the first but not very different from the fifth. This principle applies to both sañcara and pratisañcara phases of the creation process. In this way, Sarkar explains why the similarity seen between members of the same species is greater than that seen between members of the same genus or kingdom. Using the same logic, Sarkar explains the similarity of humans between two generations as contrasted to the huge difference between modern Homo sapiens and our pre-human ancestors of millions of years ago.\textsuperscript{242} He says:

This sequential evolution of kalās is called sadṛśa parināma [homogenesis, or similitude]. In these homogenetic waves are evolved the mental and physical worlds. It is due to this (homoform) curvilinear evolution that we find that the child of a human is a human and tree begets tree. The kalās are similar but not identical, and so although the difference between two successive kalās is not clearly perceivable, the differences of kalās having distant mutual relations are clearly understandable.\textsuperscript{243}

The static force continues to exert its pressure on the five fundamental factors even after they have been formed, a pressure known as bala. This bala results in the formation of two opposing forces – the exterbal and the interial forces.\textsuperscript{244} The exterbal force acts to disperse the object composed of the five factors into fragments, while the interial force acts to maintain the structural solidarity of the object. Each of these two forces is named prāṇa or ‘energy’, and prāṇa, in both interial and exterbal forms, exists in every object. In the event that the interial forces triumph over the exterbal forces, resultant interial forces will lead to the formation of a nucleus within the solid factor, and subsequently the creation of a stable objective structure. Even in such a case, there may be parts of the structure where the exterbal forces predominate, resulting in partial and localised dissociation of matter from the parent body. Sarkar equates this to wear and tear of the unit physical structure, and in the case of a living entity, such wear and tear can be offset by the prāṇa obtained from food, water, light, and air.\textsuperscript{245} In the event that the exterbal forces completely predominate over the interial forces, no physical nucleus and hence no objective structure can be formed.

Sarkar further explains that in a physical structure where life subsequently emerges, all five fundamental factors must be present. When these five factors are in correct balance, and when the environmental conditions are suitable, the resultant interial force formed from ‘mutual cohesion amongst these factors’,\textsuperscript{246} prāṇa (purely physical energy) undergoes a shift to become prāṇāḥ, vital or living energy. Here, Sarkar uses the plural prāṇāḥ to signify the combination of ten distinct vital

\textsuperscript{241} AS, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{242} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{243} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{244} These two forces are to be distinguished from the extroversal force of avidyā śakti and the introversal force of vidyā śakti, which are primarily concerned with the individual’s spiritual development.
\textsuperscript{245} IAI, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{246} IAI, p. 5.
forces (vāyus) that animate the body and the vital ingredient that makes an inorganic substance organic (these vāyus will be discussed in subsection 4.3.3). This collection of prāṇa is controlled by an overall nucleus that also controls the respective nuclei of the five fundamental factors. However, in the absence of congenial environmental conditions, a reverse process of negative saṅcara can take place. In such a case, the ever-continuing pressure of the static force on the solid bodies drastically reduces the inter-atomic space, causes an imbalance amongst the five fundamental factors, and results in an explosion of matter (jadaphota). The excessive internal friction between matter particles as a result of jadaphota causes the solid factor to become powdered down into the subtler liquid, luminous, aerial, and ethereal factors, either totally or partially. They are, however, prevented from reverting into the cosmic citta and beyond by the will of the cosmic mind. Reversal of the factors into the matrix of consciousness would mean a withdrawal of the entire creative thought-wave of puruṣa, and the universe as we know it would then disappear. Thus, Sarkar sees the five factors formed from jadaphota undergoing the process of saṅcara once again in its movement toward greater complexity and life.

In summary, the process of saṅcara is characterised by first, a process of extroversion away from the cosmic nucleus; second, a movement from singularity to multiplicity; third, an increase in the bondage of the guṇas or forces over consciousness; fourth, a flow of increasing desire; and fifth, an inanimate phase of creation. The emergence of life marks the beginning of the second half of the cosmic cycle of creation – pratisaṅcara.

3.3.3 Pratisaṅcara: The Introversial Process

The process of pratisaṅcara begins when life first emerges out of physical structures composed of the five factors in the required proportions. Sarkar uses the word ‘quinquelemental’ as a descriptive term to qualify the nature of all physical objects in this universe, meaning that all objects are comprised of these five factors. Sarkar describes pratisaṅcara as ‘… the gradual introversial movement under the waning influence of the guṇas.’²⁴⁷ He sees puruṣa gradually reducing the power of prakṛti to bind itself into the manifold entities of the universe, and attracting prakṛti back into its witnessing nucleus, puruṣottama. This cosmic merging of prakṛti into puruṣa by stages is manifested in the evolution of vital energy, life, and subsequently mind, in the process of pratisaṅcara.

We have seen how the vital ingredient of prāṇāḥ arises out of inorganic structures and transforms them into organic entities. In addition, excessive clash between interial and external forces causes certain parts within the unit structure to become pulverised, resulting in cittānu (‘ectoplasmic particles’ or ‘mind-stuff’) being evolved. The combination of all ectoplasmic particles in a single structure constitutes the sense of the objective mind (citta) within that structure. The citta is the portion of the unit mind that assimilates and takes the form of the external stimuli that it comes into contact with. Sarkar calls citta the ‘done-I’ or ‘objective-I’, and considers that the major part of the

²⁴⁷ AS I.6, p. 6.
minds of undeveloped plants and animals consists of citta only. In the case of such creatures, the crude and primary citta is not able to control or guide the prāṇāh within their bodies, as its function is mainly to take in information from the external world. As such, the movement of undeveloped living entities through pratisaṅcara is fully controlled and guided by the cosmic mind.

With the continuing weakening of the forces of prakṛti, and under the influence of the introversial force (vidyā śakti) of puruṣa, the static force gives way to the mutative force. The portion of the mind and body where the mutative force is active becomes transformed into the ‘doer-I’ or ‘owner-I’ (aham-tattva). With the continued influence of vidyā śakti, the sentient force starts becoming predominant over the mutative force, resulting in the emergence of the ‘pure-I’ feeling or mahattattva within the mind. Sarkar defines the three portions of the unit mind geometrically as progressively larger concentric circles, where the citta is the circle of smallest circumference, the mahat is the circle of largest circumference, and the aham is the circle whose circumference lies between the first two. The surplus area of the mind, beyond the periphery of the citta but within that of the aham, is thought to give rise to the intellect (buddhi). The area beyond the periphery of the aham but within that of the mahat is thought to give rise to intuition (bodhi) (see diagram below).

In undeveloped plants and animals, where aham is developed but not mahat, there is some possibility for living entities to speed up their movement through pratisaṅcara, since the sense of ego or ‘doer-I’ is present. However, developed plants and animals, whose mahat is developed, as well as aham and citta, pick up the greatest speed, since they possess the strongest sense of ego and will. In the case of animate entities other than humans, there can be cooperation between the momentum of the unit minds and the momentum of the cosmic mind in the forward movement of pratisaṅcara. However, the will of the animate entities remains subordinate to the cosmic will. In the case of humans, the cooperation between unit minds and the cosmic mind can be both subordinated and coordinated in nature.
According to Sarkar, the mechanism behind the evolution of mind in unit entities is the progressive reflection of the ‘supreme nucleus consciousness’ *(purusottama)* on the unit mental plate. This reflection is associative in nature and results in increasing dilation of the scope of the unit mind, a process that Sarkar calls ‘psychic dilation’.\(^{248}\) This psychic dilation is achieved through the struggle and clash of the unit entities with the physical environment and other unit entities, the struggle between different ideas, and the attractive force generated by ‘longing for the Great’.\(^{249}\) This evolutionary mechanism of the mind occurs in parallel with the decreasing influence of the *gunas* and the increasing pull of *vidyā śakti* exerted by *puruṣa* on unit entities. As the mind evolves and gains in volume and mass, it ‘acquires more and more potentiality for multilateral activities’;\(^{250}\) and with the increasing complexity of the mind, the physical structure correspondingly becomes more complex. Sarkar sees the complexity of the human body expressed in the large numbers of glands and sub-glands that have specific physiological and psycho-neuro-immunological functions. Underlying this complexification of the physical structure is Sarkar’s concept of life as an ongoing adjustment and parallelism of psychic and physical waves. According to him, the more subtle the mental waves become, the more complex the physical waves (and thus physical structures) have to be in order that the subtler mind can express its various propensities.

The ability of complex unit entities, such as human beings (*mānuṣa*, which Sarkar translates as ‘possessor of ego’), to accelerate their progress in the direction of further evolution is counterbalanced by their equal capacity for reverse evolution. In other words, human beings have the ability to regress along the evolutionary ladder if they so choose, by directing their will and energy toward purely materialistic pursuits. Sarkar calls this regression a movement towards *jaḍa* or crudity, otherwise termed negative *pratīṣaṅcara*. However, if a human being decides to utilise all of his/her potentialities to move toward the culminating point of evolution – which Sarkar sees as *parama puruṣa*, supreme consciousness – the evolutionary journey becomes greatly accelerated. He says:

> In this march towards the supramundane, the unit mind gradually feels a closer touch of *Puruṣottama*, and as the proximity of the two increases, the psychic gap between the reflected consciousness and the reflecting plate goes on diminishing and finally these two merge together. This supreme union of *Puruṣottama* and the unit mind is known as *yoga*: *saṃyoga yogo ityukto jīvātmā Paramātmanah* …\(^{251}\)

> … the unit mind goes on dilating because of the ever-increasing reflected density of the Macrocosmic Nucleus. Here the microcosm acts as a mirror and the reflected consciousness is just like the reflection of the rays of the sun, in that, while being reflected, He also associates Himself with the plate … and the finality in association will result in the merger of the microcosm into Macrocosm. This is what is known as *mukti*.\(^{252}\)

\(^{248}\) *I&I*, p. 12.
\(^{249}\) *Ibid.*
\(^{250}\) *Ibid.*
\(^{251}\) *I&I*, pp. 15-16.
\(^{252}\) *I&I*, p. 16.
Sarkar sees pratisanācara as culminating in the merger of the unit entity into the cosmic entity, which takes place in two forms: (1) savikalpa samādhi (‘trance of determinate absorption’) or sagunasthiti (‘state of transcendentality’), wherein the unit mind merges into the ‘all-pervasiveness’ of cosmic mind; 253 and (2) nirvikalpa samādhi (‘trance of indeterminate absorption’) or nirgunasthiti (‘state of objectlessness’), wherein the unit mind mergers totally into the ‘vacuity’ and bliss (ānanda) of cosmic consciousness. 254 These two states, when permanently attained, constitute the merger of the unit entity into saguna brahma and nirguna brahma respectively.  The precise nature of such attainments will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, where the praxis of Sarkar’s Tantra will be examined in greater detail. For better visualisation and clarity of understanding, the entire brahmacakra can be depicted diagrammatically as follows: 255

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### 3.3.4 The Microvita Connection

In the cosmic panorama of Sarkar’s universe - its genesis, evolution, and culmination, the role of minute entities known as ‘microvita’ (singular: ‘microvitum’) is crucial. Sarkar sees microvitum as the ‘mysterious emanation of Cosmic Factor’, or as a highly subtle and microscopic entity emitted into the universe by the infinite field of pure consciousness. 256 These microvita exist in both the physical and psychic dimensions. In the realm of physicality, microvita are smaller and subtler than electrons, protons, neutrons, and positrons, while in the psychic realm, they are subtler than ectoplasm or ‘mind-

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254 AS 1.22-24, pp. 15-16
255 Adapted from The Wisdom of Yoga, p. 37. Dotted lines represent witnessing activity of purusottama.
stuff” (the constituent of citta, the crudest layer of the mind). Sarkar divides microvita into three broad categories in terms of their density and subtlety, and into three main types in terms of their functions and effects on human welfare. In terms of increasing subtlety, microvita can be (a) directly perceived by powerful microscopes, (b) indirectly inferred from their actions on physical objects, or (c) directly intuited by a special form of perception developed through spiritual training. In terms of their effects, positive microvita are those that are conducive to human welfare; negative microvita are detrimental to human welfare and cause disease; and neutral microvita have neither good nor bad effects.

Sarkar takes the crudest form of microvita to be equivalent to the commonly understood organism, the virus. Such an equivalence, however, directly contradicts the notion that microvita (in the physical realm) are subtler than sub-atomic particles such as protons, electrons, positrons, and neutrons. The virus, as understood in modern science, consists of ‘a length of genetic material, either DNA or RNA, forming a core surrounded by a coat of protein’ and in some cases an additional lipoprotein envelope. As such, it is structurally far more complex than a sub-atomic particle, being more in the order of a highly complex molecule. Sarkar does not attempt to resolve this anomaly and apart from highlighting it, I simply leave aside this question of conceptual incompatibility between Sarkar’s notion of microvita and the biological concept of the virus in order to remain focussed on the aims of this thesis.

As subtle entities, microvita are said to travel throughout the entire universe, ‘… crossing the boundaries of nebulae, piercing through milky ways, galaxies, stars, satellites, planets and meteors.’ As living entities, they are born, reproduce and multiply, and die, though they are able to move through any object and under any atmospheric conditions without hindrance. For their movement, however, microvita require various media such as sound, form, touch, smell, and ideas. Sarkar conceives of a subtle form of microvita being transmitted through ideas, making it possible for strong, highly developed minds to spread certain ideas throughout a planet or even throughout the universe by the use of such microvita.

In relation to cosmology, Sarkar sees microvita as ‘… the carriers of life in different stars, planets, and satellites – not carbon atoms or carbon molecules.’ Microvita are capable of generating, as well as destroying, living minds and bodies in any part of the universe. Billions of microvita are said to coalesce to form a single carbon atom. We have seen earlier (subsection 3.3.3) that when the five fundamental factors within a unit structure are in the required proportions, a controlling nucleus has been formed, and the environmental conditions are suitable, the resultant interal force within that structure becomes prāṇāḥ or vital-energy (comprising ten vāyus), causing the emergence of primitive life. Although Sarkar does not explicitly say so, it can be inferred that in his cosmogony the guiding intelligence behind the transformation of a purely physical interal force

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258 MVN, p. 3.
259 MVN, p. 4.
(prāṇa) into vital life-energy (prāṇāh) is microvita. As microvita are emanations of cosmic consciousness, they would naturally possess a degree of intelligence intrinsic to consciousness itself, and thus be able to direct the process of biogenesis via information transfer.

Sarkar’s microvita theory has been elaborated by several AM scholars highly regarded within the movement to suggest probable mechanisms by which microvita and prāṇa (interial force) contribute to the genesis of life. In one such proposed elaboration, two parallel processes occur simultaneously in the evolution of living structures. The first is the increasing coordination of the physical structure by prāṇa, resulting in increasing frictional clashes between the structural particles. At the same time, the coordination of the interial and exterial prāṇa by the cosmic mind results in the emergence of vital energy or prāṇāh. The second is the increasing amassing of, and cooperation between, multitudes of microvita. The overall effect of these two processes is to ‘increase the quantity and quality of mind.’ In the first case, the frictional clashes between structural particles cause the pulverisation of matter to form ectoplasmic particles (cittānu). A collection of cittānu results in the first level of mind called citta, which demarcates an animate entity from an inanimate one. In the case of microvita, the synergistic coagulation of increasingly greater numbers of microvita results in more complex and subtle structures. Sarkar states that each microvitum possesses a primitive kind of unit mind termed ‘micro-psychic conation’. The coagulation of large numbers of microvita then results in a ‘phase transition where many microvita suddenly coordinate their activities so as to produce a unit mind sufficiently advanced that we call it a living organism in the ordinary sense.’ The question of the link between the processes of prāṇa (interial and exterial forces) and microvita remains unresolved. Bhaktavāra proposes that microvita emitted by the cosmic mind may have the capacity to directly manipulate prāṇa, causing the emergence of prāṇāh (vital energy), and thereby guide the evolution of living structures.

Sarkar continues to give microvita a central position in the further evolution of life-forms, once living entities have emerged in the universe. In terms of physical evolution, microvita are posited to be responsible for micro- and macro-mutations, as they are able to enter atoms comprising DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) and change the structure of genes. This in turn influences the gene pool and causes genetic drift. In terms of psychic or mental evolution, microvita are able to enter nerve cells and hormone-producing endocrine glands to effect greater development of these structures. This action of microvita results in the gradual evolution of more complex biological structures in higher animals. Beyond mental evolution, Sarkar sees microvita as instrumental in facilitating and

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260 Bhaktavāra and Jitendra Singh are two such scholars who have attempted to elaborate on Sarkar’s microvita theory. Their views are mentioned here as supplements to his own articulation on microvita.


262 Bhaktavāra, p. 66.

263 Bhaktavāra, p. 62.

264 Bhaktavāra, p. 63.
accelerating changes in the human biological systems for the purpose of psycho-spiritual pursuits. The biological changes that led to the current highly complex nervous system and well-developed hormonal system in the human being are cited by Sarkar to illustrate this theory.\textsuperscript{266}

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Sarkar first expounded his microvita theory during the years 1986 to 1988, whereas his theory of brahmacakra was first given in the years 1955 to 1961. The theory of microvita adds a new dimension to the historically earlier brahmacakra theory through the use of a new set of terminology for the cosmic entity and the universe. In the microvita theory, brahma is said to exist in two states: nirviśeṣa and saviśeṣa.\textsuperscript{267} In the nirviśeṣa state, brahma is known as the ‘Supreme Universal Entity’, where the cognitive principle (śiva) and the creative faculty (śakti) maintain a dynamic equilibrium and equipoise with each other. In the saviśeṣa state, brahma is known as the ‘Supreme Attributional Principle’, with subjective and objective portions. The subjective portion consists of the ‘Knowing principle’ or ‘Knower-I’ (jñā puruṣa) and the ‘Doing principle’ or ‘Doer-I’ (kṛtā puruṣa). Sarkar defines the ‘Knower I’ as ‘expressed energies of different characters – indestructible, interchangeable, and inter-transmutable.’\textsuperscript{268} He conceives of the ‘Doer-I’ as a concentrated package of positive and negative microvita that collectively maintains ‘… the balance of the actional universe, creating initial forms of carbon atoms’.\textsuperscript{269} Through the action of the ‘Doer-I’, carbonic structures can eventually be formed to serve as bases for the manifold expressions of life and mind. In short, it is the subjective portion (comprising the ‘knowing’ and ‘doing’ principles) of the ‘Supreme Attributional Principle’ (saviśeṣa brahma) that drives the entire process of cosmic creation.

The objective portion of the supreme attributional principle consists of the ‘Known-I’ and the ‘Done-I’. The ‘Known-I’ is the world of thoughts, ideas, and propensities – the psycho-spiritual component, while the ‘Done-I’ is the world of ‘inferences’, consisting of various forms of matter and energy – the physical component. The ‘Known’ world contains ideas and the many physico-psycho-spiritual propensities that can be conceived of, and is also termed the abstract world (bhāvastha). The ‘Done’ world is composed of physical matter and energy that can be perceived through the sensory ‘inferences’ of sound, touch, form, taste and smell. According to Sarkar, when microvita come into contact with either matter or energy, they can cause the creation or transformation of physical structures. The direction of change can be towards either crudity or subtlety depending on the type of microvita involved. Similarly, when microvita come into contact with psychic waves (in the world of ideas and propensities), modification of these waves can also occur.

This microvita ontology can be summarised as shown in the table below:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{265} This point is developed out of Sarkar’s theory in Jitendra Singh, \textit{Biopsychology: A New Science of Body, Mind and Soul} (Purulia: Gurukula Publications, 1998), pp. 26-31.
  \item \textsuperscript{266} \textit{MvN}, pp. 59-73.
  \item \textsuperscript{267} \textit{MvN}, pp. 155 -156.
  \item \textsuperscript{268} \textit{MvN}, p. 155.
  \item \textsuperscript{269} \textit{Ibid.}
\end{itemize}
Sarkar stresses that this new ontology of *brahma* based on microvita theory has no direct one-to-one correspondence to the concepts of ‘mahat’, ‘aham’ and ‘citta’ of the *brahmacakra* theory. However, a careful examination of the *brahmacakra* and microvita versions does reveal probable correspondences between their respective concepts. For example, the concept of *puruṣottama* (in the *brahmacakra* theory) can be linked to the concept of the ‘subjective portion of saviṣeṣa brahma’ (in the microvita theory). These correspondences will be highlighted in the discussion that follows.

The characteristics of the *nirviṣeṣa* and *saviṣeṣa* aspects of *brahma* can be compared to those of *nirguna* and *saguṇa brahma* respectively. In both *nirviṣeṣa brahma* and *nirguna brahma*, the creative faculty (*sakti*) has yet to exert its effect on the cognitive counterpart (*śiva*), and thus both are objectless and attributeless. In *saviṣeṣa brahma* and *saguṇa brahma*, however, qualification of *śiva* by *sakti* has occurred and differentiation of *brahma* into several distinct, though substantially the same, portions of consciousness has resulted. The nature and action of the ‘Knower-I’ (*jñā puruṣa*) and ‘Doer-I’ (*kṛta puruṣa*) in the *saviṣeṣa* state can be conceived as two functional roles of *puruṣottama*, the cosmic witnessing nucleus that witnesses and simultaneously reflects on and associates with all the entities in the universe. In other words, *puruṣottama* can be said to effect changes in unit entities through the associative ‘mechanisms’ of positive and negative microvita. For example, the infusion of subtle positive microvita into unit minds can have the effect of increasing the density, volume and mass of the mental body so that it can reflect cosmic consciousness more readily. Since microvita are themselves consciousness in minute particulate form, the association of microvita with the unit mental body would automatically transform mind into consciousness. Hence, a ‘merger’ of the unit and cosmic entities can be said to have taken place. The ‘Done-I’ may correspond to the physical objects created within the cosmic *citta* in both *sañcara* and *pratisañcara* phases of *brahmacakra*, while the ‘Known-I’ may correspond to the ideas, thoughts and propensities generated in individual units of *citta* during the *pratisañcara* phase. Thus, *puruṣottama* effects changes to both macrocosm and microcosm by means of the reflective and associative emanations of microvita in two ways: (a) as *kṛtā puruṣa* (‘Doer-I’), it effects changes to created objects in the macrocosm; (b) as *jñā puruṣa* (‘Knower-I’), it effects transformation of the mind in the microcosm. The above comparisons are purely speculative, based upon phenomenological analysis of textual material, and were not explicitly made by Sarkar. The inferred relationship between Sarkar’s microvita cosmology and his earlier theory of *brahmacakra* can be diagrammatically represented as follows:
Puruṣottama is:
1. jīva puruṣa
   (‘Knower-I’)
2. kṛtā puruṣa
   (‘Doer-I’)

Saviṣeṣa = Saguna Brahma

Nirviṣeṣa = Nirguna brahma

Pratisaṅcara or ‘Introversial’ phase

Saṅcara or ‘Extroversial’ phase

Waning of prakṛti
Qualified by prakṛti

‘Known-I’ = thoughts & propensities

‘Done-I’ = body & physical objects

Reflects & associates with unit entities via positive (+) & negative (-) microvita

Microvita Cosmology and Brahmacakra Theory
3.4 Cosmology

Sarkar’s cosmology flows naturally from his metaphysical ontology of śiva-śakti and his cosmogony encapsulated in the theory of brahmacakra. In line with the Indian Tantric tradition, Sarkar links the creative process with a complex theory of language involving the divine emanation of Sanskrit syllables out of the causal matrix of guṇa-bound consciousness (guṇayukta puruṣa). These syllabic emanations are thought to be vibrational waves deriving from the straight-line waves of the primordial omkāra. Sarkar elaborates on the structure and nature of the cosmos by dividing it into seven loka’s or ‘worlds’, each of which is embedded within a particular layer of the cosmic mind. According to Sarkar, the ‘world’ is seen as external by unit beings but realised to be nothing other than an internal thought projection from the perspective of the cosmic mind.

I then move on to a discussion of Sarkar’s understanding of the process of life, death and rebirth, explaining how this is linked to the theory of samskāra – a notion that is much articulated and accepted within Indian traditions. The discussion in this section shows Sarkar to be firmly grounded in Indian thought, both Tantric and Yogic, although several innovations can be noted, for example, in his concepts of ‘imposed’ samskāra and in his description of the various causes of death.

3.4.1 Theory of Acoustic Roots

The creation of the universe, in Sarkar’s view, is fundamentally a process of gradual transformation of pure, infinite consciousness, first into psychological structures and then into physical objects and finally lifeforms, from whence biological evolution and higher psychospiritual development begin. Since everything is basically vibratory expressions of the same fundamental consciousness, Sarkar also terms the universe as a cosmic ‘thought projection’ or ‘macropsychic conation’, but one that has a teleological finality – re-absorption into the same infinite pure consciousness that is the ultimate purpose of all existence. During the process of ‘macropsychic conation’, vibrations of many and varied wavelengths are emanated from within the cosmic ‘body’ of pure consciousness under the influence of the three forces of prakṛti. These vibrations initially take the form of subtle acoustic waves, with a total of fifty different main sounds that are within the range of human perception. According to Sarkar, there are innumerable acoustic waves in the universe but only fifty main ones can be perceived by the human mind. These are the fifty sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet and they are ‘controlled by fifty main glands and sub-glands of the human body’. Collectively, these fifty sounds create a singular sound in the universe that is called the omkāra or ‘aum’, consisting of ‘a’, ‘u’, and ‘ma’. It can also be said that the ‘aum’ sound was the primordial acoustic vibration that subsequently gave rise to the variegated sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet.

In line with Indian Tantric conception of the universe and sound, Sarkar gives metaphysical significance to the Sanskrit alphabet and attempts to link it to the process and nature of creation. In his

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270 Main sources are AS II.18-20 (p. 25), III.1-7 (pp. 29-33); LAI, pp. 32-38 and 47-54; SPSSA, pp. 117-120 and 166-205; and DOT Vol. 1, pp. 74-124.
theory of acoustic roots, he maintains that ‘for each and every action there is a supporting sound in the universe [which is] … the acoustic root of that action.’\textsuperscript{272} Seen in this light, the \textit{om} sound, being the totality of all sounds, is also the encapsulation of all the actions in the universe. As such, it represents the mundane or worldly expression of \textit{parama purusa}, ‘supreme consciousness’. Sarkar also maintains that every vibration in the universe comprises not only sound but also colour or light. Each vibration, being a thought projection of \textit{saguna brahma}, also represents a particular idea, and hence, ‘each idea has a vibrational sound and vibrational colour.’\textsuperscript{273} Thus Sarkar conceives of \textit{brahma} expressing itself in the form of ideas with attributes of sound (\textit{śabda brahma}) and colour (\textit{jyoti brahma}). In his discourses, Sarkar spoke far more about sound than about colour, and specifically elaborated on mystical sounds that are said to be heard during meditation as a result of \textit{kundalini} movement. This concept will be discussed in Chapter 6.

In his analysis of the fifty unit sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet, Sarkar distinguishes between \textit{bija} (‘acoustic root’)\textsuperscript{274} and \textit{atibija} or \textit{mahābija} (‘super-acoustic root’).\textsuperscript{275} According to him, most of the fifty sounds, termed \textit{bijas}, are primary acoustic roots in themselves, while others, termed \textit{mahābijas}, are the roots of acoustic roots other than the fifty letters. These other acoustic roots, like their counterparts in the Sanskrit alphabet, sonically represent various ideas and actions. For example, the sound ‘\textit{phaṭ}’, which according to Sarkar is the acoustic root (\textit{biṣa}) of putting theory into practice, has a super-acoustic root (\textit{mahābiṣa}) in the sound \textit{l}, a component of the Sanskrit alphabet. Sarkar gives an interpretation of the fifty Sanskrit sounds by weaving together ideas from theory of music, history, philosophy, psychology, and spiritual praxis. Generally, he considers each of the fifty letters as a \textit{māṭrākā varṇa} (‘causal matrix’) as ‘each is an acoustic root of some important factor, sound, vibration, divine or demoniacal propensity, human quality, or microcosmic expression.’\textsuperscript{276} For the sake of brevity and smooth flow of the text, I give Sarkar’s explanations of the significance of each of the letters in Appendix B.\textsuperscript{277}

All of the fifty Sanskrit unit sounds, representing the various propensities (\textit{vyṛtti}) of the mind, are said to be associated with the seven \textit{cakras} located at various points along the central axis of the body, a concept that we will turn to in Chapter 4. By theorising on the nature of sounds and their relationship with both cosmogony and individual psychology, Sarkar is engaging in an essentially ‘Tantric’ type of exercise – homologising the microcosmic and the macrocosmic. The macrocosmic process of cosmic creation occurs in variegated bursts of sound and colour, all from a singular sound that pervades both macrocosm and microcosm. These various sounds are present as vibrations in the cosmos and in the human body, representing in seed form the various propensities of the macrocosmic and microcosmic minds. In the microcosm of a human being, these sounds exist as subtle vibrations

\textsuperscript{271} \textit{DOT} Vol. 1, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{272} \textit{DOT} Vol. 1, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{273} \textit{DOT} Vol. 1, p. 82.
\textsuperscript{274} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{275} \textit{DOT} Vol. 1, p. 91.
\textsuperscript{276} \textit{Ibid.}
in the mind-body complex and their full expression as vocalised sounds occurs through a six-stage process. In this process, the vibrational propensities of the mind are expressed as vocalised sounds, words, or sentences, involving the movement of šakti (here interpreted as ‘energy’) from the lowest cakra (at the base of the spine) to the throat cakra. Sarkar terms the six stages parā, paśyanti, madhyamā, dyotamāṇa, vaikharī, and śrutigocarā.278

In Sarkar’s terminology, the first or primordial stage of linguistic expression is termed parā, while the potential energy of vocalisation is known as parāśakti (to be distinguished from the parāśakti at the initial phases of cosmogony). He says:

All the potentialities of vocal expression lie dormant in the form of parāśakti at the mūlādhāra cakra [psychic centre at the base of the spine]. Parāśakti is raised step by step and finally leads to the vocal expression of language.279

At this stage, vocalisation is dormant and is neither audible nor perceptible in any way. When the mind visualises what it wants to communicate, whether consciously or unconsciously, it enters into the second stage of linguistic expression. At this second stage, the energy of vocalisation moves from the lowest cakra to the second cakra at the genital area, and enables the mind to visualise its communicative intent. This energy is known as paśyanti šakti. Paśyanti šakti then moves up into the third cakra (counting upward from the base of the spine) and combines with the energy of the luminous factor (known as indraśakti) to form madhyamā šakti. Madhyamā šakti is controlled by the third cakra and gives extra momentum to the ideas that are to be communicated. At this third stage of linguistic expression, communicative ideas do not yet have a sound audible to the ear but are ‘audible’ internally in the mind.

Madhyamā šakti then gets transformed into the form of vocalised speech at the fourth stage of linguistic expression. At this fourth stage, the energy of vocalisation is known as dyotamāṇā šakti and functions at a point between the third cakra (at the navel) and the fifth cakra (at the throat). According to Sarkar, dyotamāṇā šakti is expressed ‘as a relentless effort to transform idea into language’ but may result in only a ‘partial or incoherent vocal expression’ if the mind is influenced by fear or other emotions,280 or if there is a lack of proper command over language.281 In Sarkar’s view, the stage of dyotamāṇā also exists in collective life wherein human beings since the dawn of civilisation have always searched for diverse ways to fulfil their desires. However, he considers that human beings as a collective have to date been unable to give ‘full and rich expression to the vast world of human thought.’282

277 DOT Vol.1, pp. 82-124. I follow AM’s translation of terms of the discourse in question.
278 DOT Vol.1, pp. 93-98.
279 DOT Vol.1, p. 94.
280 DOT Vol.1, p. 96.
281 DOT Vol.1, p. 97.
282 Ibid.
At the fifth stage of linguistic expression, the vocal cords situated at the level of the throat cakra transform the abstract ideas of speech into vocal expression. This transformation is facilitated by the energy of vaikhari šakti, which is the energy that causes ideas and inaudible internal sounds to become audible vocal expressions. The sixth and final stage of linguistic expression comprises the conveying of the exact language of communication to one’s listeners. The energy that mediates this phase of linguistic communication is known as śrutigocarā šakti.

Sarkar seems to have developed his acoustic root theory by borrowing heavily from the Tantric conception of sound and the universe. While some of his interpretations and analyses are arguably idiosyncratic, the overall pattern is unmistakably Tantric. The issue of Sarkar’s links to traditional Tantra will be explored further in Chapter 8. For now we leave Sarkar’s theory of acoustic roots and proceed to his conception of the lived worlds of sentient existence.

3.4.2 Sarkar’s Worlds

In his treatise Idea and Ideology, Sarkar details his concept of the various possible dimensions of existence within this universe bounded by space and time. In his worldview, the external world exists in parallel with the internal world or inner mind-states of the individual, a relationship best described by the concept of macrocosmic-microcosmic homologism. We have seen earlier that the cosmic mind comprises three increasingly subtle and vast portions of mental space: citta, aham, and mahat. Within the cosmic citta (the grossest portion), is created the entire physical universe, out of which animate beings and finally human beings with developed minds emerge after a long evolutionary process. Thus, microcosms or unit minds (comprising unit citta, aham and mahat) exist within the scope of the cosmic citta. The entire physical creation is thought to form out of the crudest layer of cosmic citta, known as the kāmamaya kośa or ‘layer of desire’. Other more subtle layers are the manomaya kośa (‘layer of mind’), the atimānasa kośa (‘supramental layer’), the vijñānamaya kośa (‘layer of special knowledge), and the hiraṇmaya kośa (‘golden layer’). As the universe, living entities, and the various layers of cosmic mind are ultimately dynamic vibrations of cosmic consciousness in various wavelengths and degrees of metamorphosis, they can be described as thought or psychic projections of the cosmic entity, or in short, as ‘macropsychic conation’. 283

Sarkar uses the term ‘loka’ to refer to the world in which the different unit minds, with all their various layers (kośas), exist. Kośas are various layers of the unit mind which also exist in macrocosmic form as layers of the cosmic mind. Sarkar explains:

The Cosmic Entity extends in different lokas wherein the different kośas and the unit minds dwell. The term loka refers only to the Macrocsm and not to the unit. 284

283 AV Part 30, pp. 16-17.
284 IAI, p. 36.
Sarkar does not elaborate on these loks, though he does provide details of the various kośas of the mind on a microcosmic scale. His interpretations of the loks beyond the first two are mainly extrapolations into the macrocosm of his explanations of the higher kośas.

According to Sarkar, the kāmamaya kośa of the cosmic mind gives rise to two worlds – the bhūrloka or ‘physical world’ and the bhūvarloka or ‘crude mental world’. The bhūrloka is the crudest level of existence, where material structures have taken form in the first layer of the cosmic mind. It is equated with the entire physical universe, the world in which we live. The bhūvarloka is a slightly subtler state of existence, in which material structures are just beginning to take form but have yet to fully materialise. It can be equated with the early phase of Sarkar’s physical evolution, when the five fundamental factors have just been formed but have yet to fully congeal into material structures. Here, bhūvarloka can be said to be ‘mental’ from the perspective of cosmic citta but ‘physical’ from the perspective of created units. Alternatively, it can be seen as the crude mental spaces of unit beings, where the impulses of sensing, perceiving, desiring, and resisting predominate. While each being’s crude mental space is separate from another’s, it makes sense to talk about a collection of these mental spaces pooled together as the crude mental world, bhūvarloka. In this case, bhūvarloka is ‘mental’ from the standpoint of both unit and cosmic entities.

Above the kāmamaya kośa, the manomaya kośa of the cosmic mind is the svarloka or ‘subtle mental world’, where no physical structures exist and objects are purely mental or psychic from the perspective of both unit and cosmic entities. In this level, the predominant mental faculties are those of dreaming, memory, problem solving, logical thinking and reasoning, and other higher cognitive functions. On an individual or microcosmic level, this can be conceived as the totality of each person’s cognitive world. On the macrocosmic level, this may be equated with the collective pool of cognitive spaces of all sentient creatures.

The atimāṇasa kośa of the cosmic mind is the maharloka or ‘supramental world’, where reside the deeper faculties of intuition and creativity and imprints of past actions in the form of ‘reactive momenta’ (sāṁskāras). Reactive momenta are the potential reactions of past actions committed by the unit mind, individually or collectively, and stored in the third and deeper layer of the mind known as atimāṇasa kośa. Sarkar conceives of this layer as being macrocosmic in nature, and as functioning as a collective field of karmic seeds shared by all unit entities. In other words, while each unit mind acts and imbibes the reactions to its actions, these reactions in potentiality exist in the collective field of the atimāṇasa kośa and are expressed when suitable circumstances and conditions prevail.285

The vijnānamaya kośa of the cosmic mind forms the janarloka or ‘subliminal world’, where the highly subtle faculties of discrimination (viveka) and non-attachment (vairāgya) exist. Again, this subliminal world can be seen as the macrocosmic vijnānamaya koṣa that all unit entities share, and that each entity can develop and access through meditative practices.

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285 It can be postulated that collective archetypes, as conceived by Carl Jung, would be considered by Sarkar to exist in this layer of the cosmic mind.
The hiranmaya kośa of the cosmic mind is the taparloka, for which no English translation has been given. On a microcosmic level, Sarkar describes the hiranmaya kośa as the ‘golden’ layer of the mind, where there is only an intense attraction for the cosmic entity. It is described as the last ‘thin veil’ that separates the individual mind from the ātman, which is in essence identical to brahma, cosmic consciousness. Extrapolating from the above, the taparloka can be seen as the state of existence where unit minds experience this golden radiance of the mind that expands beyond the limited boundaries of the self. It is the world of intense urge for merger into the cosmic entity.

Beyond all the kośas lies the satyaloka or brahmaloka, which is identified with puruṣottama, the witnessing consciousness at the nucleus of the universe. Sarkar also calls this world the ‘Causal Cosmic Body’.\(^{286}\) This is the realm of final spiritual attainment, synonymous with the infinite and resplendent field of the brahma itself. The layers (kośas) of the cosmic mind together with their witnessing nucleus consciousness (puruṣottama), and the corresponding worlds (lokas) that they form can be tabulated as follows:\(^{287}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kośas of Cosmic Mind</th>
<th>Lokas (Worlds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Manomaya kośa</td>
<td>2. Bhūvarloka – crude mental world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Atimānas kośa</td>
<td>3. Svārloka – subtle mental world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Hiraṇmaya kośa</td>
<td>5. Janarloka – subliminal world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puruṣottama</td>
<td>6. Taparloka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(– cosmic witnessing nucleus)</td>
<td>7. Satyaloka or Brahma-loka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– causal cosmic body</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sarkar differentiates the seven lokas one from another by ascribing to them varying proportions and intensities of the three guṇas – sattva guṇa (sentient force), rajoguṇa (mutative force), and tamoguṇa (static force). Sattva guṇa is said to be dominant in janarloka and taparloka, while tamoguṇa is dominant in bhūrloka and bhūvarloka. The relative strength of the guṇas distributed across all the lokas can be tabulated as follows:\(^{288}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loka</th>
<th>Relative Strength of Guṇas</th>
<th>Loka</th>
<th>Relative Strength of Guṇas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhūrloka</td>
<td>Sattva guṇa (S) – least</td>
<td>Janarloka</td>
<td>S – dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rajoguṇa (R) – less</td>
<td></td>
<td>R – least</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tamoguṇa (T) – dominant</td>
<td></td>
<td>T – less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhūvarloka</td>
<td>S – less</td>
<td>Taparloka</td>
<td>S – dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R – less</td>
<td></td>
<td>R – less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T – dominant</td>
<td></td>
<td>T – less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Svarloka</td>
<td>S – less</td>
<td>Satyaloka</td>
<td>All guṇas are dormant. This is essentially the state of nirguṇa brahma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R – dominant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T – less</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{286}\) AS, p. 30.

\(^{287}\) Adapted from IAI, p. 37.

\(^{288}\) Described in AMP Part 3, pp. 202-204.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maharloka</th>
<th>$S$ – less</th>
<th>$R$ – dominant</th>
<th>$T$ – least</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Sarkar unequivocally denies the existence of heaven and hell as commonly understood in many religious traditions.\(^{289}\) He conceives of heaven as merely the environment within which a person enjoys the pleasurable fruits of his/her good actions, while hell is the environment within which he/she experiences the painful consequences of his/her evil actions. Such ‘heavenly’ or ‘hellish’ environments can be experienced in this present-moment reality of earthly life. In other words, Sarkar views heaven and hell more as psychological states than as actual physical planes of existence. In particular, heaven and hell exist in the pure mental world of *svarloka* where happiness (*sukha*) and pain (*duḥkha*) are experienced.\(^{290}\)

### 3.4.3 Life, Death, and Rebirth

Sarkar views life as a continuous process of adjustment between physical waves, mental waves, and *prāṇāḥ*, resulting in the maintenance of the unit structure during the introversial phase of the cosmic cycle, *pratisaṅcara*. A parallelism of physical and mental waves is essential for the existence of living structures, or life, while a loss of parallelism in these waves due to ‘… maladjustment of or unadjustable elevation or degradation of any one of the constituent factors’ will result in physical and mental dissociation, or death.\(^{291}\) The three main causes of elevation of physical and mental waves are: (1) physical clash, or struggle of the unit entity against other entities and the environment; (2) psychic clash, or interaction and struggle between different ideas and mental waves amongst unit entities; and (3) attraction of the Supreme, or the spiritual force emanated by the cosmic entity to draw all entities back into Him. This force is manifested in the urge for spiritual development, deeper fulfilment, and lasting happiness in highly-evolved entities such as human beings. Sarkar gives an example of how maladjustment of physical and mental waves can occur:

… if a dog comes in contact with a human, the mental waves of the dog contact and clash with the waves of the human and thereby the dog's mental waves get evolved and attain a greater wavelength. A stage may be reached when the evolved mental wavelength of the dog may lose proper adjustment with its physical structure. This loss in parallelism will cause dissociation, and the dissociated mind will have to find a physical body with which it can find proper adjustment. In common parlance it will be said that the dog has “died” and undergone a corporeal change.\(^{292}\)

As opposed to elevation in mental waves resulting in evolution, degradation in mental waves resulting in counter-evolution (or negative *pratisaṅcara*) can take place. Sarkar says:

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\(^{289}\) *AS* II.20, pp. 25-26. The *śloka* reads: *Na svarga na rasātalah* [There is neither heaven nor hell].

\(^{290}\) *AMP* Part 3, p. 203.

\(^{291}\) *IAI*, p. 51.

… if the mental wavelength of a person cannot adjust properly with the human body, the psychic body of the person will have to be associated with a properly-adjustable physical structure, which may be of an inferior animal, a plant or still cruder matter … The imbibing of waves of higher wavelengths can rarely the psychic body of a lower animal or plant, so that it can have an association with the human physical structure, and vice versa, if the wavelength is made cruder by inculcating meainer thoughts.293

Sarkar explains the immediate physical cause of death as loss of parallelism of physical and mental waves within the unit structure, leading to dissociation of mind and body. The process through which death occurs is closely linked to the prānāh of the unit entity. For life to exist, proper adjustment between the physical and mental waves with prānāh is another essential. According to Sarkar, prānāh is the collective name of ten vāyus or ‘winds’, of which five are internal and five are external. The names and functions of these vāyus are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External vāyus</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nāga</td>
<td>Jumping, extending body and throwing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kūrma</td>
<td>Contracting body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krkara</td>
<td>Yawning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devadatta</td>
<td>Thirst and hunger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhanañjaya</td>
<td>Sleep and drowsiness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal vāyus</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Regulates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prāṇa</td>
<td>Inhalation and exhalation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apāṇa</td>
<td>Excretion and egestion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samāṇa</td>
<td>Adjustment between prāṇa and apāṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udāna</td>
<td>Vocal cords and voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vyāna</td>
<td>Blood circulation and nerves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the final moments preceding death, all the internal vāyus, starting with prāṇa, apāṇa, samāṇa followed by the next two, gather into one strong force and strike at every delicate point on the physical body for an outlet. All the external vāyus except dhanañjaya follow suit and leave the physical structure with the internal vāyus. Dhanañjaya remains in the body, causing the long deep sleep of death, and only leaves when the body is cremated or has completely decayed. All the vāyus pass into the limitless space of the cosmos, where they remain until they are re-activated according to the will of prakṛti.

Another two possibilities for the immediate cause of death are admitted in Ānanda Mārga philosophy. First, a sudden and drastic change in the physical waves of a living structure can result in loss of their parallelism with mental waves. Such an event, exemplified by an accident or a severe illness, can trigger death. Second, a prolonged synchronisation of mental waves with the infinite wavelength of the cosmic entity (brahma), as a result of spiritual practices, will lead to loss of

293 IAI, p. 52.
parallelism between the mind and the body. The mind finally leaves the body and attains a state known as *mukti* (merger in cosmic mind) or *mokṣa* (merger in cosmic consciousness). This is known as *mahāmrtyu* or the ‘great death’, and is regarded not as ‘… death in the sense of annihilation, but a merger into a state of infinite beatitude.’

In common with the general Indian worldview, Sarkar sees death not as the end of life. He views life as continuing in a cycle of rebirths following death, driven by the *samskāras* or ‘reactive momenta’ of the unit being. He postulates that the movement of living beings through life cannot occur without some force driving it. This force can be either the introversial force of the cosmic mind that pulls unit minds towards its nucleus, or the self-directed volition, thoughts and actions of unit minds themselves. Rebirth, in Sarkar’s estimation, is a mechanism through which living entities gradually evolve into higher forms on their journey towards the cosmic entity. However, as unit minds have the capacity to choose their direction of movement, rebirth can also lead them downward on the evolutionary scale if they decide to indulge in crudifying thoughts and actions.

Sarkar provides some clues to the mechanisms of rebirth, which follow on from the dissociation of the body, mind and *prāṇāḥ*. As previously mentioned, both the psychic waves and the *vāyus* merge into the cosmos following death. While the *vāyus* await further activation by *prakṛti*, the dissociated psychic body moves in search of a suitable physical basis for its expression, as directed and aided by the mutative force of *prakṛti*. The dissociated mental body contains all the unexpressed reactive momentum of its previous lives and requires a material basis for proper expression of that momentum. The cosmic mutative force (*rajoguna*) is responsible for providing the mental body with a physical basis that is able to maintain parallelism with the mental waves. Sarkar sees spermatozoa and ovum as having specific wavelengths according to the reactive momenta of the parent bodies, and when an embryo is formed as a result of their union, it also possesses a specific resultant wavelength. When a parallelism between disembodied mental waves and the embryonic structure can be established, the mental body penetrates into the physical embryo and a new life is formed.

Throughout the entire period when the mind leaves the body and re-situates itself in another physical structure, the *ātman* or a unit of witnessing consciousness remains associated with the mind and its repository of reactive momentum. Although the dissociated mind is in a state of inaction wherein reactions exist only in potentiality, the witnessing faculty continues to function, acting as a ‘residence’ for the mind. Here, one is reminded of a substantialist notion of the *ātman* commonly upheld by proponents of the *upanisadic* tradition, which is at odds with the non-substantialist overtones of Sarkar’s other statements on the nature of the *ātman*. It appears that while Sarkar does not ascribe any sense of personality or ownership to the concept of *ātman*, he nevertheless sees it as an entity that ontologically exists and functions, albeit as a ‘wave-like’ or ‘field-like’ continuum rather than as a solidified mass or substance.

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294 *The Wisdom of Yoga*, p. 47.
3.4.4 Theory of Śaṃskāra

Sarkar asserts that the ‘… mind is an ever-changing functional organism and so it must have a momentum.’

Sarkar identifies this momentum as coming from śaṃskāra, which he defines as the effect of action in the stages leading up to the formation or current status of the unit mind. As previously discussed, the first emergence of the unit mind occurs as a result of various forces acting within sañcara, the extroversial phase of the cosmic cycle of creation. Sarkar further clarifies that the ‘… ultimate cause of momentum of every force is, of course, the Macrocosm [Cosmic Mind], the entire working principle in sañcara and pratisañcara.’

In the stage of sañcara, when only inanimate entities exist, no question of śaṃskāras arises since no mind has yet existed. In the initial stages of pratisañcara, when crude unit minds (citta) have just evolved, the cosmic mind or macrocosm provides the momentum to move these minds ever closer towards the cosmic nucleus. Later, when ego or aham evolves out of citta, the unit mind begins to feel that it is the ‘owner’ of śaṃskāra or reactive momentum, and subsequently establishes volitional control over its mental activities. Human beings, as the most highly evolved forms of physical life according to Sarkar, are ‘owners’ of their śaṃskāras and thus move through the cycle of evolution or counter-evolution by means of the mechanism of rebirth. In Sarkar’s estimation, rebirth need not inevitably lead one forward to the culminating point of cosmic consciousness (parama puruṣa or brahma). It can also be regressive if the unit mind has volitionally thought or acted in a way that crudifies rather than subtilises itself.

In unit beings where the aham and mahat portions of the mind have developed, it is possible to talk of two kind of actions: original (pratyayamūlaka) and reactive (saṃskāramūlaka). Original actions (pratyayamūlaka karma) are those that are performed not as a consequence of saṃskāra but as direct expressions of innate mental propensities (vyrtti). Propensities or vyrtti are ‘occupations’ that the mind adopts when expressing its momentum in the course of evolution, the momentum being provided by the cosmic mind in the early stages of pratisañcara. In the case of a more developed unit mind, its vyrtti can be formed according to the configuration of its saṃskāra, as the whirlpool of thoughts and emotions that constantly emerge from and dissolve in the mind. In this case, actions performed by the unit mind as a result of its vyrtti are no longer ‘original’ in the strict sense, since these vyrtti were formed through the conditioning effect of its saṃskāra. (Sarkar’s theory of vyrtti will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 4.)

Reactive actions (saṃskāramūlaka karma) are direct consequences of potential reactions or reactive momentum (saṃskāra) stored within the unit mind, which the unit mind experiences as pain or pleasure according to the nature of the original actions. Sarkar says:

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295 See discussion on nature of ātman in subsection 3.2.4.
296 IAI, p. 49.
297 IAI, p. 50.
It is the result of the original actions that potential reactions, sanskāras, accrue, which are consumed or dissipated through the retributive actions (i.e. through [undergoing] the requittals or consequential reactions). So the unit has freedom in original actions but none in the retributive ones.\(^{298}\)

The portion of the unit mind that acts and experiences reactions to its actions is the aham or ‘doer I’. The citta or ‘done I’, the crudest portion of the mind, gets distorted in three ways: (1) it takes the form of external objects perceived through the senses; (2) it takes shape according to the desires of aham; and (3) it assumes the form of the fruit of action which the aham enjoys or suffers. Thus, the citta is continuously being distorted, much like a rubber ball being constantly dented by the pressure of fingers. Just as the rubber ball seeks to regain its original shape, its dented surface bouncing out with a force of equal intensity, so the citta tries to regain its original balanced state by undergoing the reaction to action. Sarkar calls this process of returning to the original unaltered citta state prāptirphalabhoga or karmaphalabhoga.\(^{299}\) According to him, the intensity of mental reaction is not always equal and opposite to the intensity of the original action. This is due to changes in time, place, and person, which have a multiplying effect on the strength of the original action to give a greater reaction. The longer the lapse of time between action and reaction, or the greater the change in place and person, the greater will be the reaction in comparison with the action.

Sarkar’s theory of saṃskāra has several features that make it unique and different to the classical Indian doctrine of karma.\(^{300}\) He classifies saṃskāra into three main types, the first and second of which are common to other Indian schools of thought: (1) sahajāta or ‘inborn’ saṃskāra; (2) prayamālaka or ‘acquired’ saṃskāra; and (3) āropita or ‘imposed’ saṃskāra. Sahajāta saṃskāra are those that a unit entity inherits from its former existences, while prayamālaka saṃskāra are those that the entity freshly acquires through independent thought and action. Āropita saṃskāra, a category unique to Sarkar’s theory, are defined as those saṃskāra that are imposed on the unit entity by various means.

First, there are jāgatika or ‘world’ saṃskāra, which are imposed on the mind by contact with the physical world. These are impressions of sensory objects on the mind due to association with matter. Second, there are pariveśagata or ‘environmental’ saṃskāra, which are imposed by the surrounding social and cultural environment. The effect of a person’s social company falls into this category. Third, kartavyagata or ‘responsibility’ saṃskāra are those that are placed upon a person by virtue of his/her social responsibility. The roles and responsibilities that define a person’s membership of a particular family, organisation, or country impose a certain pattern of actions and hence reactions on the person concerned. Fourth, śisṣāgata or ‘education’ saṃskāra are those that are imposed on a student’s mind through various stages of education. Ideas, ideologies, and attitudes conditioned by a person’s education constitute this category of imposed saṃskāra. Finally, there is vrīttigata or

\(^{298}\) Sarkar’s discourse quoted in SPSSA, p. 189.
\(^{299}\) AS, p. 25.
\(^{300}\) See SPSSA, pp. 193-195.
‘habituated behaviour’ samskāra, which are the result of the preceding four kinds of imposed samskāra. The combined effect of physical, environmental, socio-cultural, and educational conditioning moulds and shapes the thoughts and actions of individuals, gradually inducing changes to the hormonal glands and secretions, resulting in long-term behavioural changes. Sarkar views imposed conditioning as having the power to biologically perpetuate certain basic traits and mentality in individuals and society.

3.5 Summarising Conclusion

This chapter began with an account of Sarkar’s concept of the ontological ultimate, portrayed as a tri-aspect cosmic entity he calls brahma. Brahma is said to comprise śiva or puruṣa (‘consciousness’ or ‘cognitive faculty’) and śakti or prakṛti (‘operative principle’), which are inseparable in much the same way as fire is inseparable from its burning capacity. In the scheme of causal relations between śiva and śakti, śiva is pre-eminent and the material and primary efficient cause of the universe, while śakti is subordinate and the secondary efficient cause and link between the material and efficient causes. While śiva or puruṣa is pure, unfettered consciousness – a continuous flow of knowing and luminosity (akhandā cidaikarasaḥ) characterised by truth, cognisance and bliss (sat-cit-ānanda), śakti or prakṛti is made up of three binding forces (guna) – sentient (sattva), mutative (rajas), and static (tamas).

Depending on the dynamics between śiva and śakti, brahma can exist in three states; saguna, nirguṇa, and tāraka. The immanent state of brahma, in which śakti has exerted its influence over śiva and where the forces of prakṛti have begun to act, is known as saguna brahma. In the saguna state, puruṣa exists in its pristine state as the cosmic nucleus consciousness (puruṣottama). Puruṣottama is said to be located in the centre of the entire universe, both macrocosmically and microcosmically. The transcendent aspect prior to all influence of prakṛti over puruṣa is known as nirguṇa brahma. Tāraka brahma is that aspect of the same entity that lies as a bridge between the immanent and transcendent dimensions of brahma. Sarkar sees tāraka brahma as the tangential point and silver lining between the unmanifested (avyaktā) and manifested (vyakta) consciousness, simultaneously partaking in the stance of both saguna and nirguṇa brahma. Tāraka brahma is sometimes equated with puruṣottama and acts to maintain order and devotional inspiration in the universe. Understood as a soteriological concept, tāraka brahma manifests as the perfect human guru, who has the capacity to lead human beings toward salvation both individually and collectively.

Sarkar simultaneously remythologises and philosophises on the central Hindu personality of Kṛṣṇa, as part of the attempt to construct his AM ontology. He sees Kṛṣṇa as a historical manifestation of tāraka brahma some three thousand five hundred years ago, one who has two aspects: Vraja Kṛṣṇa – the playful and sweetly charming young Kṛṣṇa of Vrindāvan, and Pārthaśārathi Kṛṣṇa – the strict and tough community leader who leads and directs the forces of righteousness in the Mahābhārata war. On a philosophical level, Sarkar conceptualises vraja kṛṣṇa as the sweet, attractive, and spontaneous aspect of puruṣottama, the pure witnessing consciousness existing as the nucleus of
the universe. Similarly, he views pārthaśārathi kṛṣṇa as the directive and controlling aspect of puruṣottama, responsible for leading all beings on to the path of righteousness.

Sarkar explains his view on the nature of the self (which is seen to be identical to the nature of the universe) through the concepts of ātman and paramātman. He sees ātman as a continuous flow of knowledge (jñāna) essentially one with and embedded in the infinite cognisant space of paramātman (a flow of jñāna of infinite scope). Equivocating between a substantialist and a non-substantialist interpretation of ātman, Sarkar maintains that paramātman, which is puruṣottama in association with the universe and individual beings (and essentially one with brahma), is both the ground and the witnessing faculty of cosmic and psychological reality.

Sarkar’s theory of cosmogony or brahmacakra forms the overall context for his entire ideology and praxis. He sees brahmacakra as having two phases – saṅcara (‘proper movement’) and pratisaṅcara (‘reverse proper movement’). In the primordial and pre-evolutionary stages prior to the start of creation, several processes are said to occur, which finally precipitate the brahmacakra. In the primordial phase, the three forces of prakṛti – sattvagūṇa, rajogūṇa, and tamogūṇa – flow haphazardly in all directions with infinite momentum, forming many multi-sided figures of force in the infinite ‘body’ of undifferentiated and unmanifested puruṣa (nirṛga brahma). Here, prakṛti is said to be dormant or anucchāṇya. In the subsequent pre-evolutionary stage, the three guṇas form themselves into stable triangles of forces in dynamic equilibrium, resulting in a localised portion of the infinite puruṣa being acted upon by prakṛti.

Saṅcara, the first phase of actual creation, then begins with one of the forces bursting out from one of the vertices of the triangle. It is unclear whether (1) one triangle of forces gives rise to one universe, in which case the multitude of triangles within infinite brahma give rise to many universes; or (2) one triangle of forces emits just one entity in the universe, in which case the many triangles controlled by a common nucleus (puruṣottama) are responsible for the multiplicity of entities in one universe. It can be argued that this ambiguity is one salient weakness of Sarkar’s cosmogonic theory.

During the cosmogonic process, the sentient force (sattvagūṇa) is the first to emerge and along with it is a qualified state of puruṣa in the form of a linear wave (jñānaśakti nāda). This nāda is the acoustic expression of the primordial sound, om, which later differentiates into multiple sound units made up of vibrational waves. Before that happens, the linear waves undergo further influence by sattvagūṇa and become transformed into the cosmic mahat, the sense of self-existence in the previously selfless and objectless consciousness. The mutative force (rajogūṇa) takes over the sentient and transforms part of the cosmic mahat into the cosmic aham, the sense of doership or agency and a stronger sense of self. The static force (tamogūṇa) then predominates and transforms a part of the cosmic aham into cosmic citta, the coarsest objectified portion of the mind. Together, the cosmic mahat, aham and citta form the cosmic mind (bhūmamanas). It is out of the cosmic citta that the five-elemental (pāñcamahābhūta) material and living universe finally emerges with the continued action of the static force.
Pratisaṅcara, the other phase of the brahmacakra, is said to begin when life first emerges from matter. Living structures are formed from a balanced composition of the five fundamental factors (ethereal, aerial, luminous, liquid, and solid), the emergence of prāṇāḥ (a collection of ten vital energies), and the formation of a controlling nucleus within each structure. The static force gives way first to the mutative force and then to the sentient force, resulting in gradual emergence of citta, aham and mahat within the unit living structure. Citta, aham and mahat, in their microcosmic form, collectively comprise the unit mind. Evolution of the unit mind is said to be the result of continuing frictional clashes and pulverisation of matter and ectoplasmic particles (cittāṇu), causing subtler and more expansive layers of the mind to emerge out of cruder ones. Through spiritual devotion, altruistic service and meditative practices, unit minds are able to expand themselves further and finally attain the teleological goal of existence – merger into that supreme consciousness (parama puruṣa) from whence all entities have arisen. This completes Sarkar’s cycle of cosmic creation (brahmacakra), which is an ongoing process said to occur from moment to moment from beginningless past to endless future.

The role of the subtle entities that Sarkar calls microvita in the cosmic creative process, particularly in the initial formation of life and in subsequent genetic mutations, is a relatively late addition to Sarkar’s worldview. His microvita theory adds a new dimension to the historically earlier cosmogonic theory of brahmacakra and to aspects of his soteriology, purporting to account for the evolution of life and the transformation of the mind in response to spiritual praxis. Sarkar sees microvita as minute emanations of pure consciousness that may be positive or negative in terms of their impact on the human mind and body. Positive microvita are said to be emanated and utilised by the sadguru (who is the supreme consciousness in embodied existence) to assist spiritual aspirants in their meditative and soteriological quest. Sarkar sees such a ‘shower’ of positive microvita by the guru on sincere practitioners as synonymous with the grace of the supreme entity (brahma kṛpā). In microvita cosmology, Sarkar gives nirguṇa brahma an alternative appellation of ‘nirviśeṣa’ (‘without characteristics’) and saguṇa brahma the appellation ‘saviśeṣa’ (‘with characteristics’). He uses the terms jñā puruṣa (‘knower-I’) and kṛtā puruṣa (‘doer-I’) possibly to refer to the dual role of puruṣottama, the cosmic witnessing nucleus, in (1) guiding the process of evolution, and (2) attracting and accelerating unit beings towards the highest spiritual goal of brahma. From the quasi-scientific terminology he uses in his microvita theory, it can be argued that Sarkar is consciously trying to couch his latest philosophy in terms palatable to the modern mind. It is ironical that in this attempt, the very pedagogy he uses to boost his ideas backfires, revealing an element of confusion in his usage of the concepts ‘virus’ and ‘sub-atomic particle’ when referring to microvita in the physical realm (see subsection 3.3.4).

In terms of cosmology, Sarkar articulates a theory of acoustic roots (bīja) reminiscent of the traditional Tantric theory of sounds and letters. He sees all acoustic roots or sound units as ultimately derived from the primordial sound of om, the first linear vibration emitting from the matrix of creation,
the triangle of forces. These sound units, while existing in the cosmos, are simultaneously represented in the human body as acoustic roots of various propensities of the mind.

On the cosmic scale, Sarkar conceives of seven lokas or worlds that form all possible dimensions of physical and psychic existence: bhūrloka, bhūvarloka, svarloka, maharloka, janarloka, taparloka, and satyaloka. These lokas exhibit macrocosmic-microcosmic homologism, a feature typical of Indian cosmologies. With the exception of the seventh and subtlest world, satyaloka, they are all essentially layers of the cosmic citta in varying degrees of crudity or subtlety. The entire physical universe is said to be formed in the bhūrloka of the cosmic citta.

Sarkar’s theory of saṃskāra is the final element in his complex monistic worldview of AM. It is essentially an articulation of the Indian doctrine of karma from a Yogic and psychosocial perspective. A clear example of his psychosocial slant on karma is his unique analysis of āropita or ‘imposed’ saṃskāra – imprints on or distortions of the citta as a result of sociocultural conditioning and societal imposition (e.g. conditioning as a result of social structures such as caste, class, gender divisions). By including a psychosocial dimension in his cosmology, Sarkar is effectively building a link to his social, economic, and political concerns, concerns that are articulated and acted upon in his philosophy of Progressive Utilisation Theory (PROUT). Sarkar also offers a conception of life, death and rebirth based on the mutual adjustment between physical waves, mental waves and prāṇāh. He outlines the process of death and dying in terms of the gradual resorption and exit of the vital energies (vāyus) from the body and a sequential dissolution of the layers of the mind. Rebirth of the deceased individual is said to be guided by (1) the ‘basket’ of unexpressed saṃskāras lying latent in the dormant mind of the deceased, and (2) the mutative force of the cosmic prakṛti, which assists in finding the dissociated mind a physical body with which its psychic waves are in parallelism. In many ways, Sarkar’s ideas on rebirth are reminiscent of a typical Indian religious outlook, an outlook that views the cycle of birth, death and rebirth as natural, inevitable (for the unenlightened), and to be transcended. In elaborating on the finer details of his rebirth theory, Sarkar borrows from Yoga the notion of saṃskāra, and from Śāmkhya the concepts of prakṛti and rajoguna. (A more in-depth comparison between Sarkar’s AM and both Yoga and Śāmkhya is found in Chapter 7.) In much the same way as he has appropriated scientific terminology for his microvita theory, Sarkar employs the scientific metaphor of waves to explain the processes of death and rebirth, a pedagogy that may be construed as modern adaptation of traditional concepts so as to target a contemporary and better-informed audience. In articulating Sarkar’s cosmology in this chapter, I have engaged with his terminology and texts not as a reified essentialised subject divorced from history and culture, but as an organic field of meanings, intentions, and influences in critical and reflexive dialogue with the matter of investigation, itself a fluid horizon of polytextual constructions. In particular, my intellectual grasp of concepts such as puruṣa, prakṛti, śiva, and śakti, reflect both the input of my spiritual and academic training and the pull of meaning exerted by the hermeneutical and critical reflection of the AM textual tradition. Seen in this light, these concepts are not simply designations of static ontological truths but semantic pulsations’ evocative of and pointing to lived experience.
Chapter 4
Mind and Biopsychology

4.1 Introduction
This chapter takes us another step on the journey into Sarkar’s spiritual world, exploring his ideas on
the mind and its workings and a new integrated science of body, mind and spirit that he terms
biopsychology. This chapter draws heavily on Sarkar’s compiled discourses in Yoga Psychology (YP:
1998), parts of Idea and Ideology (IAI: 1993), Discourses on Tantra (DOT) Volume 1 (1993) and
Volume 2 (1994), Ānanda Śūtram (AS: 1996), and the secondary text, The Spiritual Philosophy of Śrī
Śrī Ānandamārīti: A Commentary on Ānanda Śūtram (SPSSA: 1998). The sections in this chapter
examine the themes of psychology and biopsychology in Sarkarian Tantra and are divided into sub-
sections for purposes of clarity and manageability.

Sarkar’s layered theory of mind bears some resemblance to the ancient Indian conception of
the five ‘selves’ of the human being as exemplified in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad and later in the
philosophical school of Vedānta.301 On deeper analysis, however, the terminologies used are found to be
different in several cases and the definitions and meanings applied to them are also found to vary.
Such issues will be more critically and thoroughly examined in Chapter 7. In this chapter, Sarkar’s
homologism of the unit mind with the cosmic mind, and its relationship to the nucleus witnessing
consciousness (puruṣottama), are described, as are his theory of knowledge and his concept of
‘propensities’ or ‘expressed sentiments’ (vṛtti). Sarkar’s theory of knowledge offers an insightful view
of the types of knowledge open to the human mind, while his concept of vṛtti seeks to explain deep
forces that drive the mind, how they work, and where they might be located.

Sarkar’s biopsychology presents an integrated view of the biology of nerves and endocrine
glands and their relationships to mind, psychology, and spirituality. A cursory examination shows
much of his terminology to be identical or close to traditional Tantric terms and concepts; e.g. śukra,
nāḍī, cakra, prāṇa, and kuṇḍalinī. However, Sarkar’s usage of modern scientific terms such as
‘gland’, ‘nerve’, and ‘hormone’, and his understanding of the links and inter-relationships between the
various biopsychological constructs appear entirely original. This chapter explores his unique
presentation of traditional Tantric constructs, highlighting in some detail the structure and function of
those biopsychological entities central to his teachings.


100
4.2 Yoga Psychology

Sarkar’s understanding of the mind as a multi-layered entity showing homology with the cosmic mind has been briefly discussed in the previous chapter. This section examines in greater detail the different layers of the mind, as Sarkar conceives them, and seeks to correlate them to other models of the mind that Sarkar has given in his discourses. Inconsistencies are highlighted and hopefully resolved through a comparison of Sarkar’s various models, with a view to correlating similar phenomenological features identified between the various structures and functions of these models.

The relationship between the microcosmic and macrocosmic levels of the mind shows a neat symmetry of layers and functions, differing only in scope and boundary. While the microcosmic mind is spatiotemporally located within the person, the macrocosmic counterpart extends throughout the physical universe and beyond. However, Sarkar’s assertion is that at the level of the three deepest layers, the microcosmic and macrocosmic minds are essentially one. Hence, it is possible for a person to gain access to the cosmic mind through going deep into his/her own mind. Sarkar portrays purusottama as the nucleus witnessing consciousness of all layers of the cosmic mind, and as the witnessing entity associated with each layer of the unit mind. Depending on the layer of mind in question, Sarkar gives distinct terms to the witnessing purusottama in order to differentiate between its various functional forms.

To Sarkar, mind is the instrument of knowledge and he sees knowledge as the ‘subjectivization of objectivity or objectivities’. According to Sarkar, all forms of knowledge involving a duality between the knower and the known are the ‘umbra and penumbra of knowledge’ rather than true knowledge itself. These would include perceiving an external object, recollecting a memory, or cogitating a thought. The only true and pinnacled form of knowledge is non-dual knowledge, otherwise termed ‘self knowledge’, where the knower and the known become one. This occurs when the unit mind merges into the unit consciousness (anucaitanya), and the unit consciousness merges into the cosmic consciousness (bhūmācaitanya). The supreme stance of knowledge is, according to Sarkar, to be the supreme subjectivity itself, the ineffable, infinite field of awareness whence all objects and ideas emerge, wherein they are maintained, and into which they finally dissolve. Sarkar affirms that devotion (bhakti) is a valid, and indeed the ultimately valid, mode of knowledge, in addition to the commonly accepted modes of sense inference, authority, and rationality. The reason is that it is only through a completely selfless and devotional orientation of one’s whole being towards the supreme entity that the pinnacle of knowledge can be attained. In this

\[\text{ānanda-mayaḥ} \] In later Vedānta, these are termed the five sheaths: annamaya kośa, prāṇamaya kośa, manomaya kośa, vijnānamaya kośa, and ānandamaya kośa.

303 NSS, pp. 175-176.
304 NSS, pp. 172-178.
305 AS II.8, p. 21.
process, the unit mind is able to merge completely into cosmic consciousness and thus realise the ultimate knowledge. To Sarkar, loving is a way of knowing and more – it is knowing par excellence.

An account of Sarkar’s psychology would be incomplete without a discussion of his theory of vṛtti, translated as ‘propensities’ or ‘expressed sentiments’. The relationship between vṛtti and saṃskāra is somewhat problematic and requires clarification. Examples of some of the issues to be explored in this section are whether saṃskāra conditions vṛtti, or vice versa, or both; and whether actions resulting in saṃskāra can affect and either strengthen or weaken certain vṛtis. The plethora of primary vṛtis a human being possesses and their loci in the various glands and cakras of the body are also discussed.

4.2.1 Theory of Mind

In his diverse discourses, Sarkar proposes several distinct but possibly parallel models of the mind that aim to elucidate what the mind is, how it functions, how it can be developed and how it can be finally liberated. In addition to these models of the mind’s structure, Sarkar also describes four possible states of mind, states that are normative within the Indian tradition, namely: waking (jāgratā), dreaming (svapna), dreamless sleep (nīḍā), and the ‘state of non-duality’, turīya. He views the first three of these states as caused by the action of the operative principle (prakṛti) on pristine consciousness (puruṣa), and the fourth state as the natural, undivided condition of nirguṇa brahma. He says:

Under the influence of Prakṛti there can exist three conditions or states between the unit entity, conscious of its smallness, and the unfathomably great Brahma. These three conditions are wakefulness, dream, and sleep. None of these three is permanent, for they are evolved by the influence of Prakṛti’s three guṇas or attributes, viz., sattva, rajah, and tamaḥ. In all these three conditions Macrocosm and microcosm remain apparently separate. But the influence of Prakṛti being absent in the fourth condition, which is known as turīya (state of non-duality) or kaivalya (absolute identity with the divine essence), there remains no distinction between Brahma and the unit. Both are one consummate whole.307

In addition to the four states, Sarkar mentions senselessness and death (maranam) as two other possible mind states.308 He distinguishes senselessness from death, and senselessness and death together from the other four states in terms of the functioning of mind layers (kośas) as shown in the table below (kośa is a concept to be elaborated in Sarkar’s third and fifth models of the mind). He also differentiates the first three mind states from one another using the above-mentioned criterion as follows.309

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307 SS Part 2, p. 73.
308 SS Part 2, pp. 80-81.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State of mind</th>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Dormant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Waking       | ▪ Crude mind (*kāmamaya kośa*)  
▪ Subtle mind (*manomaya kośa*)  
▪ Causal mind (*atimāṇasa kośa, vijñānamaya kośa, hiraṇyamaya kośa*) | – |
| Dreaming     | ▪ Subtle mind  
▪ Causal mind | ▪ Crude mind |
| Dreamless sleep | ▪ Causal mind | ▪ Crude mind  
▪ Subtle mind |
| Senselessness | ▪ Causal mind | ▪ Crude mind  
▪ Subtle mind  
(both inactivated due to external blow or shock.) |
| Death        | – | ▪ Crude, subtle, and causal minds suspended. |
| *Turiya*     | ▪ All three layers of mind merged into *parama puruṣa*. |

Sarkar also homologises the first three states of microcosmic experience with three ontological states of the macrocosmic mind.\(^{309}\) The waking state in the unit mind is homologised with that state of cosmic mind wherein *sattvaguṇa* is predominant, termed *kṣīrasamudra* (‘sea of milk’). This state appears to be identical with the cosmic *mahat*. The dreaming state is homologised with the cosmic state wherein *rajaguṇa* is predominant, and is termed, on the macrocosmic scale, *garbhodaka* (‘fluid of creation’). *Garbhodaka* may be identical with the cosmic *aham*. The state of dreamless sleep is homologised with the cosmic state wherein *tamoguṇa* is predominant, which is termed *kāraṇārṇava* or *kāraṇasamudra* (‘sea of causality’). *Kāraṇasamudra* is the created universe, formed within the cosmic *citta*. The fourth state, *turiya*, is beyond any differentiation into unit and cosmic, and exists as the perennial ground of the mind and the final goal of spiritual development.

Coming now to Sarkar’s models of the mind’s structure, the first describes differentiation of the mind into three functional components – *citta*, *aham*, and *mahat*. On the microcosmic level, *citta*, as seen in the previous chapter, is the crudest and most primitive portion of the mind that imbibes the reactions to its actions, and hence is termed the ‘done-I’. It is a collection of subtler-than-matter ectoplasmic particles, which were formed as a result of the powdering down of matter particles due to evolutionary forces. The *citta* takes the form of the external object perceived or mental object projected and is able to retain that memory trace even after the perception has occurred. It also has the ability to affect the vital force (*prāṇa*) and cellular protoplasm via instincts, which are habituated propensities that have been biologically perpetuated through the functions and secretions of the glands. In other words, the *citta* is primarily instinctive in its function.

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\(^{309}\) Adapted from *SPSSA*, p. 184.  
\(^{310}\) SS Part 2, pp. 73-75.
Aham is the sense of ‘doer-I’ that is inherent in the citta and emerges when a sufficient degree of collision and movement within the citta forces the subtler aham to manifest. Aham is the sense of agency and ownership, otherwise termed the ego, which performs an action and enjoys the results of that action in the form of pleasure or pain. Its functions are twofold: firstly, to create a mental image of an action to be performed on its citta (sāmkalpātmaka), and secondly, to enact the action by means of the citta and the sensory and motor organs (vikalpātmaka). The more developed sense of ego present in the aham allows for the expression of some degree of intellect. Sarkar uses the analogy of two concentric circles to represent the citta and aham: the inner circle with the smaller circumference can be equated with the citta, while the outer and larger circle is the aham. The aham is thus present in as well as outside the citta. The surplus area of the aham that extends beyond the boundary of the citta gives rise to the faculty of the intellect. In this case, the instinctual impulses of the mind associated with the citta can then be controlled by the intellect of the aham.

Mahat is the subtlest portion of the mind that comprises the sense of the mind’s existence. Mahat is that self-awareness in the mind that is able to observe the workings of the aham and citta, in terms of both the performance of actions and the resultant enjoyment of their consequences, both pleasure and pain. Mahat is not directly involved in actions but is indirectly associated with the external world through the aham. Just as aham pervades within and without citta, mahat is intrinsic to the very fabric of the aham itself as well as extrinsic to it. Again using the concentric circle analogy, the mahat is the largest and outermost circle that encompasses both the aham and the citta. The surplus portion of the mahat that extends beyond the boundaries of the citta and aham gives rise to the faculty of intuition. The predominance of the mahat over the aham and citta allows for the control of intuition over the forces of intellect and instinct. The presence of a well-developed mahat in the mind elicits a strong urge to know and understand its subtlest nature and the deepest truths of life and the universe. This activity of the mahat marks the beginning of the spiritual quest. It is important to note here that Sarkar distinguishes the spirit from the mind by defining the spirit or soul, as commonly termed, as nothing other than the intrinsic pure consciousness (ātman) underlying and beyond the mind. Ātman, being the ultimate nature of the mind and the universe, is the subtlest, infinite and all-pervasive entity that is fundamentally an endless flow of knowledge (jñāna), truth (sat), cognisance (cit), and bliss (ānanda). It has a witnessing capacity far more refined and all-encompassing than that of the mahat. Realization of this ātman, which is identical with the cosmic entity, brahma, is the summum bonum of Sarkar’s spiritual praxis. The first model of the mind is represented in the diagram below:
Another model that Sarkar uses to describe the mind has an arguably more modern and scientific ring to it, utilising terms such as ‘protozoic mind’, ‘metazoic mind’, and ‘unit microcosm’.\(^{311}\) According to Sarkar, every single cell in the human structure possesses a primitive mind, the protozoic mind, which is completely dominated by basic instincts such as hunger, thirst, fear, sleep, and procreation. The human being is thus made up of millions of protozoic minds working collectively and driving its instinctual life. When cells come together to perform specialized functions in a coordinated way, a more complex metazoic structure is formed. In correspondence with the metazoic structure, a higher level of mind, which he calls the metazoic mind, evolves. An example of a metazoic structure would be an organ such as the heart, or in its greatest complexity, the brain. In addition to the collective protozoic mind of a specialized group of cells that exist in any metazoic structure, there is the metazoic mind that exists alongside it. Unlike the protozoic minds, the metazoic mind possesses some degree of intellect and rationality, and is able to exert some control over the instinctual impulses of the protozoic minds. The unit microcosm is the most developed level of mind possessing mainly intellect, rationality, and intuition and thus exerts overall control over both protozoic and metazoic minds. The more developed the unit microcosm, the greater its ability to guide and channel the forces of the protozoic and metazoic tendencies toward nobler and subtler pursuits. This hegemony of the unit microcosm makes it possible for the individual to develop a sense of universal love beyond the selfish and instinctual drives of the lower minds. The human mind is thus a collective mind comprising the unit microcosm, the metazoic mind, and the collective protozoic mind. The unit microcosm maintains an association with each of the protozoic and metazoic minds individually, as well as with all the protozoic and metazoic minds collectively.

The most obvious similarity between these two models of mind proposed by Sarkar – the *citta-aham-mahat* model and the protozoic-metazoic-microcosm model – is their tripartite division. On closer examination, the three categories, protozoic mind, metazoic mind, and unit microcosm, do not correspond neatly with the *citta, aham*, and *mahat* of the first model, nor are they meant to. In *IAI*.

\(^{311}\) *YP*, pp.1-4.
(1993), Sarkar specifically uses the term ‘microcosm’ to refer to the totality of the *citta, aham, and mahat* of the unit mind.\textsuperscript{312} The unit microcosm has been described as that aspect of the unit mind, which has the ability to control and direct the flow of the protozoic and metazoic minds toward higher goals due to its intellectual and intuitive powers. It is also the ‘gateway’ into the cosmic mind or the macrocosm in the sense that it can, as a minute part of the vast cosmic mental field, expand and merge into it provided proper meditative training is undertaken. In his third model, Sarkar further analyses the *citta* into five progressively subtler and deeper layers of mind or *kosas*, the deepest three of which are said to have the potential to expand to macrocosmic proportions. This would concur with his preceding assertion that the unit microcosm provides access into the cosmic mind. If unit microcosm is equated with the totality of unit *citta-aham-mahat*, this leaves the status of the protozoic and metazoic minds unclear with respect to the first model. As they are considered less developed than the microcosm, they cannot be equated with *aham* and *mahat*. More light will be shed on this issue when we investigate Sarkar’s third model.

The third model of mind that Sarkar proposes has been briefly discussed in the previous chapter. This model describes the mind as having five layers of increasing subtlety and scope. In addition, the material body (*annamaya kośa*) is itself considered a *kośa*, being the crudest layer formed as a result of the metamorphosis of pure consciousness during cosogenesis. Hence, while the physical body is not a part of the mind, it nevertheless contains the potentiality of consciousness within its very fabric. It is in this sense that it is possible to correlate the protozoic and metazoic minds with the *annamaya kośa*, albeit only loosely.

From the above discussion, it appears that the protozoic and metazoic minds (of Sarkar’s second model) do not equate with *citta* and *aham* (of the first model) respectively, but rather equate with the primitive mind present in the physical body – *annamaya kośa*. This would corroborate Sarkar’s earlier assertion that unit microcosm comprises the totality of *citta, aham* and *mahat* within the individual being. The relationship between the first and second of Sarkar’s models of the mind can now be tabulated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citta</td>
<td>Protozoic mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aham</td>
<td>Metazoic mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahat</td>
<td>Unit microcosm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Returning to Sarkar’s third model, the first *kośa* of the mind is termed the layer of desire (*kāmamaya kośa*), also translated as conscious or crude mind. It is responsible for (1) sensing external stimuli through the sense organs, (2) having desire on the basis of those stimuli, and (3) acting out or expressing those desires through the motor organs. The *kāmamaya kośa* controls the sensory

\textsuperscript{312} IAI, p. 37.
and motor organs and the instincts that propel the individual towards various external objects. In addition, the kāmamaya kośa is the layer of mind that controls the functions of the mūlādhāra cakra (‘terranean plexus’)\(^{313}\) located at the base of the spine. Sarkar’s theory of cakras will be discussed later in the chapter; suffice for now to mention that the cakras can be seen as sub-stations of the mind through which the mind exerts its influence over the body and vice versa. Regarding this, Sarkar says:

The human body is made up of five fundamental factors. These five fundamental factors are being controlled by prāṇa, the first of the five internal vital principles. The prāṇa is being controlled by the mind … the different seats of the mind for the indirect control of the different corporal factors are called “cakras” or “circles” or centres of psychic force … the five koṣas … chiefly control the five cakras …\(^{314}\)

The second layer, manomaya kośa or layer of mind, also translated as subconscious or subtle mind. The manomaya kośa directly controls the conscious mind and performs the functions of memory (smarāṇa), contemplation (manana), experience of pleasure and pain as reactions to past actions, and dreaming.\(^{315}\) It is also the layer of mind that controls the svādhiṣṭhāna cakra (‘fluidal plexus’) located at the base of the genital organ. According to Sarkar, there are two main categories of memory, cerebral and extra-cerebral memory. Cerebral memory is the type of memory that is stored in the brain cells and consists of memory traces of events and actions that occurred in the present lifetime. Extra-cerebral memory is memory of events and actions belonging to former lifetimes that is not stored in the brain cells. Sarkar asserts that a child of up to five years of age may still be able to recollect traces of extra-cerebral memory, but that this is not possible once the child grows older. An older child with access to both cerebral and extra-cerebral memory in one physical body will not be able to adjust to the present body and environment and will have to die to take birth in a new body. Besides memory, contemplation in the form of intellectual reasoning, problem solving, and scientific and philosophical thinking is a crucial function of this layer of the mind. It is possible, according to Sarkar, for the manomaya kośa to be so active that external sensory stimuli may not even be received by the sense organs. Instead, the body responds to the images of the manomaya kośa rather than to the stimuli of the external world.

The third layer is termed the atimānasa kośa or layer of higher mind, also translated as ‘supramental mind’, and ‘first layer of the superconscious causal mind’.\(^{316}\) ‘Causal mind’ is the term Sarkar applies to the three deepest layers of the mind, which are essentially cosmic in scope and one with the cosmic causal mind. The atimānasa kośa goes beyond the limitations of time, space, and person, and ‘sees’ into the past, present and future. It is also the layer of intuition and creativity, where fresh insights into old problems may emerge, and the layer from which samskāra is first

\(^{313}\) YP, p. 137. All subsequent English translations relating to the cakras are taken from the same page.

\(^{314}\) Sarkar’s words quoted in SPSSA, p. 162.

\(^{315}\) SPSSA, p. 148.


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expressed. In this layer, deeply buried reactions to past actions first manifest in the form of desires or thoughts. It is also where the desire for spiritual practice (śādhanā) first finds expression.\textsuperscript{317} The \textit{atimānasa kośa} controls the \textit{manipūra cakra} (‘igneous plexus’) located at the navel.

The fourth layer is the \textit{vijñānamaya kośa} or layer of special knowledge, otherwise translated as subliminal mind. As the second layer of the causal mind, the \textit{vijñānamaya kośa} is all-expansive in scope and can perceive all the vibrational inferences (\textit{tanmātras}) of the universe, whereas the lower \textit{kośas} can only perceive a fraction of them. It controls the functions of the \textit{anāhata cakra} (‘solar plexus’) located at the mid-point of the chest. Many positive mental qualities are said to be expressed in this layer of the mind, namely mercy (kṛpā), gentleness (mṛdutā), patience (dhaiṛya), serenity (suṣṭhir), non-attachment (vairāgya), steadiness (dhṛtī), success (sampat), cheerfulness (hāsyā), spiritual ecstasy (romāṇca), humility (vinaya), meditation (dhyāna), seriousness (gāmbhīrya), enthusiasm (udyama), imperturbability (akṣobhya), magnanimity (audārya), and focussed attention (ekāgratā).\textsuperscript{318} The chief characteristics of the \textit{vijñānamaya kośa} are, above all, discrimination (viveka) and non-attachment (vairāgya). Viveka is the ability to distinguish the eternal from the ephemeral, truth from falsehood, and light from darkness. It allows one to differentiate the transient pleasures of life from the lasting happiness of spiritual fulfilment. The consequence of viveka is the ability to renounce or let go of attachment to the pleasures and objects of the mundane world. This non-attachment is known as vairāgya. For Sarkar, true vairāgya takes place in the context of a positive attraction for the cosmic entity, the ultimate reality underlying all finite physical and mental objects. When love for the supreme consciousness is so strong that all finite entities are seen as expressions of the divine, a natural sense of non-attachment to these objects ensues.

The fifth layer is the \textit{hiraṇmaya kośa} or the ‘golden’ layer, also known as the subtle causal mind. This is the highest and subtlest layer of the mind; the sense of ‘I’ is latent and its nature is ‘brilliant golden effulgence’ accompanied by an intense attraction for the supreme consciousness. It controls the functions of the \textit{viśuddha cakra} (‘sidereal plexus’) located at the throat. Sarkar sees the \textit{hiraṇmaya kośa} as the last thin veil that separates the mind from its witnessing ātman and by extension, the \textit{paramātman} or supreme consciousness. He says:

\begin{quote}

The subtlest expression of the mind is in the \textit{hiraṇmaya kośa} which is the first expression of mahattattva. It is the establishment in this \textit{kośa} in a universal manner that is termed \textit{savikalpa samādhi}. When after emerging from the \textit{samskāra}, the \textit{hiraṇmaya kośa} merges in attributeless Brahma, then alone we call it \textit{nirvikalpa samādhi}.\textsuperscript{319}
\end{quote}

With regard to the relationships between the various \textit{kośas}, Sarkar says that the consecutively deeper layers are larger than, and contain, the preceding ones:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{317} \textit{SPSSA}, p. 153.
\item \textsuperscript{318} \textit{SPSSA}, p. 154. This list of qualities attributed to \textit{vijñānamaya kośa} is given by Ānandamitra in \textit{SPSSA}. It appears that Sarkar never made this assertion in the published discourses of AM.
\end{itemize}

\newpage
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The kāmamaya kośa is bigger than the annamaya kośa. The manomaya kośa is bigger than the kāmamaya kośa. The atimānasaka kośa is bigger even than the manomaya kośa. The vijñānamaya kośa is larger than this. The hiraṇmaya kośa is bigger even than the vijñānamaya kośa, and the biggest of all is the [ātman].

Sarkar’s third model of the mind can be represented as in the diagram below:

The above discussion reveals that the five kośas of the third model can be equated with the citta portion of first model, and form a part of the unit microcosm in the second model. Their relationships can be tabulated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>Protozoic mind</td>
<td>Annamaya kośa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metazoic mind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citta</td>
<td>Unit microcosm</td>
<td>Kāmamaya kośa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Manomaya kośa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aham</td>
<td></td>
<td>Atimānasaka kośa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahat</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vijñānamaya kośa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hiraṇmaya kośa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In his fourth model of the mind, Sarkar divides the mind into two portions: ectoplasm and endoplasm. In his cosmology, he mentions how citta is formed from a collection of ectoplastic particles known as citānu, and citta can thus be termed ectoplasm for short. Citta or collective ectoplasm has a sense of individuality or ‘I’ feeling commensurate with the growth in volume and

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319 Sarkar’s words quoted in SPSSA, p. 157.
320 The annamaya kośa is the physical body, which Sarkar sees as the crudest expression of consciousness and hence ‘continuous’ with the mind in a special sense.
scope of each unit ectoplasmic particle. The growth of each unit ectoplasmic particle will contribute to the overall growth of the collective form of ectoplasm. At the same time, ectoplasm is unitary in structure in that it exists as a separate entity in each human mind. We note that Sarkar attributes the ‘unit existential faculty and the unit knowing faculty’ to the ectoplasm, a curious fact since the ‘ectoplasmic stuff’ has earlier been equated with the citta only, and the terms ‘unit existential faculty’ and ‘unit knowing faculty’ presumably refer to the mahat’s stance of subjective existence and awareness. If the term ‘ectoplasm’ includes both the unit existential and knowing faculties, this implies that the mahat, as the subjective knowing faculty of the mind and mental events, is part of ectoplasm. This concurs with Sarkar’s first model since, as previously mentioned, the aham and mahat exist within the citta though they extend beyond it in terms of ‘spatial circumference’.

Sarkar mentions that ectoplasm has an outer covering known as endoplasm, which possesses a minimum sense of individuality or ‘I’ feeling and is collective in nature and structure. The prefix ‘endo’ in ‘endoplasm’ suggests that the endoplasm acts as a boundary that encloses the ectoplasm and keeps it in. It can be compared to a final cosmic veil or silver lining that shields and demarcates all unit minds collectively from the cosmic entity (brahma). When the collective ectoplasm (that is, the collection of ectoplasmic particles in a unit being) increases in scope and volume, it causes the expansion, and finally the bursting, of the endoplasm that encapsulates it. When this happens, the unit ‘I’ is said to merge into the cosmic ‘I’. Sarkar’s fourth model of the mind can be represented diagrammatically as follows:

![Diagram of Cosmic entity (Brahma), Endoplasm, and Ectoplasm]

Ectoplasm is thus the totality of ‘mind-stuff’. It is structurally composed of minute ectoplasmic particles and functionally it consists in the faculties of objectification, subjective existence and knowledge. Through a comparison of phenomenological features between the different models of mind hitherto examined, it can be argued that the term ‘ectoplasm’ refers to the citta, while ‘endoplasm’ is the final and subtlest ‘lining’ of the mahat where the sense of existential ‘I’ is most attenuated. This equation leaves the problem of aham’s location in the scheme of things as proposed in the fourth model. One possibility is that aham is a part of the ectoplasm, albeit subtler in substance than the citta. In this case the term ‘ectoplasm’ would include both the cruder ectoplasmic stuff of citta and the subtler ectoplasmic stuff of aham, thus resolving the aforementioned problem. The
suggestion that *aham* is part of the ectoplasm rather than of the endoplasm is corroborated by Sarkar’s statement that the endoplasm contains minimum ‘I’ feeling.\footnote{YP, p. 90.} Since *aham* is the sense of doer ‘I’ or ego, it cannot be the same as the endoplasm, where ‘I’ feeling is minimal. The above demonstrates that Sarkar’s first and fourth models of the mind can be correlated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Citta</em></td>
<td>Ectoplasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ahām</em></td>
<td>Endoplasm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fifth model of mind propounded by Sarkar poses some hermeneutical difficulty in that the distinctions between the various terms have not been made entirely clear. In this model, Sarkar divides the mind into two chambers: objectivated mind (or objective mind?), and subjectivated mind (or subjective mind?). The problem lies in the vague and possibly inconsistent usage of the terms ‘objectivated’ and ‘objective’ versus ‘subjectivated’ and ‘subjective’. With regard to the process of knowing, Sarkar says:

(1) In the mechanical sphere, knowing, or the functional side of knowledge, occurs with the perception of special types of reflections and refractions, but in the psychic sphere, it occurs as a result of the subjectivization of objectivity or objectivities … We take an external object inside ourselves, be it an elephant, a horse, a vocalized word, a touch, or anything else with which we come in contact in the outer world, and assimilate it in our psychic existential ‘I’ feeling. This is the process of knowing.\footnote{YP, p. 40.}

He goes on to describe two portions of the mind involved in the process of knowing:

(2) Whenever an action of knowing takes place within the arena of the mind, a portion of it plays the subjective role and another portion the objective role. The mind is divided into two chambers: the objective chamber which is formed from almost all the ectoplasmic stuff, and the subjective chamber formed from that portion which is the knowing self.\footnote{YP, p. 52.}

Sarkar makes a statement regarding the ‘objectivated’ and ‘subjectivated’ minds without making it entirely clear whether they are synonymous with the objective and subjective minds respectively:

(3) Many things may be created in both the objectivated and subjectivated minds, which do not belong to the external world; they are exclusively confined to the internal domain. They are created within the mind, and there they remain as mental objects. They become objectivated in the mind independent of any external influence.\footnote{YP, p. 61.}
There is an anomaly concerning the actual number of factors involved in the process of knowing. In the passage numbered (2) above, Sarkar mentions the division of the mind into two chambers, but passage (4), below, seems to suggest there is another factor (the first chamber of knowledge) that had not been discussed:

(4) The third chamber or factor of knowledge is the subjective mind (the second being the objective mind) ... The subjectivated mind is the witnessing counterpart of the objectivated mind, and may take its object both from the external physical world and the internal psychic world. It may create an object within itself; it can convert its own subject into an object.\(^{326}\)

One possible resolution to this anomaly is to regard the ‘first chamber’ of knowledge as the ‘mechanical sphere’ of ‘reflections and refractions’ mentioned in passage (1) in which Sarkar discusses the process of knowing. Seen in this light, the second and third chambers of knowledge would naturally be the objective and subjective minds respectively. Juxtaposing the descriptions of the objective and subjective chambers in passage (2) with that of the objectivated and subjectivated minds in passage (4) above, it can be deduced that ‘objective’ equals ‘objectivated’ and ‘subjective’ equals ‘subjectivated’ – though the evidence is not entirely conclusive.

Unlike Sarkar’s other models of mind, the objective/objectivated mind can be loosely and separately equated with the citta, the five kosas, and the citta-portion of the ectoplasm, in terms of their relatively similar functions and characteristics. They represent the crudest layer of mental experience where sensory perception and objective thought are the chief functional characteristics. The subjective/subjectivated mind is loosely similar in function to the aham and mahat, both of which serve as witnessing counterparts of the sense objects perceived. The subjective/subjectivated mind would encompass the remaining aham-portion of the ectoplasm as well as the endoplasm. Sarkar’s first, fourth and fifth models of the mind can be correlated as in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citta</td>
<td>Ectoplasm</td>
<td>Objectivated/Objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aham</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahat</td>
<td>Endoplasm</td>
<td>Subjectivated/Subjective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sixth model of mind is comparatively free of ambiguities and poses little hermeneutical difficulty. In this model, Sarkar divides the mind into crude, subtle and causal levels. He equates the crude mind with the kāmamaya kośa, the subtle mind with the manomaya kośa, and the causal mind with the atimānasa kośa, vijñānamaya kośa, and hīraṇmaya kośa collectively. While the crude and subtle minds are limited in scope and function, located within the boundaries of the unit entity, the

\(^{326}\) YP, p. 68-69.
causal mind is transpersonal in nature and essentially cosmic in scope and function. All three minds – crude, subtle, and causal – fall within the scope of *citta* in the unit mind.

To summarise the foregoing discussion, Sarkar’s models of the mind are tabulated and cross-compared below to highlight the correspondences between the internal constructs of these models:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>Protozoic</td>
<td><em>Annamaya kośa</em></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>Metazoic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Citta</em></td>
<td>Microcosm</td>
<td><em>Kāmamaya kośa</em></td>
<td>Ectoplasm</td>
<td>Objectivated/Subjective</td>
<td>Crude mind/Causal mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Manomaya kośa</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Atimānasaka kośa</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Vijñānāmaya kośa</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Hīrāṃmaya kośa</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Aham</em></td>
<td>Above</td>
<td><em>Hīrāṃmaya kośa</em></td>
<td>Endoplasm</td>
<td>Subjectivated/Subjective</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mahat</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through comparison based on phenomenological features, it is possible to obtain a relatively coherent and comprehensive understanding of Sarkarian psychology. The nature and function of pure consciousness, in both microcosmic and macrocosmic aspects, will be discussed separately in the next section.

### 4.2.2 Microcosm, Macrocosm and Consciousness

Sarkar’s view of the mind encompasses both personal and cosmic levels and reflects a neat microcosmic-macrocosmic homologism typical of the Indian worldview. This homologism has been discussed in Chapter 3 in terms of the parallel layers of mind in the unit and cosmic entities. This section begins with a general comparison of the microcosmic and macrocosmic minds, and then explores the relationship between the witnessing pure consciousness and the layers of mind on both unit and cosmic levels.

Ānandamitra, a senior nun of Ānanda Mārga who wrote a commentary on Sarkar’s *As*, has made a comparison of the features of the microcosmic and macrocosmic minds based on Sarkar’s teachings. This comparison is paraphrased in the table below:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Microcosmic Mind</th>
<th>Macrocosmic Mind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Created in <em>pratisaṅcara</em> through matter being pulverised into subtler factors.</td>
<td>Created in <em>saṅcara</em> through localised bondage of <em>Prakṛti</em> over <em>Puruṣa</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to create original objects or physical reality; only transforms and combines existing physical substances.</td>
<td>Creates physical realities for unit minds by transforming itself into multiple entities of various degrees of crudity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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327 *SPSSA*, pp. 169-170.
| Material world appears as external reality, differentiated and separate from the observing mind. | Material world is internal to Cosmic mind, appearing as one collective unity. |
| Requires sense organs to perceive the world. | Requires no sense organs, as all is internal for the Cosmic mind. |
| Multi-purposive (having many desires). | Uni-purposive (has sole desire of merging all creation into itself). |
| Unilateral (can only attend to one thing at a time). | Multilateral (can attend to many actions at one time). |

The above comparison highlights the relative limitations of the microcosmic mind vis-à-vis the macrocosmic mind in general, but also describes the salient features and functions of the microcosmic mind.

In summary, Sarkar’s yoga psychology portrays the microcosmic mind as an emergent entity that arises out of the material factors of the universe through a process of evolutionary clash and cohesion. This mind stands apart from the external world, perceives it through its sensory organs and faculties, and is unable to create anything original in the world. More importantly, the mind is seen as having the capacity for only one action or thought at a time (unilateral) and possessing multiple desires and motivations (multi-purposive).

Sarkar uses many technical terms drawn from the common Indian stock to describe the various functional forms of the witnessing consciousness in relation to the mind layers. On the microcosmic level, the witnessing consciousness or puruṣottama reflects on and associates with every layer of the unit mind, and is variously termed prājñā, tajāsa and viśva. Prājñā is the functional form of puruṣottama witnessing the kāmamaya kośa or crude mind. Tajāsa is the witnessing entity of the manomaya kośa or subtle mind, while viśva is the witnessing entity of the atimāṇasa kośa, vijñānamaya kośa, and hiraṇmaya kośa taken collectively, otherwise known as the causal mind (see table below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Microcosm</th>
<th>Kośa</th>
<th>Mind</th>
<th>Witnessing Entity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>Annamaya kośa</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citta</td>
<td>Kāmamaya kośa</td>
<td>Crude</td>
<td>Prājñā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manomaya kośa</td>
<td>Subtle</td>
<td>Tajāsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Atimāṇasa kośa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Viṣṇu</td>
<td>Causal</td>
<td>Viṣṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hiraṇmaya kośa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahamattava</td>
<td>Above</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahattava</td>
<td>Hiraṇmaya kośa</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Puruṣottama</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the macrocosmic level, puruṣottama similarly reflects on and associates with the various layers of the cosmic mind. Īśvara is the witnessing consciousness of the crude cosmic mind; hiranyagarbha is the witnessing consciousness of the subtle cosmic mind; and virūtā or vaiśvānara is
the witnessing consciousness of the causal cosmic mind. Sarkar emphasises that these various terms used to describe the witnessing consciousness do not represent different entities but rather different functional forms of the same entity:

By its very nature, if the mind is to possess objectivity it must also have a witnessing entity. The witnessing entity is the *sumnum bonum* of the mind. Philosophy has given different names to the witnessing entity according to the differences in the nature of the objective mind. But this does not mean that the same *Puruṣottama* is not acting as the witnessing entity at different stages of the mind. It is He who reflects Himself as the witnessing counterpart by functional difference due to the changing mental status.\(^{328}\)

The various names of the witnessing entity in relation to the layers of the macrocosmic mind are tabulated below in order to clarify the relationships:\(^{329}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macrosom</th>
<th><em>Koṣa</em></th>
<th>Mind</th>
<th>Witnessing Entity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mahattattva</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td><em>Puruṣottama</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahamattva</td>
<td>Hiraṇṇamaya koṣa</td>
<td>Causal</td>
<td><em>Virātā</em> or <em>Vaiśvānara</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citta</td>
<td>Vijñānamaya koṣa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Atimānasvo koṣa</td>
<td>Subtle</td>
<td><em>Hiranyakarbhaka</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| | Manomaya koṣa | | *
| | Kāmamaya koṣa | Crude | *Īśvara* |

Thus, according to Sarkar, the microcosmic mind is embedded within the macrocosmic mind, while the witnessing consciousness exists in association with both the microcosmic mind and the macrocosmic mind by acting as the ultimate observing and knowing entity of all physical events and mental processes occurring in their respective layers.

### 4.2.3 Theory of Knowledge

In his writings, Sarkar often emphasises the importance of knowledge in the overall path of spiritual praxis. He delineates a theory of knowledge closely linked to his conception of the mind and consciousness. According to Sarkar, knowledge takes place in two spheres of human existence: the intellectual sphere and the spiritual sphere. Within and across these two spheres, various types of knowledge are possible. He also mentions that AM epistemology has two branches – *parā* and *aparā*:

*Parā jñāna* means knowing the Supreme reality beyond the scope of time, space and person. *Aparā jñāna* means the knowledge within the scope of time, space and person.

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\(^{328}\) *IAI*, p. 36.

\(^{329}\) *IAI*, p. 37. In this table, the relative positions of *citta, ahamattva*, and *mahattattva* are reversed from that in the preceding table. This reversed order reflects the actual order in which the macrocosmic mind forms – from *mahat*, to *aham*, to *citta* (see Chapter 3). Within the macrocosmic *citta*, the universe forms and living beings emerge. In living beings, the order in which (microcosmic) mind emerges is from *citta* to *aham* to *mahat*. Hence the reversal in order of presentation of *citta, ahamattva* and *mahattattva* in these two tables.
– which is ever changing. The means to attain parā jñāna, or absolute knowledge, is through the application of the pinnacle intellect (agryābudhi), and the means to attain aparā jñāna, or relative knowledge, is the pinnacle intellect plus circular approach.330

It can be argued that what Sarkar calls knowledge in the intellectual sphere belongs to the branch of aparā jñāna, while what he calls knowledge in the spiritual sphere belongs to the branch of parā jñāna (see table below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory of Knowledge (Epistemology)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Branches of Knowledge:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parā jñāna (Absolute knowledge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= knowledge in spiritual sphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aparā jñāna (Relative knowledge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= knowledge in intellectual sphere</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The various types of knowledge, straddling both intellectual and spiritual spheres, are analysed in the following discussion. Sarkar calls the two major types of knowledge ‘conceptional knowledge’ (parokṣa bodha) and ‘spiritual knowledge’ (aparokṣa bodha).331 While spiritual knowledge is entirely relegated to the spiritual sphere, conceptional knowledge can take place in both intellectual and spiritual spheres depending on its sub-types. The ‘perceptional’ (mati jñāna) sub-type of conceptional knowledge functions within the intellectual sphere, while the ‘spontaneous intuitional’ (sphūrta jñāna) sub-type functions within the spiritual sphere (see table below).332

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual knowledge (aparokṣa bodha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Functions purely in spiritual or ultimate sphere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Synonymous with full emergence into nirguṇa brahma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptional knowledge (parokṣa bodha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Functions in both spiritual and intellectual spheres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Comprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) Perceptional knowledge (mati jñāna) – in intellectual sphere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Spontaneous-intuitional knowledge (sphūrta jñāna) – in spiritual sphere.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perceptional knowledge (mati jñāna), functioning within the intellectual sphere, can be further sub-divided into ‘sensory knowledge ’ (indriyajña bodha) and ‘acquired knowledge’ (samskāraja bodha). Sensory knowledge can be ‘direct’ (sarala saṃyuktī) or ‘indirect’ (tiryak saṃyuktī), and

330 AMP, pp. 262-263.
331 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 550.
332 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 554.
acquired knowledge can be based on ‘habitual instinct’ (*siddha samśkāra*) or ‘inborn instinct’ (*sahajata samśkāra*).  

Direct sensory knowledge (*sarala samyukti jñāna*) occurs ‘when an *indriya* [sense organ] directly receives an inferential vibration and conveys it straight to the unit *citta*, thus creating the same kind of experience in the unit mind.’ In other words, direct sensory knowledge is gained through direct sensory perception, acquired as a result of contact between a sense organ and its object. Indirect sensory knowledge (*tiryak samyukti jñāna*) is gained through learning and information gathering rather than direct sensory perception. Sarkar gives the example of direct knowledge of an elephant acquired through sensory perception contrasted with indirect knowledge of the elephant through hearing a description of it or seeing its picture. In the case of indirect sensory knowledge, information about an object is gathered through the senses in the form of representations rather than the actual object in question. The sub-types of perceptual knowledge (*mati jñāna*) are tabulated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptual Knowledge (<em>mati jñāna</em>)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Sensory knowledge (<em>indriyaja bodha</em>) comprising:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Direct sensory (<em>sarala samyukti</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Indirect sensory (<em>tiryak samyukti</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Acquired knowledge (<em>samśkāra bodha</em>) based on:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Habitual instinct (<em>siddha samśkāra</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Inborn instinct (<em>sahajata samśkāra</em>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Acquired knowledge based on ‘habitual instinct’ (*siddha samśkāra jñāna*) occurs ‘when one receives the same piece of information again and again’, and on it depends a person’s power of memory. Using the same example, Sarkar explains that when a person sees the elephant a second time and concludes that the second image is identical to the first, recognizing the second image as that of an elephant, this can be termed knowledge acquired through habitual instinct. Acquired knowledge based on ‘inborn instincts’ (*sahajata samśkāra jñāna*), according to Sarkar, is merely an extension of the knowledge through habitual instincts. Sarkar defines inborn instinct as ‘actually the habitual instinct carried over from one’s previous life’ and identifies it with the ‘animal-like propensities of human beings’ acquired over the course of biological evolution. Sarkar cites the example of the baby mammal automatically knowing how to suck its mother’s breast without any form of training, a case of acquired knowledge through inborn instinct. In short, the various forms of sensory and acquired knowledge together make up perceptual knowledge, which can be regarded as the category of knowledge involving objects of perception and requiring the mediation of sensory and motor organs (see table immediately preceding this paragraph above).

There is another category of conceptional knowledge (*parokṣa bodha*) which, in contrast to perceptual knowledge (*mati jñāna*), does not require any sensory or motor mediation; it is termed

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333 *AMI* Parts 5-8, p. 554.
334 *AMI* Parts 5-8, p. 550.
335 *AMI* Parts 5-8, p. 551.
‘spontaneous-intuitive knowledge’ (sphûrta jñâna). As mentioned before, spontaneous intuitive knowledge occurs in the spiritual sphere, as opposed to perceptual knowledge, which occurs in the intellectual sphere. Sarkar identifies two types of spontaneous intuitive knowledge, namely ‘focussed-intuitive’ (aparokṣabhâsa) and ‘spiritual-intuitive’ (aparokṣā anubhûti) knowledge (see table below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spontaneous-intuitive Knowledge (sphûrta jñâna)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Focussed intuitive knowledge (aparokṣabhâsa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= Clear, direct insight into aspects of the causal mind.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focussed intuitive knowledge (aparokṣabhâsa) is a deep form of knowledge based on seeing the ‘objectivities that lie accumulated within the causal mind’. Sarkar defines it as ‘the process to see some parts of the causal mind [the atimânasa, vijñânamaya, and hirañmaya kośas] with the help of spiritual effulgence’, parts which normally remain unseen through being ‘darkened by static ignorance’. Sarkar explains that this form of knowledge is beyond the realm of perceptual knowledge for two reasons: firstly, the objectivities to be seen are embedded within the causal mind, not the external world; and secondly, the knowledge is acquired through ‘spiritual effulgence and not psychic probing’. Sarkar does not elaborate on what this ‘spiritual effulgence’ exactly is. The term ‘effulgence’ suggests some kind of illumination, perhaps a cognisance of things that have previously been hidden from view. In the case of focussed intuitive knowledge (aparokṣabhâsa), the objects clearly cognised by spiritual effulgence are aspects of the atimânasa, vijñânamaya, and hirañmaya kośas, which includes the first expression of past samskāra and the workings of subtle faculties such as discernment (viveka), renunciation (vairûgya), and devotion (bhakţī). This implies that focussed intuitive knowledge (aparokṣabhâsa) involves some kind of direct insight into the content and process of the mind, especially with regard to the workings of its deeper layers or kośas.

Spirituo-intuitive knowledge is an even subtler form of knowledge that is attained when a person is ‘established in the Macrocosmic Mind’ and has become ‘the knower of all objectivities’. To such a person, whose mind has expanded to include the entire cosmos, all knowledge gained is in the category of spirituo-intuitive knowledge. Correlating this with Sarkar’s soteriology (to be

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336 Ibid.
337 Ibid.
338 AMI Parts 5–8, p. 552.
339 AMI Parts 5–8, p. 552.
340 Samskāra is said to first express itself in atimânasa kośa; discernment (viveka) and renunciation (vairûgya) function in vijñânamaya kośa; and devotion (bhakţī) is the prime quality of hirañmaya kośa.
341 This form of knowledge resembles Buddhist vipassanâ in so far as it involves direct seeing into and understanding of the content and workings of the mind. A rigorous comparison is beyond the scope of the present thesis.
342 AMI Parts 5–8, p. 552.
discussed in Chapter 5), it appears that this form of knowledge is realised when a person attains the meditative state of savikalpa samādhi (‘trance of determinate absorption’),\textsuperscript{343} that of temporary merger into saguna brahma.

Both perceptional knowledge (discussed earlier) and spontaneous-intuitional knowledge (in two variant forms) fall into the macro-category of conceptional knowledge (parokṣa bodha). From the foregoing discussion, it appears that conceptional knowledge necessitates the presence of mental objects, whether crude, subtle, or causal, in accordance with the layer of the mind (kośa) in which this knowledge takes place. However, there is some ambiguity with regard to the precise nature of focussed-intuitional knowledge and spirituo-intuitional knowledge (the two sub-types of spontaneous-intuitional knowledge), located as they are, in an epistemological space beyond the discursive, intellectual mind. There is also little clarification of the difference between spiritual knowledge (aparokṣa bodha) – non-conceptional knowledge occurring purely in the spiritual sphere – and spirituo-intuitional knowledge (aparokṣa anubhūti) – a form of conceptional knowledge occurring in the spiritual sphere.

Sarkar provides a clue to the distinction between spiritual knowledge and spirituo-intuitional knowledge in his description of what constitutes ‘real knowledge’:

> When the perceiver, perceivable and perception; or the knower, knowable and knowledge become one; or when the deed and the ‘doable’ become one with the doer, one attains non-dualistic self-knowledge, one becomes the embodiment of knowledge. Only this is real knowledge. All other knowledge is the shadow of knowledge … insubstantial knowledge.\textsuperscript{344}

Again, he describes spiritual knowledge thus:

> Do you know the difference between intellectual knowledge and spiritual knowledge? Intellectual knowledge is psychic, and thus cannot help one to attain Brahma …\textsuperscript{345} Remember, the mind cannot fathom Him. To attain Him one must merge one’s mind in Him.\textsuperscript{346}

In other words, Sarkar is claiming that spiritual knowledge is gained only when one so fully merges one’s mind into the supreme consciousness (parama puruṣa) that not a trace of duality exists between self and brahma. He sees this ‘ensconcement in the field of Supreme Cognition’ as the culmination of the spiritual journey and hints at its nature and the process of attaining it:

> A sincere spiritual aspirant understands that Parama Puruṣa is the Prati bodhasatthā (Omni-telepathic Entity). What does this mean? Mind is the perceiver and the

\textsuperscript{343}AS, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{344}AMI Parts 5-8, p. 552.
\textsuperscript{345}AMI Parts 5-8, p. 556.
\textsuperscript{346}AMI Parts 5-8, p. 557.
apparent knower of objects. The subjective emanations from this perceiving mind are finally reflected in the Cognitive Faculty. Hence the Cognitive Faculty is called the Omni-telepathic Entity ... The Omni-telepathic Entity is like a mirror. When a spiritual aspirant, after relinquishing the authorship of actions, is established in this Omni-telepathic Entity, he or she attains immortality.347

From the above, it appears that the attainment of non-dual spiritual knowledge (aparokṣa bodha) requires stable abiding in a state of unbounded mirror-like cognisance through a radical letting go of the mind’s sense of ego or agency. Sarkar sees this state as the culmination of the path of knowledge (jñāna yoga); it is arguably synonymous with the realization of nirvikalpa samādhi (‘trance of indeterminate absorption’), or temporary mergence into cosmic consciousness or nirguṇa brahma.

However, Sarkar outlines another route to this supreme knowledge, which he defines as the path of devotion (bhakti yoga). He says it is possible to attain spiritual knowledge through the attitude of total self-surrender and love:

What happens to those who accept the Supreme Entity not only as the Omni-telepathic Entity, but as the life of their lives, the soul of their souls? Those who accept Him as an object of genuine devotional sentiment? The answer is that they will certainly attain immortality. The manifestation of the Supreme Entity will be clearer in those who are free from the vanity of intellectual knowledge, who love Him as the soul of their soul ... Brahma is love personified, Brahma is unbounded. One who is in deep love with Him will steadily advance towards the infinite from the world of finitude.348

From the foregoing discussion, it can be inferred that spiritual knowledge is a state of non-dual self-realization where there exists only a boundless, mirror-like awareness free of any sense of subject, object, or action, a state that is none other than mergence into nirguṇa brahma. Spiritual knowledge is thus purely non-conceptual in nature. Spirituo-intuitional knowledge, in contrast, is a state of all-pervasive knowing and cognisance of all objectivities in the universe, after having attained oneness with saguṇa brahma. It is thus conceptual though profoundly subtle in nature. Sarkar’s theory of knowledge can be summed up as in the following table:

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347 Ibid.
348 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 558.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptional knowledge (parokṣa bodha)</th>
<th>Spiritual knowledge (aparokṣa bodha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceptional (mati jñāna)</td>
<td>Spontaneous-intuitional (sphūrtta jñāna)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Sensory (indriyaja bodha):</td>
<td>= non-dual knowledge attained in nirvikalpa samādhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. direct sensory (sarala samyukti)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. indirect sensory (tiryak samyukti)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Acquired (saṃskāraja bodha):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. habitual instinct (siddha saṃskāraja jñāna)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. inborn instinct (sahajata saṃskāraja jñāna)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occurs in: Intellectual sphere</td>
<td>Occurs in: Spiritual sphere</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.4 Theory of Vṛtti

In conjunction with his theory of knowledge, Sarkar also elucidates his ideas about the driving forces of the mind in terms of the concept of vṛtti. The term ‘vṛtti’ is usually translated as ‘instinct’ on a physical level, or ‘expressed sentiment’ on a psychological level; another common translation is ‘propensities’. Sarkar defines vṛtti as ‘the way of expression of mind’, pointing out that in order to express itself, the mind ‘adopts certain inter- and intra-ectoplastic occupations’ such as love, hatred, fear and other emotions. He further explains that this innate need for mental expression is a result of the momentum gathered by the mind over the course of cosmic evolution. He says:

Mind is a state in the process of Brahma Cakra. It being the result of changing positions, is essentially a stage in the process of motion, and implies a momentum which it has to express.

Vṛtti, in other words, is the inherent momentum of the mind finding expression as various emotional drives that can be described physiologically as instincts and psychologically as sentiments.

Sarkar makes a theoretical distinction between instincts and sentiments with reference to the degree of association with what he terms ‘subsidiary glands’ of the body. Subsidary glands are all the endocrine glands in the body apart from the pituitary and pineal glands, which Sarkar believes are intimately linked to the functions of the mind. For Sarkar, ‘sentiments’ are those psychological forces or ‘occupations’ that, when habituated over some time through frequent activation, become biologically perpetuated as ‘instincts’ in connection with the various subsidiary glands. In other

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349 IAI, p. 29.
350 Ibid.
351 Ibid.
352 YP, p. 136.
words, sentiments appear to be the initial psychological forces formed out of the evolutionary momentum of the mind. Subsequently, as evolution progresses and physical structures become more complex, these sentiments become biologically embedded in the glands as instincts. Regarding instinct, Sarkar says:

When the psychic flow emanates from the feeling of unit corporality and moves along the maze of human corporal relationship and again comes back to its starting point, then that certain psychic flow is known as “instinct”. In each and every living being, including plants, there are instincts, and whenever there is any mind, mind of any form – developed form or undeveloped form or even mind in a dormant condition – there is instinct.  

He emphasises that instinct is not to be confused with *samskāra* (discussed in Chapter 1) since *samskāra* is the reaction of an original action, existing in potential form within the mind. When conditions are conducive, such *samskāra* would then be expressed. Instincts drive the mind to perform actions that in turn create *samskāra*, which are imprinted on the mind and exist as potential reactions to be expressed at some later time. While instincts are primarily inborn, they can be strengthened or weakened through culture, through association with others, through study and education, and through spiritual practices. In other words, the *samskāras* created by the above-mentioned means can affect the quality and intensity of the mind’s innate *vṛttis*. It is then possible to say that *vṛttis* are generated according to the inherited and acquired *samskāras* of the mind concerned. In short, although a subtle theoretical difference exists between instinct (which is not identical to *samskāra*) and sentiment, Sarkar stresses that in practical terms, instincts and sentiments are one and the same thing.

Sarkar sees the seed of all *vṛttis* as lying in the brain, but says that the first expression of *vṛttis* occurs in the subsidiary glands (regarded as sub-stations of the different organs in the body). The mental waves created by the mind are first transmuted into physical waves in the glands or substations and later transmitted through the efferent nerves in the body. Sarkar believes that the complexity of the physical structure, in particular the endocrine system, directly reflects the number of *vṛttis* the organism possesses and vice versa. For example, better-developed animals have more *vṛttis* than less-developed ones; and human beings, as the most highly evolved organisms according to Sarkar, possess one thousand *vṛttis*. Sarkar re-interprets the traditional Yogic notion of the thousand-petalled *sahasrāra cakra* located at the crown of the head as describing the seeds of these one thousand *vṛttis* localised in the pineal gland. (Sarkar correlates the *sahasrāra cakra* with the pineal gland.) He explains that the pituitary gland controls two *vṛttis* – *samkalpātmaka* or ‘internal occupations’ [that] lead towards the Great’ and *vikalpātmaka* or ‘internal occupations [that] lead towards the mundane or crude’ – while the subsidiary glands control forty-eight *vṛttis.*

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353 *YP*, p. 82.
354 *LAI*, p. 30.
Samkalpātmaka leads the mind to knowledge of brahma (parāvidyā), and vikalpātmaka leads it to knowledge of the mundane (aparāvidyā). Sarkar further explains that these fifty vṛttis are expressed both internally and externally by all ten sensory and motor organs (indriyas)\(^{355}\), accounting for a total of one thousand vṛttis (i.e. \(50 \times 2 \times 10 = 1000\)). The pineal gland itself has no vṛttis but is considered their source and can thus be said to contain the seeds of these vṛttis. (The different vṛttis will be delineated and their associated glands and plexuses (cakras) discussed more fully in section 4.3.2.)

Associated with the theory of vṛtti is the concept of ‘longing’, which Sarkar defines as ‘the urge that pulls forward’.\(^{356}\) Sarkar conceives of four types of ‘micropsychic’ longing that pull individual minds towards their fulfilment, namely psychophysical longing concerning inborn instinct; psychophysical longing concerning non-inborn instinct; psychic longing for psychic pabulum; and longings concerned with apexed psychology. The first category, psychophysical longing concerning inborn instinct, refers to the force created by natural biological urges that pull the organism towards various objects of gratification. An example of this type of longing would be a baby’s urge for breast milk upon hearing the sound of its mother. In the case of inanimate matter, Sarkar sees the increase or decrease in inter-atomic or inter-molecular spaces as an expression of inborn instinct, but does not explain how inanimate entities are able to have psychophysical longings in the absence of mind. Another example would be the desire of a species for certain changes to its collective bio-structure in order to cope better with environmental demands. Sarkar says that such changes can actually occur if the macrocosm or cosmic mind supports the collective longing of the species for mutation.

The second category, psychophysical longing concerning non-inborn instinct, refers to various physical and/or psychological longings created as a result of learning and experience. These longings are intimately linked to the development, in the human body, of plexuses (cakras) – where instincts (vṛttis) are spatially located – and of endocrine glands – where instincts are biologically perpetuated. According to Sarkar, over-secretion or under-secretion of hormones affects the nerve cells, and indirectly affects thoughts. The types of thoughts predominant in the mind create sanskāras (reactions in potentiality) that affect the strength of vṛttis in the human organism. In this way, instincts change according to the quality and quantity of hormonal secretion by the glands. The processes of human growth and development, behavioural learning, education, and association with society all impact on the variety and intensity of psychophysical longings vis-à-vis non-inborn instincts.

The third category, psychic longing for psychic pabulum (ābhoga), refers to the pull towards a psychological ‘object of enjoyment’, which may be crude or subtle. Thinking about and longing for a crude object, such as a sweet, will render the mind crude, while contemplating and longing for a subtle object, such as a noble idea, will render the mind subtle. Sarkar emphasises that in any movement toward a psychic object, the mind will have to maintain proper adjustment and parallelism with the body so that the integrity of the organism is maintained. Maladjustment between the physical and

\(^{355}\) The ten are five sensory organs: eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin; and five motor organs: arms, legs, vocal cords, genitals, and anus.

\(^{356}\) YP, p. 104.
mental waves of an organism, (as discussed in Chapter 3), can cause dissociation of mind and body
and result in death. For example, a dedicated spiritual aspirant constantly engaged in contemplation of
\textit{brahma} will have to maintain psychophysical parallelism through special Yogic postures (\textit{āsanas}) and
vital energy control (\textit{prānāyāma}) so that an equilibrium between body and mind can be created.

The fourth category, longings concerned with apexed psychology, refers to the spiritual
longings of the human mind that flow uni-directionally towards the supreme entity, \textit{brahma}.
Regarding apexed psychology, Sarkar says:

When the movement of the human mind is not in many lateral directions – north, 
south, east, and west – but towards the Supreme Entity, then the mind becomes apexed, 
pinnacled. This pointed mind either merges in the Macrocsm, or gives up its 
individual existence in the Supreme Cognitive Faculty.\footnote{357}

Such spiritual longings associated with apexed psychology are fulfilled through a process of intense 
spiritual practice (\textit{sādhanā}). Sarkar recommends that people commence these practices by the age of 
thirteen, because thirteen is the approximate age when the sex glands develop, along with a sense of 
dutifulness and responsibility. He sees the sense of dutifulness and responsibility as being closely 
related to the flowering of spiritual longings and the subsequent attainment of apexed psychology.

\subsection{4.3 Yoga Biopsychology}

Sarkar’s metaphysic of mind and consciousness, and his theory of knowledge and \textit{vṛtti}, are integral 
components of an overall conceptual framework of the body, mind, and spirit that he calls the science 
of biopsychology. The preceding discussions have shed some light on the psychological structures 
and processes envisioned by Sarkar in his articulation of yoga psychology. In this section, this 
articulation will be expanded to include the physiological and spiritual processes that, together with 
the aforementioned psychological processes, form the larger Sarkarian theory of biopsychology. 
While focussing on the details of Sarkar’s biopsychology, it is important to remember that in the 
Sarkarian project, cosmology, ontology, theology, epistemology, psychology, physiology, ethics, and 
soteriology are all organically interwoven into a complete whole. Hence, the various 
biopsychological processes described in the following sub-sections will show up as intimately 
connected to other aspects of Sarkar’s teaching.

Central to Sarkar’s biopsychology is his concept of \textit{ṣūkra} or ‘vital fluid’, a highly precious and 
subtle substance derived from the human body’s assimilation of food from the environment. \textit{Ṣūkra} is 
the raw material for the synthesis of hormones and other vital bio-chemicals in the body, as well as 
the essential nutrient for the brain. \textit{Ṣūkra}, often used interchangeably with the term ‘lymph’, is 
closely related to the various lymphatic and endocrine glands in the body. Hence the quantity and 
quality of \textit{ṣūkra}, in association with the proper functioning of the glands, are intimately linked to a 
person’s physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being.
Alongside the śuṣkra, other essential structures for the proper functioning of the body-mind complex in Sarkar’s biopsychology are the nāḍīs or ‘nerves or subtle energy channels’, cakras or ‘nerve plexuses’, and prāṇa or ‘vital energy’. These terms are not unique to Sarkar, being found in the classical traditions of Yoga and Tantra. But Sarkar redefines these concepts and translates them into the idiom of modern scientific understanding. The various cakras of the body (seven in total), their locations in connection with the three main nāḍīs, and the locations and functions of the prāṇa are delineated in this section, as is the distribution of vṛtti throughout the cakras in association with the glands.

A discussion of Sarkar’s biopsychology would not be complete without mention of the quintessential concept of kulakunḍalinī or the ‘coiled serpentine residing in kula’. Kulakunḍalinī is the force of dormant spirituality lying in the lowest cakra at the base of the spine, and is linked to Sarkarian cosmology and soteriology. The upward movement of the kulakunḍalinī through the central channel (suṣumṇā) towards the topmost cakra is the underlying mechanism behind spiritual evolution.

4.3.1 Nāḍīs and Cakras

Sarkar’s biopsychology, in common with the Indian Tantric tradition, includes the concepts of nerves (nāḍīs), plexuses (cakras), and vital energy (prāṇa). It can be argued that Sarkar’s science of biopsychology is but a modern restatement of classical Tantric ideas relating to the body’s bioenergetic system, with use of scientific terminology and quasi-scientific reasoning to explain hitherto mysterious and often secret teachings. (This line of argument will be pursued in greater detail in Chapter 6.)

Sarkar’s term for nāḍī, as translated in the AS, is ‘nerve’, though ‘subtle-energy flows’ have also been used by AM in presenting his teachings. In AS, Sarkar treats the nerves as a component of the indriyas, or ‘organs’ (both motor and sensory). The other components are ‘the gateways of the organs, the nerve fluid, and the appropriative pīthas (seats) of the organs (in the brain).’ In other words, Sarkar sees the nāḍī or nerve as an anatomical structure that either transmits the vibrations at the gateways of sense organs to their specific neurosensory sites in the brain or, conversely, carries vibrations from the specific neuro-motor sites in the brain to the gateways of motor organs. He gives the example of the eye (sense organ gateway), the optic nerve (nāḍī), the optic fluid (nerve fluid), and the ‘optic point of the nerve cell’ to illustrate his conception of the eye indriya. Apart from this quasi-scientific use of the term nāḍī, Sarkar mentions the names of three psycho-spiritual channels commonly known in Hindu Tantra as idā, piṅgala, and suṣumṇā. However, he does not specifically label them as nāḍīs, which leaves the status of these

357 YP, p. 120.
358 AS, p. 28.
359 SPSSA, p. 254.
361 AS, p. 28.
channels vis-à-vis the nādīs somewhat ambiguous in his writings. The commentary to ĀS unambiguously proclaims that nādīs are subtle, psychic energy channels that can be found throughout the body.362 Even then, the three channels, idā, piṅgalā, and susumnā, are not specifically cited as examples of nādīs. Leaving aside the question whether they are to be classed as nādīs, the idā and piṅgalā channels are seen to be carriers of prāṇa or vital energy in the body. They start their course of travel from the base of the spinal cord and, weaving around the spinal cord, terminate in each nostril.363 The idā terminates in the left nostril, the piṅgalā in the right. When the breath flows predominantly through the left nostril, the idā is considered to be active, and the body remains cool and the mind introverted. When the breath flows mainly through the right nostril, the piṅgalā is said to be active and the body and mind become heated and prepared for physical, extroverted activity. While Sarkar never specifically describes the structure and function of these two channels in the primary texts, he does mention the importance of maintaining an active left nostril while performing yoga postures (āsanas)364 and meditation (śādhanā),365 and of keeping the right nostril unblocked during and just after meals.366 This is so that the body and mind are in the state most conducive to either introverted spiritual practices or extroverted mundane activities. In the case of āsanas and śādhanā, the flow of breath through the left nostril induces a calm and introspective frame of body and mind via the activity of the idā. In the case of eating a meal and digesting it, the flow of breath through the right nostril allows digestive juices and processes to function effectively via the activity of the piṅgalā. The susumnā is considered the most important of all the energy channels, as it is the passage through which the spiritual energy of kuṇḍalinī rises and moves on its way to the topmost plexus (sahasrāra cakra). The sahasrāra cakra is, on the microcosmic scale, the seat of supreme consciousness (known variously as brahma, parama puruṣa, kṛṣṇa, or śiva). The susumnā is thought to pass through the entire length of the spinal column and to extend up to the crown of the head.367 The precise nature and function of kuṇḍalinī (and prāṇa) will be discussed in the next section. Sarkar describes the points of intersection of the idā, piṅgalā, and susumnā as the loci of the major cakras (plexuses) in the body. In the SPSSA, Ānandamitra mentions that the ‘kuṇḍalinī is lying quiet in the mālādhāra cakra (lowermost cakra) because of obstructions in these cakras which block her free passageway up the susumnā’.368 Here the susumnā is expressly described as the channel through which the kuṇḍalinī travels and along which the various cakras are located. The next passage confirms this:

362 SPSSA, p. 254-255.
364 Caryācaryā Part 3, p. 25.
365 Caryācaryā Part 2, p. 25.
367 ĀS, p. 76.
368 SPSSA, pp. 254-255.
As the kundalinī rises in the susumnā and pierces the cakras one by one, the bondages break, and the unit again becomes the Supreme – jīva becomes Śiva. Thus the spiritual journey is essentially the journey of the kundalinī, transmuting energy from lower centres to higher ones; the opening of the susumnā canal; and the progressive release and channelling of the powerful dormant energies in the human body.\(^{369}\)

In terms of spiritual practice and advancement, Sarkar sees the role of the cakras as indispensable. While translating cakras as ‘plexi’ [sic], he also defines a cakra as a collection of glands and sub-glands, whose location varies from animal to animal.\(^{370}\) His use of the term ‘plexi’ probably derives from his conception of the main nerve-centres located at the level of each cakra, and the nerve sub-centres within the various sub-glands.\(^{371}\) In parallel to this physical definition, he seems to conceive of the cakras as psychic centres that function much like sub-stations of the mind, where mental propensities are transmuted into physical energy and expressed in the form of hormones.\(^{372}\) The natural or unnatural expression of these propensities is linked to the normal or abnormal secretion of hormones, and the existence of the mind is fully dependent on the existence of propensities. To Sarkar, total destruction of the propensities means complete annihilation of the mind. In addition, most of the myriad hormones secreted by the glands are consumed within the associated plexuses, with very little passing into the glands and sub-glands below them. One exception is the manipūra cakra (igneous plexus), where the hormones secreted are not absorbed or utilised by any of the plexuses but are instead excreted from the body.\(^{373}\)

Sarkar lists seven major cakras situated at strategic points along the susumnā as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cakra (‘Plexus’)</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mūlādhāra cakra (‘terranean plexus’)</td>
<td>Base of the spinal cord.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Svādhiṣṭhāna cakra (‘fluidal plexus’)</td>
<td>Level of the genitals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Manipūra cakra (‘igneous plexus’)</td>
<td>Level of the navel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Anāhata cakra (‘solar plexus’)</td>
<td>Mid-point of the chest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Viṣuddha cakra (‘sidereal plexus’)</td>
<td>Level of the throat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ajānā cakra (‘lunar plexus’)</td>
<td>Mid-point between the eyebrows.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to these seven major cakras, Sarkar also emphasises the crucial importance of the guru cakra (‘inner macro-pineal plexus’) in the practice of meditation. He defines the guru cakra as the inner-side of the macro-pineal plexus situated just within the skull, while the sahasrāra cakra is, strictly speaking, just above the skull and thus outside the body. Hence, the sahasrāra cakra is

\(^{369}\) SPSSA, p. 255.  
\(^{370}\) YP, p. 136.  
\(^{371}\) YP, p. 158.  
\(^{372}\) YP, p. 137.  
\(^{373}\) YP, p. 189.
essentially the outer-side of the macro-pineal plexus and represents the culminating locus of the entire spiritual quest. Besides the guru cakra, Sarkar mentions another called the lalanā cakra but fails to elaborate on what it is or where it is located.

According to Sarkar, the mūlādhāra cakra (‘terranean plexus’) is situated within a larger structure known as the bhauma maṇḍala. He gives no translation for the term bhauma (which means ‘terranean’), but does translate the term maṇḍala as ‘circle’, suggesting that it refers to a larger area or space in which the specific cakra is embedded. He states that the mūlādhāra cakra contains a number of glands and sub-glands, which are seats of four propensities each with an acoustic root. These propensities are dharma (‘psycho-spiritual longing’),374 artha (‘psychic longing’), kāma (‘physical longing’), and mokṣa (‘spiritual longing’) and their Sanskrit acoustic roots are va, śa, ṣa, and sa respectively. In Sarkar’s Tantric theory of acoustics, the myriad entities of the entire universe are seen to be pulsating at different vibrational frequencies, all of which can be summated and reduced to fifty specific acoustic roots. These fifty acoustic roots, as mentioned in Chapter 3, are harmonic variations of the primordial sound of creation, the omkāra, and are microcosmically reflected in the vibrational activities of the fifty different propensities of the human mind. These vibrational activities result in the acoustic roots that form the entire alphabet of the Sanskrit language. As all objects in the universe are composed of the five fundamental factors (discussed in Chapter 3), the human body is no exception. The mūlādhāra cakra is the controlling centre of the solid factor in the body, and is in turn controlled by the kāmamaya kośa of the mind.

Details on the seven cakras are tabulated below, correlating the cakras with (1) the type of propensities (vyrtti), and the number of glands and sub-glands (see Table 1); (2) the larger areas (maṇḍala) in which they are embedded, the fundamental factors (bhūtas) they control, and the layers of mind (kośas) that control them (see Table 2); and (3) the acoustic roots associated with propensities contained within the cakras (Table 3).

374 All the Sanskrit terms for the different propensities and their respective English translations are taken from YP, pp. 138-144.
Table 1. Correlations between *Cakras*, Propensities, and Associated Glands and Sub-glands.\(^{375}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cakra</th>
<th>Propensities</th>
<th>Glands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sahasrāra cakra</td>
<td>Source of all 1,000 propensities of the human mind</td>
<td>Outside the cranium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guru cakra</td>
<td>Source of all inspiration and seed of omniscience</td>
<td>Pineal gland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ājñā cakra</td>
<td>1. Aparā (‘mundane knowledge’)</td>
<td>Pituitary gland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Parā (‘spiritual knowledge’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visuddha cakra</td>
<td>1. Śādaja (‘sound of peacock’)</td>
<td>Thyroid &amp; Parathyroid glands (16 sub-glands)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Rṣabha (‘sound of bull or ox’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Gāndhāra (‘sound of goat’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Madhyama (‘sound of deer’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Paṅcama (‘sound of cuckoo’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Dhaivata (‘sound of donkey’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Niśāda (‘sound of elephant’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Oṁ (‘acoustic root of creation, preservation, dissolution’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Hūṃ (‘sound of arousing kulakundalini’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Pḥat (‘practication, i.e. putting a theory into practice’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Vausaṭ (‘expression of mundane knowledge’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Vaṣaṭ (‘welfare in the subtler sphere’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Svāhā (‘performing noble actions’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. Namah (‘surrender to the Supreme’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. Viṣa (‘repulsive expression’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. Amṛta (‘sweet expression’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anāhata cakra</td>
<td>1. Āśā (‘hope’)</td>
<td>Thymus gland (12 sub-glands)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Cīntā (‘worry’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Čeṣṭā (‘effort’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Mamatā (‘mine-ness, self-love’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Dambha (‘vanity’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Vīveka (‘conscience, discrimination’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Vikalatā (‘mental numbness due to fear’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Ahamkāra (‘ego’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Lolatā (‘avarice’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Kapaṭatā (‘hypocrisy’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Vitarka (‘argumentativeness to the point of wild exaggeration’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Anutāpa (‘repentance’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{375}\) YP, pp. 105-125, 136-145, 155-162 and 186-195.
Table 1.  Continued …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cakra</th>
<th>Propensities</th>
<th>Glands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Manipūra cakra | 1. Lajjā (‘shyness, shame’)  
2. Piśūnātā (‘sadistic tendency’)  
3. Īṛsā (‘envy’)  
4. Suṣupti (‘staticity, sleepiness’)  
5. Viśāda (‘melancholia’)  
6. Kaśāya (‘peevishness’)  
7. Trṣṇā (‘yearning for acquisition’)  
8. Mōha (‘infatuation’)  
9. Grīhā (‘hatred, revulsion’)  
10. Bhaya (‘fear’)                                                                 | Adrenal glands (10 sub-glands)         |
| Svādhiṣṭhāna cakra | 1. Avaijñā (‘belittlement of others’)  
2. Mūrečhā (‘psychic stupor, lack of common sense’)  
3. Praśraya (‘indulgence’)  
4. Aviśvāsa (‘lack of confidence’)  
5. Sarvanāśa (‘thought of sure annihilation’)  
6. Kruratā (‘cruelty’)                                                                 | Sex glands (i.e. prostate and ovaries) |
| Mūlādharā cakra | 1. Dharma (‘psychospiritual longing’)  
2. Artha (‘psychic longing’)  
3. Kāma (‘physical longing’)  
4. Mokṣa (‘spiritual longing’)                                                                 |                                        |

Table 2.  Correlations between Cakras, General Locations, Factors Controlled, and Controlling Kośas.376

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cakra</th>
<th>Embedded in</th>
<th>Controls</th>
<th>Controlled by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sahasrāra cakra</td>
<td>Brahmarandhra: outside the cranium</td>
<td>Source of all 1,000 propensities</td>
<td>Nirguṇa brahma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guru cakra</td>
<td>Pineal gland</td>
<td>Nuclei of all brain cells</td>
<td>Tāraka brahma (i.e. brahma as guru)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajñā cakra</td>
<td>Candra maṇḍala</td>
<td>All kośas</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viśuddha cakra</td>
<td>Nakṣattra maṇḍala377</td>
<td>Ethereal factor</td>
<td>Hiraṇmaya kośa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anāhata cakra</td>
<td>Saura maṇḍala</td>
<td>Aerial factor</td>
<td>Vijnānamaya kośa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipūra cakra</td>
<td>Agni maṇḍala</td>
<td>Luminous factor</td>
<td>Atimānasa kośa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Svādhiṣṭhāna cakra</td>
<td>Tarala maṇḍala</td>
<td>Liquid factor</td>
<td>Manomaya kośa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mūlādharā cakra</td>
<td>Bhauma maṇḍala</td>
<td>Solid factor</td>
<td>Kāmamaya kośa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

377 Sarkar defines nakṣa as ‘to twinkle’ and nakṣattra as ‘that which helps us with its twinkling potentiality’ in YP, p. 140. Actually, nakṣattra means ‘constellation’.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cakra</th>
<th>Propensities</th>
<th>Acoustic Roots</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sahasrāra cakra</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guru cakra</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ājñā cakra</td>
<td>1. Aparā</td>
<td>kṣa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Parā</td>
<td>ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viśuddha cakra</td>
<td>1. Śaḍaja</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Rṣabha</td>
<td>ā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Gāndhāra</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Madhyama</td>
<td>ī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Pañcama</td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Dhaivata</td>
<td>ū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Niśāda</td>
<td>r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Om</td>
<td>ū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Hūṃ</td>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Phat</td>
<td>ī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Vauṣaṭ</td>
<td>ai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Vaṣaṭ</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Svāhā</td>
<td>au</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. Namaḥ</td>
<td>aṁ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. Viṣa</td>
<td>aḥ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. Amṛta</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anāhata cakra</td>
<td>1. Aśā</td>
<td>kā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Cintā</td>
<td>kha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Cesta</td>
<td>ga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Mamatā</td>
<td>gha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Dambha</td>
<td>ṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Viveka</td>
<td>ca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Vikalatā</td>
<td>cha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Ahamkāra</td>
<td>ja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Lolatā</td>
<td>jha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Kapaṭatā</td>
<td>ŋa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Vitarka</td>
<td>ṭa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Anutāpa</td>
<td>ṭha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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YP, pp. 138-144.
Table 3. Continued …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cakra</th>
<th>Propensities</th>
<th>Acoustic Roots</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manipūra cakra</td>
<td>1. Lajjā</td>
<td>da</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Piśunatā</td>
<td>dha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Īrśā</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Suśupti</td>
<td>ta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Viśāda</td>
<td>tha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Kaśāya</td>
<td>da</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Trṇā</td>
<td>dha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Moha</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Gr̥hna</td>
<td>pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Bhaya</td>
<td>pha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Svādhīṣṭhāna cakra

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Propensities</th>
<th>Acoustic Roots</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Avajñā</td>
<td>ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mūrcchā</td>
<td>bha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Praśravya</td>
<td>ma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Aviśvāsa</td>
<td>ya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sarvanāśa</td>
<td>ra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Kruaratā</td>
<td>la</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mūlādhāra cakra

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Propensities</th>
<th>Acoustic Roots</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dharma</td>
<td>va</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Artha</td>
<td>ša</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Kāma</td>
<td>ša</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mokṣa</td>
<td>sa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sarkar’s description of the cakras and their associated acoustic roots (bījas) shows obvious similarities with traditional Tantric accounts, strongly suggesting his dependence on existing tradition in the formulation of his teaching. However, his linking of cakras with endocrine glands and mental propensities (vṛttis) in a structured manner appears to break away from existing tradition, as does his theory of the influence of microvita on the cakras.

The manipūra cakra is termed ‘shelter of greatness’ by virtue of being located in the centre of the body, and termed ‘shelter of heat’ as it is the site of maximum accumulation of heat. Sarkar mentions that situated in the navel region of the manipūra cakra is a gland of ‘thunder-like hardness’ called rudra granthi,379 within which is found the agni cakra. Apart from emphasising the importance of agni cakra (along with the anāhata and ājñā cakras) in the performance of action in the world, Sarkar’s position regarding the status of agni cakra vis-à-vis the agni maṇḍala is unclear. It is very likely that agni cakra is merely another name for the manipūra cakra.

The anāhata cakra makes contact with microvita (both positive and negative) via the original, reflected and refracted light rays from all celestial bodies in the universe. Microvita, as discussed in Chapter 3, are sub-microscopic subtle entities emanated by cosmic consciousness that serve a variety of functions including the emergence of life, transmission of ideas, and spiritual elevation. All the twelve sub-glands of this cakra are affected by all the reflected or refracted light as well as positive and negative microvita, though positive microvita tend to predominate here. Sarkar also mentions
that the anāhata cakra exists in the ‘swaying of the solar plexus, or Viṣṇu Granthi’,\(^{380}\) referring probably to the major gland within which the central point of the cakra is located. The sub-glands of this cakra house the sub-centres and their respective propensities.

Elsewhere in the same source, Sarkar situates the viśuddha cakra in the kūrma nādi (‘sinusoid nerve’) of the throat, and describes it as the centre of speech and as important in the ‘enlightening of intellect’.\(^{381}\) Two major glands in close proximity to the viśuddha cakra are the thyroid and parathyroid, called bhṛspatī granthi and bhṛspatī upagranthi respectively.\(^{382}\) Sarkar sees the viśuddha cakra as an important site where positive microvita come into contact with the human body. Positive and negative microvita travel through the media of light waves and sound (acoustic roots) to affect the viśuddha cakra and control the body positively or negatively. There are a total of sixteen sounds associated with eighteen light waves coming directly or indirectly from the sun, which contact the sixteen glands and sub-glands of the cakra. These eighteen light waves derive from the seven component colours of the spectrum plus ultraviolet and infrared working both internally and externally (i.e. \(7 + 2 = 9\); \(9 + 9 = 18\)). Sarkar mentions that two of these eighteen light waves come not from the sun but from the moon.

Sarkar pinpoints the location of the ājñā cakra (lunar plexus) at the ‘upheavals of imagination in Brahma Granthi [possibly the pituitary gland]’.\(^{383}\) It controls only two propensities, which in turn direct and control all the other propensities in the lower cakras. These two propensities set the direction of movement of the emotional and instinctual energy in the mind by activating either the lower mundane propensities (in the lower cakras) or the higher spiritual propensities (in the higher cakras). The two controlling propensities are aparā (‘mundane knowledge’) and parā (‘spiritual knowledge’). The right side of the ājñā cakra is involved in aparā, affecting the cruder propensities below the navel, while the left side is involved with parā, affecting the subtler propensities in the upper portion of the body. Sarkar conceives of the ājñā cakra as being profoundly influenced by the reflected light of the moon, which in turn affects the upper cakras (above the navel) and lower cakras (below the navel) via the left and right sides of the cakra respectively. It is because of this influence of the moon that Sarkar calls the ājñā cakra the lunar plexus. Unlike the lower cakras, the ājñā cakra does not control any physical factor, but is instead ‘the seat or central point of the mind.’\(^{384}\)

Apart from moonlight, Sarkar states that all the direct and indirect, reflected and refracted rays of all celestial bodies in the universe (for example planets, stars, meteors, comets, suns, moons) have an impact on all the glands and sub-glands of the human body. He concedes that it is impossible for astrology and astronomy to measure and calculate all the effects of these celestial rays on the individual, for which a completely new science is required. According to Sarkar, astrology can only

\(^{379}\) YP, p. 186
\(^{380}\) Ibid.
\(^{381}\) YP, pp. 186-187.
\(^{382}\) YP, p. 187.
\(^{383}\) YP, p. 186.
\(^{384}\) Sarkar’s words quoted in SPSSA, p. 162.
calculate the effects of various planets in our solar system on the individual, but not the totality of effects from all celestial bodies in the cosmos.\textsuperscript{385}

The guru cakra is located between the ājñā cakra (lunar plexus) and the sahasrāra cakra (outer macro-pineal plexus), as previously mentioned, and is said to be the physical counterpart of the sahasrāra cakra (which Sarkar says is a psychological concept more than a physical structure). Sarkar marks the spiritual location of the sahasrāra cakra on the outer portion of the cranium at a point called the brahmārāndhra.\textsuperscript{386} He stresses that the sahasrāra cakra is only an ‘ideational point’\textsuperscript{387} without a physical existence in the nerve cells. In contrast, the guru cakra is just inside the cranium and is the ‘controlling point of all the controlling points of all the brain cells on the physical, psychic and spiritual planes’.\textsuperscript{388} This ultimate regulating point or prāṇakendra is the source of ‘a thousand and one kinds of inspiration and propulsion’ that human beings receive.\textsuperscript{389} It is possible that the guru cakra may, technically speaking, be the pineal gland with which the sahasrāra cakra is associated, though Sarkar does not specifically say so. He does stress, however, that the guru cakra contains ‘the supreme potentiality of omniscience’,\textsuperscript{390} and is ‘the loftiest point for the purposes of meditation and contemplation’.\textsuperscript{391} As the guru cakra is the point at which tāraka brahma abides as the supreme guru, it is at this cakra that meditation on the guru has to be performed.

### 4.3.2 Theory of Śukra and Glands

Sarkar defines śukra as the final essence of the physical body, which is obtained after a process of digestion and sequential assimilation of food. Food that has been ingested is mixed with digestive juices and transformed into what Sarkar calls rasa, a fluid-like substance, while unnecessary material is rejected as urine and other waste products. The essence of rasa undergoes further transformation to become blood, with further waste material being rejected. Sarkar goes on to say that the ‘essence of blood changes into flesh and the essence of flesh into meda or vasa (fat), and so on, till it changes into bone, bone marrow and ultimately into śukra’.\textsuperscript{392} According to him, the physical body is composed of these seven materials – rasa, blood, flesh, fat, bone, bone marrow, and śukra – with śukra being the ‘final essence’. Śukra in turn has three component stages of lymph (prāṇa-rasa or lasikā), spermatozoa, and seminal fluid (for males), and lymph, ova, and menstrual fluid (for females). It appears that Sarkar sees lymph as being produced not only from food but also from ‘the energy and vitality acquired from the different quinquenlental factors of this universe, such as water, air and light’.\textsuperscript{393}

\textsuperscript{385}YP, pp. 144-145.
\textsuperscript{386}YP, p. 181.
\textsuperscript{387}YP, p. 192.
\textsuperscript{388}YP, p. 190.
\textsuperscript{389}YP, pp. 191-192.
\textsuperscript{390}YP, p. 181.
\textsuperscript{391}YP, p. 192.
\textsuperscript{392}IAI, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{393}YP, p. 117.
In Sarkar’s theory, lymph is supplied from the lymphatic glands and transported through a series of lymphatic vessels that function in parallel to the blood vessels. The chief functions of lymph are ‘to purify the blood and maintain the beauty and glory of the body’394 and to serve as raw material for the synthesis and production of hormones (‘granthirasas’)395 in the endocrine glands. Surplus lymph serves as nutrient for the brain cells and strengthens the brain and intellect. It appears that Sarkar sees lymph as either identical to or contained in the cerebrospinal fluid, which flows within the spinal cord all the way to the brain, and in which the brain is bathed. For Sarkar, deficiency or defect of lymph in any organ results in disease of that particular organ. Hence, he maintains that for intellectuals whose brain activity levels are high, adequate amounts of lymph are essential.

As previously mentioned, one essential function of lymph is to act as raw material for the production of hormones, which occurs when lymph comes into contact with an activated endocrine gland. Sarkar thus speaks of lymph as the initial hormone out of which other hormones are made, with the rate and quantity of hormonal production depending on certain ‘positive and negative catalytic agents’.396 The main positive catalytic agent for lymph production is chlorophyll, which is obtainable from fresh green and leafy vegetables. According to Sarkar, chlorophyll accelerates the speed of production of lymph and should form an essential part of the human diet. Apart from chlorophyll, a positive psychic and physical environment greatly accelerates the production of lymph. Sarkar regards association with spiritually minded people and elevating discussion as examples of positive psychic environments, and spiritually uplifting places as examples of positive physical environments. Conversely, negative psychic environments such as unwholesome company and discussion, and negative physical environments such as cinema halls, brothels, and busy commercial venues can retard the rate of production of lymph and be detrimental to physical and mental health.

Sarkar highlights several important endocrine glands in the body where the hormones produced are crucial to physical well-being and psycho-spiritual growth. When the testes (correlated with the fluidal plexus or svādhiṣṭāna cakra)397 in the male start functioning, the lymphatic glands there also start supplying lymph for conversion into semen. This conversion of lymph into semen is directed by the pituitary gland. When semen is produced, the nerves are affected and changes in the person’s thoughts occur. This is especially so when the production of lymph exceeds the body’s capacity to utilise it, resulting in lymph’s conversion to excess semen. In this case, sexual desire is generated in the mind. If the secretion of the testes is normal, a sense of dutifulness develops in the boy of three years or older. In the case of a teenage boy, if the testes are over-active and there is high secretion of hormones, he will grow pubic and armpit hair as the physical effect and will develop the spirit of rationality as the psychic effect. He will also develop in intelligence since the proper secretion of the testes helps develop the solar plexus, upon which intelligence is dependent. If over-

394 IAI, p. 55.
395 YP, p. 187.
396 YP, p. 118.
397 YP, p. 137.
secretion of testicular hormones occurs between the ages of fifteen and seventeen, the youth will acquire the longing for universalism and a desire for supreme consciousness (parama puruṣa). Conversely, if there is under-secretion of hormones in the testes in a teenage boy, there will be less pubic and armpit hair; and if the sex glands do not develop by a specified age, he will become unsociable and perhaps even cruel between thirteen and fifteen. The same youth will then grow into a man with less kindness and a proclivity to dogmatism, characterised by a lack of moral strength to resist dogma and to accept new ideas. Besides the testes, the prostate gland (possibly but not definitively correlated with the terranean plexus or mūlādhāra cakra)\textsuperscript{398} is extremely important to the development of the male body and psyche. The prostate gland is responsible for the feeling of shyness or shame in the mind. A child of three to five does not experience shyness owing to the under-development of this gland. In the case of an adult male, shyness is commonly due in part to the activity of the prostate and in part to social conditioning or imposed samskāras. Over-secretion of hormones from the prostate gland can result in melancholia and pessimism. Conversely, under-secretion can cause a person to develop a fearful nature and perhaps even to suffer from psychic hallucinations. In the case of females, where testes and prostate are absent, some of the lymph produced by regional lymphatic glands is converted into ova in the ovaries (the female correlate to the fluidal plexus or svādhiṣṭāna cakra),\textsuperscript{399} while a certain portion of it is converted into milk in the female breasts. In both males and females, some of the lymph is used to maintain proper energy levels and physical glamour of the body, while some is transported to the brain cells for their nourishment.

The characteristics of over- and under-secretion of hormones in the igneous plexus or maṇipūra cakra are identical to those just described for the prostate gland.\textsuperscript{400} According to Sarkar, normal secretion of hormones of the first sub-gland of the igneous plexus, in reaction to socially-imposed conditioning, results in the propensities of shyness and shame. He goes on to say that over-secretion of the fifth and sixth sub-glands of the igneous plexus together results in melancholia, while under-secretion of its ninth and tenth sub-glands together results in the fear complex. While these features seem to suggest that the prostate gland might be related to the igneous plexus, this is not probable. While in the case of the prostate, all the effects of hormonal over- and under-secretion are linked to only one gland, in the case of the igneous plexus, four different sub-glands (not glands) are involved. The unitary prostate gland can, therefore, be neither one of, nor the totality of, the multiple sub-glands of the igneous plexus. This implies that the sub-glands of the igneous plexus may function in synergy with the prostate gland to create the above-mentioned psychological effects.

When adequate lymph is secreted in the solar plexus or anāhata cakra\textsuperscript{401} (which is associated with the thymus glands), and when the solar plexus develops, the spirit of love and affection for children develops. This occurs in all animals such as birds, mammals, and human beings. Sarkar

\textsuperscript{398} YP, p. 137. To the best of my knowledge, Sarkar does not specifically associate the prostate gland with mūlādhāra cakra, but he does translate mūlādhāra cakra as ‘terranean plexus’.

\textsuperscript{399} YP, p. 137.

\textsuperscript{400} YP, p. 123-124.
views the constant and regular supply of lymph in the solar plexus as essential for its proper functioning. When lymph supply and hormonal secretions are normal, the male develops a beard and a muscular chest, while this does not happen when supply and secretions are low. Also, love for children may be lacking in sterile men and women with low secretion of hormones from the solar plexus. In the case of spiritual aspirants, high supply of lymph and over-secretion of hormones in the solar plexus cause the transformation of love for children into love for the brahma. In the case of males, a thick beard and a well-developed chest may ensue. Sarkar sees the solar plexus as the central base of all higher human propensities, and considers that a human being will not be able to survive if the solar plexus is ever dissociated from the body.

When there is adequate supply of lymph and normal hormonal secretion in the thyroid and parathyroid glands (correlated with the sidereal plexus or viśuddha cakra), the voice grows deep and a moustache develops in the case of a male, along with the quality of self-reliance. Underdevelopment of these glands will result in a quarrelsome nature in both men and women generally, and irrationality and vanity in women particularly. According to Sarkar, these glands develop fully by the age of twenty-four in both men and women, though this is delayed by two years in cold climates. Slight physical deterioration but psychological growth occurs in people beyond the age of thirty-nine, and this is followed by more physical deterioration and slight mental deterioration for those beyond the age of fifty in hot climates and fifty-one in cold climates. Finally, after the age of sixty in hot countries and sixty-one in cold countries, thinking power gradually degenerates in most people.

The pituitary gland (correlated with the lunar plexus or ājñā cakra) and the pineal gland (correlated with the inner macro-pineal plexus or guru cakra) are sites of utmost importance in Sarkar’s biopsychology. Sarkar stresses that there is no difference between males and females as regards the pituitary and pineal glands, and hence there should be no discrimination between the sexes in terms of entitlement to spiritual enlightenment. In a person who has performed spiritual practices in previous existences, and after the sex glands have developed by the age of thirteen, the pituitary gland starts becoming very active. This intense activity of the pituitary gland results in a strong thirst for spirituality in the person concerned. In the presence of proper guidance from a spiritual preceptor, the aspirant achieves spiritual growth and progress. Sarkar asserts that the pituitary gland is psychospiritual in nature while the pineal gland is fully spiritual in nature, probably alluding to the notion that while the pituitary gland remains associated with mind and its functions (by virtue of being the biological locus of both worldly-directed and spiritually-directed propensities), the pineal gland has no propensity associated with it and is entirely beyond the scope of the mind. As previously mentioned, he regards the pineal gland as the biological counterpart of the sahasrāra cakra, the microcosmic seat of paraṃ puruṣa or nirguna brahma.

\[\text{YP, p. 123-124.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{YP, p. 152.}\]
According to Sarkar, the pituitary plexus (referring to the lunar plexus or ājñā cakra, not the pituitary gland) is divided into right and left portions. The right wing controls the ‘qualities, attributions, and quanta of the leftistic propensities, which are a little more than four hundred in number’, while the left wing controls the ‘qualities, attributions, and quanta of the rightistic propensities, which are also a little more than four hundred in number’. The total of both classes of propensities is a little less than eight hundred and fifty. Sarkar defines ‘leftistic’ propensities as those that ‘have a degenerating and depraving effect, such as shyness, shamefulness, melancholia and fear’; ‘rightistic’ propensities as those that propel the individual towards supreme consciousness. In other words, the leftistic propensities can be loosely equated with vikalpātmaka (‘internal occupations [that] lead towards the mundane or crude’), while rightistic propensities are identical to samkalpātmaka (‘internal occupations [that] lead towards the Great’). While not the actual site of these propensities, the pituitary plexus (ājñā cakra), and by extension the pituitary gland, is the controlling centre of the totality of propensities that lead the person towards either the mundane or the supramundane.

In summary, Sarkar sees lymph (via its conversion into hormones) as responsible for many psychic changes and regards it as absolutely essential for the growth of human qualities such as sense of dutifulness, parental and universal love, rationality, sense of self-reliance, and thirst for spirituality. In addition, all the glands and plexuses (cakras) in the body are interdependent. However, the prostate gland, the testes and other subsidiary endocrine glands depend more on the lymphatic glands for adequate supply of lymph, than lymphatic glands depend on the endocrine glands for their essential functions. In the case of plexuses, the lower plexuses are more dependent on the higher ones than are the higher plexuses on the lower ones.

4.3.3 Prāṇāḥ, Prāṇendriya and Kuṇḍalinī

Prāṇāḥ is the plural form of the more familiar word prāṇa, and refers to the composite of ten vāyus or ‘airs’ that are said to exist in the human body. Sarkar’s cosmology describes the process of gradual crudification of puruṣa into five fundamental factors and subsequently the inanimate and animate orders under the ongoing influence of the three forces of prakṛti. The resultant interial force that holds the structural integrity of the living body in the presence of congenial environmental conditions and requisite proportions of the five factors is known as prāṇāḥ or ‘vital energy’. The ten vāyus that make up prāṇāḥ are of two types: ‘interial’ and ‘external’. There are five interial vāyus, namely prāṇa, apāṇa, samāṇa, udāna, and vyāna and five external vāyus, namely nāga, kūrma, krkara, devadatta, and dhanaṇjaya. Their functions have been spelt out in Chapter 3 and will not be repeated here.

While it is unclear whether any of these vāyus flow through the central passageway, susumnā, it is possible that some or all of the internal vāyus are thought of as travelling through the īḍā and

\[\text{\cite{405} YP, p. 123.} \]
\[\text{\cite{406} IAI, p. 30.} \]
\[\text{\cite{407} IAI, p. 6.} \]
pīṅgalā. Udāna, the vāyu responsible for voice and control of the vocal cords, is located at the throat. Prāṇa, the vāyu controlling the functions of the heart, lungs, and respiration, is located between the throat and the navel. Apāna, the vāyu controlling the functions of excretion and the movement of urine and faeces, is located between the navel and the anus. The vāyu that maintains balance and adjustment between prāṇa and apāna is samāna, located at the navel itself. Vyāna is distributed throughout the body and is responsible for regulating blood circulation and the functioning of the nerves. Of these five vāyus, the first four are likely to be present in the idā and pīṅgalā, judging from their physical locations and physiological functions. To recapitulate, the idā and pīṅgalā are subtle channels that travel along both sides of the spinal cord and interweave around it so as to intersect at the central points of the first six cakras. In contrast, the five external vāyus are scattered throughout the body and have no fixed location. Nāga is the vāyu responsible for expanding the body, in actions such as jumping, throwing, and stretching. Kūrma contracts the body, such as when one is cold. Krkara assists in spasmodic movements such as yawning, hiccupping, twisting in pain, and sneezing. Devadatta causes hunger and thirst, while dhanañjaya causes sleep and drowsiness. While it is still possible that these external vāyus are present in the idā and pīṅgalā, Sarkar does not make it explicitly clear that this is so.

Sarkar speaks of a vital controlling centre situated in the middle of the anāhata cakra that regulates all the flows of prāṇāh in the body. This centre is known as prāṇendriya, which he defines as ‘the collective name of the ten vāyus’ and ‘more or less a co-related activity of ten analysed sub-factors of vāyutattva’. He uses other terms such as bodhendriya and bodha vivikti to name the same thing. From his definition, it appears that the prāṇendriya is a localised functional process that ensures the regulated flow of prāṇāh (or the ten vāyus) in the body. This is said to occur on the ‘physical and psycho-physical level’. Sarkar describes the prāṇendriya as a pulsative process of alternate contraction and expansion (saṃkoca-vikāśi), whereby the ‘auxiliary waves’ of the prāṇendriya flow in a sequence of motion and pause. The nerves flow in the pattern in which the prāṇendriya itself flows and it is this function of the prāṇendriya that makes it closely linked to sensory perception and mental conception. The ability of the citta (crude mind) to receive tanmātras (sensory inferences) from the external world is directly linked to the phase that the prāṇendriya is in. In the pause phase, when the flow of the prāṇendriya is calm, all the nerves become correspondingly calm and the flow of information through them is unimpeded. This results in correct perception by the citta and proper cognition by the aham or ego. This also happens when the prāṇendriya, instead of being at a pause, is in a contraction phase. However, when the prāṇendriya is in an expansive phase, the citta and all the nerves pulsate in tune with the expanding and dynamic waves of the prāṇendriya, impeding the movement of incoming tanmātras. In such a case, there may be difficulty in perception or no perception at all. Similarly, the ability of the mind to receive and understand an idea (bhāva) is

\[408\] IAI, p. 27.
\[409\] Ibid.
directly linked to the activity of the prāṇendriya. A paused or contracting prāṇendriya enhances conception while an expanding, dynamic prāṇendriya impedes it.

In addition to its role in perception and conception, the prāṇendriya is deemed to be responsible for recognising ‘the objectives from different experienced sense perceptions and innate psychic projections’.\(^{410}\) Sarkar gives the example of perceiving qualities of softness and hardness, melody and harshness, hot and cold to illustrate this special perceptual function of the prāṇendriya. On a more subtle level, the prāṇendriya is the ‘auxiliary force’\(^{411}\) that subjectively perceives mental qualities such as kindness, affection, and antipathy in another person.

A central concept of traditional as well as Sarkarian Tantra is that of the kulakuṇḍalinī or ‘coiled serpentine’, a psycho-spiritual force or potential that lies normally dormant in the mūlādhāra cakra at the kula or base of the spine. The concept of kulakuṇḍalinī is closely linked to the cosmic cycle of creation in Sarkar’s cosmology. In the third stage of saṅcara (the controversial phase of the cycle of creation), the straight-line waves of puruṣa emanating from the vertex of the triangle of forces become transformed into curved vibrational flows that get sequentially shorter in wavelength. This represents the gradual crudification of subtlest consciousness into the manifold forms of the universe. In this stage, prakṛti is known as bhavānī śakti and stays active throughout the entire phase of saṅcara. Towards the end of the san ṣcara phase, the expressional force of bhavānī śakti reaches its climax and the final state of crudification is reached. In this state of crudity, bhavānī śakti is known as parāśakti or ‘introversion pervasive force’, which abides in a ‘quiescent state as the jīvabhāva [finite subjectivity]’ at a point called the svayambhūlinga, translated as ‘ultimate point of negativity’.\(^{412}\) This parāśakti resting at the svayambhūlinga is also known as the kulakuṇḍalinī or ‘coiled serpentine’. Sarkar says:

In the ultimate state of crudification, the parāśakti lying dormant at svayambhūlinga is called the kuṇḍalinī (“coiled serpentine”) … The last expressional point, which is the fringe of the bhavānī śakti, is the ultimate state of expression of force - the ultimate state of crudity. In this state of crudity the parā śakti [introversion pervasive force] that is lying in a quiescent state as the jīvabhāva [finite subjectivity], is called the kulakuṇḍalinī [“coiled serpentine”, or force of fundamental negativity].\(^{413}\)

He goes on to say that the ‘ultimate point of manifestation is called svayambhūlinga …’ which is the ‘ultimate point of negativity, wherein resides the kulakuṇḍalinī force, quiescent and coiled like a serpent’.\(^{414}\) As the kulakuṇḍalinī force resides in the point of fundamental negativity, it is also called the ‘force of fundamental negativity’.\(^{415}\)

\(^{410}\) IAI, p. 29.  
\(^{411}\) Ibid.  
\(^{412}\) AS, p. 39.  
\(^{413}\) Ibid.  
\(^{414}\) AS, pp. 39-40.  
\(^{415}\) AS, p. 40.
From the above it appears that the kulakundalinī force is entirely separate from and perhaps much subtler than, the prāṇāḥ or ten vāyus found in the nāḍīs and possibly the idā and pīṅgalā channels. It is said to be wound up in three and a half coils in a clockwise direction in the lowest cakra (mūlādhāra cakra) at the last bone of the spine (kula). This lowest point in the lowest bone of the body, known as svayambhūlīnga, is where the living being exists in its crudest form. Here, the entirety of the person’s divinity, as represented by the kulakundalinī, exists in latent form. When the kulakundalinī is awakened by spiritual practice, in particular through mantra meditation, it uncoils and rises up the spinal column towards the ultimate point of śambhūlīnga (‘point of self-created controller’) at the crown of the head. The details of spiritual practice and its relation to the kulakundalinī and associated concepts will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. Suffice to mention here that, for Sarkar, raising the kulakundalinī is the quintessential practice for, and mechanism of, any genuine spiritual elevation. He sees the inner spirit of this practice as ‘… to control the [propensities] and seed sounds of the different glands and to suspend one’s self in Paramaśīva [the Nucleus Consciousness], whose rank is beyond the scope of all the instincts and seed sounds’.416 In this process, a spiritual aspirant overcomes the pākas (‘bondages’) of mental weaknesses and other mental ripus (‘enemies’), and transforms animality into divinity.417

In Sarkar’s cosmogony, the śambhūlīnga is the primordial point of creation, the vertex of the triangle of forces, from where the entire created universe sprouts. It is also the supreme controlling point of the unit microcosm from where all psychic and physical origins originate. Sarkar says this point is located at the crown of the head (and thus is identical with the sahasrāra cakra):

That is, in the entire Cosmological order there is a Śambhū point, the starting point, and similarly, in the unit expression, in the microcosm, there is Śambhū in miniature form, in microcosmic form, controlling the microcosm. And it is this point [crown of the head], the controlling point of the pineal gland. It is the site of Parama Puruṣa, Paramaśīva.418

Regarding the śambhū point in the human being, Sarkar says that it is the point where the ‘entity of a living being is in subtlest form, is in purest form, is in unadulterated form’, where the ‘entity of the living being’ presumably refers to the presence of the supreme witnessing entity (puruṣottama, parama puruṣa or paramaśīva) in microcosmic form. Sarkar touches upon the precise nature of this supreme witnessing entity briefly:

Now, wherever there is any expression or wherever there is no expression, the Witnessing Entity is there, just like the light of a stage, a theatrical stage. When there is an actor, the light is there, witnessing the activities of that particular actor … And when nobody is present – no actor, no dancer, no singer – the light, that very light, witnesses that “Nobody is present here now.” … where there is expression, that

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417 Ibid.
418 DOT Vol.1, pp. 63-64.
Cosmic Light, that Cosmic Father, is there. And where there is no expression, the Father is there to say that nobody is present now – just like the light of the theatrical stage.\textsuperscript{419}

While the ‘theatrical stage’ is obviously a metaphor for the entire created universe on the macrocosmic scale, it is nevertheless possible to extrapolate its meaning to include the entire experiential world of the individual being, especially given that Sarkar has explicitly asserted the macrocosmic-microcosmic homologism of the concept of \textit{śambhūliṅga}. Viewed from a microcosmic perspective, the ‘light’ that illumines and witnesses the ‘theatrical stage’ of mental activity (or silence) would refer to the pristine awareness of \textit{ātman} – an unbroken flow of knowledge (\textit{jñāna}).

\subsection*{4.4 Summarising Conclusion}
This chapter has explored Sarkar’s psychology in terms of the theory of mind, the relationship between mind and consciousness, the theory of knowledge, and the theory of \textit{vṛtti}. Sarkar’s blend of traditional and innovative re-interpretation of Tantric concepts has been discussed under the theory of \textit{śukra} and glands, \textit{nāḍīs} and \textit{cakras}, and \textit{prāṇāḥ}, \textit{prāṇendriya} and \textit{kundalinī}. In seeking to interpret Sarkar’s terms and concepts, I have made use of both phenomenological description of conceptual structures, mindful of their intertextual nature and reflexively attuned to their experiential dimensions. In the dialogical interplay between texts and reader, I have come to conclude at least tentatively on what Sarkar is trying to convey in his discourses by allowing the texts themselves to make their claim on me even as I attempt to understand them from where I am in this historical moment.

In his theory of mind, Sarkar posits six different and probably parallel models of the mind that account for the structure and function of mind, while also having soteriological and practical implications. These implications will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. Synthesising information from all the six models allows us to construct a relatively coherent, structural overview of the human mind as understood by Sarkar. From Chapters 3 and 4, we see that Sarkar views the mind as an emergent entity formed out of the five fundamental factors (ethereal, aerial, luminous, liquid, and solid) through a long process of evolutionary clash and cohesion. The mind is unable to create anything original in the world; it merely transforms and combines existing physical substances to form new substances. It exists apart from the external world and perceives and acts in the world via its sense and motor organs. A limited entity, the mind can attend to only one object or thought at a time (unilateral) while possessing myriad desires and goals (multi-purposive).

Sarkar differentiates the mind from consciousness by saying that mind is essentially a transformed and objectified state of consciousness, located within the parameters of space and time. Consciousness, however, is the subtlest state of subjectivity, a ‘pure knowing’ wherein all opposites, all boundaries, all limitations in thought, language and physicality cease to exist. Sarkar describes consciousness as having not only a witnessing capacity that observes and knows all that occurs in the

\textsuperscript{419} DOT Vol. 1. p. 64.
entire universe (physical and mental), but also an associative capacity that allows it to engage with and transform all physical and mental objectivities. In relation to the various layers and aspects of the mind, Sarkar posits the witnessing consciousness existing in various functional forms, observing and associating with them at all times. His differentiation of consciousness from mind is an important theoretical move that ultimately underpins the soteriology of AM (see Chapters 5 and 6), insofar as mind, as an ‘objectivated’ phenomenon, is relative and changing, while consciousness, in its pristine state, is the ‘final subjectivity’ that is absolute and beyond time. Consciousness can thus be identified with total freedom and bliss, the goal and salvation that all AM practitioners seek.

Based on a multi-layered ontology wherein mind and phenomena are relative while consciousness is absolute, Sarkar posits the possibility of (1) conceptional knowledge (parokṣa bodha) and (2) spiritual knowledge (aparokṣa bodha). All forms of conceptional knowledge are merely knowledge of relative phenomena except for spirituo-intuitional knowledge, which is essentially identical to the meditative state of savikalpa samādhi or temporary merger into saguna brahma. As such, it approximates knowledge of absolute reality. Also, all types and sub-types of conceptional knowledge involve some kind of mental object or conception, be it crude (as in sense objects) or subtle (as in conception of saguna brahma). Spiritual knowledge, however, is of a different order entirely, located in a transcendent space totally beyond the scope of the mind. It is non-dual knowledge and is identical with merger into nirguṇa brahma or nirvikalpa samādhi. Thus, it is absolute knowledge in its fullness. For Sarkar, an intimate link exists between authentic knowledge (that is, knowledge of absolute reality) and salvation or liberation. As we shall see in Chapters 5 and 6, the AM practices that Sarkar prescribes for his followers are geared towards realisation of just such absolute knowledge, knowledge that in his view, is none other than absolute love.

Sarkar’s theory of vṛtti (or ‘instinct’, ‘experienced sentiment’, and ‘propensities’) elucidates dynamic functions of the mind in relation to the physiological make-up of the human body. Stating that there are a total of 1000 vṛtis in the human mind, distributed and localised throughout the seven major cakras (nerve plexuses) in the body, Sarkar attempts to synthesise biology, psychology, and spirituality into a coherent framework that helps explain the mechanisms behind spiritual practice and development. He calls this framework biopsychology, a contemporary and scientifically-sounding term that may strike a chord with a modern and informed audience. Such a quasi-scientific reframing of traditional concepts can be read as an attempt to adapt Tantra to suit modern needs. In many ways, Sarkar’s appropriation of Tantric concepts such as nādi, prānāh, bija (acoustic root) and kundalinī does not depart from traditional Indian Yogic and Tantric theory. Hence, his so-called ‘science of biopsychology’ is not particularly original, although the links that Sarkar makes between traditional cakras and modern endocrine glands, and between chlorophyll and lymph production, for example, are innovative and make rather interesting reading.

The next chapter will explore in detail the soteriological dimension of Sarkarian Tantra, with emphasis on the spiritual practices advocated by Sarkar and the mechanisms underlying spiritual development and perfection.
Chapter 5
Ānanda Mārga: Frameworks for Practice

5.1 Introduction

The soteriological dimension of Sarkar’s Tantra is the main focus of this chapter. We will examine the context, theory, and disciplines of Sarkarian Tantric praxis as encapsulated in his Path of Bliss or Ānanda Mārga (AM). As mentioned in earlier chapters, Sarkar’s soteriology is inextricably linked to his ontology, cosmology, theology, and psychology and metaphysics of mind. This chapter weaves these various elements of Sarkar’s spiritual worldview together in the service of explicating his Tantric soteriology and praxis.

In explicating Sarkar’s soteriology and praxis, the practical and experiential dimensions of the texts cannot be ignored, in so far as Sarkar sees all theories as rooted in mystical realisation. Thus, a complete understanding necessitates nothing short of a ‘transcendental’ hermeneutic – direct spiritual insight into ultimate reality and its dynamics. In this hermeneutic task, the game-like dialogical interplay between the interpreter and the texts becomes of crucial significance. Gadamer’s idea of application (Anwendung) in the defining moment of understanding is highly relevant here. In the text-reader dialogue, I apply my particular historicity and pre-understandings to the texts in each moment of reading and interpretation. The ‘reader’s horizon’, conditioned by my personal practice of Buddhist and AM spirituality, enters into dialectical engagement with the subject matter of the text. In this back and forth movement between the texts and myself, the horizon of neither text nor reader is privileged, yet space is allowed for my direct insights (meditative or otherwise) to play a role in the interpretive act without necessarily privileging them.

In this way, obscure and difficult soteriological concepts and practices become more amenable to interpretation and hence more meaningful to the reader. Of particular interest here are the twin concepts of mukti (‘liberation’) and mokṣa (‘salvation’). In this chapter, mukti and mokṣa will be elaborated and analysed in relation to other paired concepts such as śiva-śakti, puruṣa-prakṛti, savikalpa-nirvikalpa samādhi, and sāguṇa-nirguṇa brahma. The role of tāraka brahma and meditative techniques for the attainment of mukti and mokṣa will be discussed. Other soteriological terms such as brahmasadbhāva, sahajāvasthā, and dhrūvasmṛti will be compared with the key soteriological states of savikalpa-nirvikalpa samādhi, and with the concept of jīvanmukta, ‘liberated soul’.

The fundamental requisites for Tantric spiritual practice – guru, mantra, and dīkṣa (initiation) – will be discussed, as will the five systems of classical Tantra that form the context within which Sarkar locates his traditional-innovative blend of Tantra, AM. Sarkar sets as the guiding framework for his spiritual path, the eight-limbed yoga of Patañjali (to which he has added some innovations) and the original Sixteen Points of AM (which summarise the entire system of Sarkarian praxis). Within
these frameworks are embedded the various physical, psychological and spiritual disciplines designed to facilitate the accelerated actualisation of a spiritual aspirant’s full potential.

5.2 Soteriological Goals
Sarkar distinguishes mukti from mokṣa and hierarchically positions them in order of spiritual ultimacy, seeing mukti as the penultimate state of merger with sagunā brahma (qualified cosmic consciousness) and mokṣa as ultimate merger with nirguṇa brahma (non-qualified cosmic consciousness). In terms of soteriological finality, mokṣa is superior to mukti, and nirguṇa brahma has greater ultimacy than sagunā brahma. This is in keeping with the fact that Sarkar subordinates śakti (operative principle) to śiva (consciousness): śiva unqualified by śakti is nirguṇa brahma, and when qualified by śakti, is sagunā brahma. In both mukti and mokṣa, the binding and qualifying influence of prakṛti weakens until it finally (1) becomes minimally active, acting only through its sentient force (sattvaguna) in the case of mukti, and (2) dissolves totally into parama puruṣa and becomes dormant in the case of mokṣa.

Mukti and Savikalpa Samādhi
Mukti is achieved when the spiritual aspirant, after intense effort and with proper techniques, realises the state of savikalpa samādhi (trance of determinate absorption) without remainder of ‘seeds’ (nirbija). Sarkar equates savikalpa samādhi with samprajñātā samādhi (‘proper and excellent knowledge’), a term used in the Yoga Sūtra of Patanjāli (ca. second - third century CE). The term ‘seeds’ refers to the accumulated potential reactions in the mind known as samskāras, which serve to generate a sense of separate ego and to draw a person into continued existence within a limited physical body-mind so that these seeds can be expressed and exhausted. When the aspirant attains savikalpa samādhi with ‘seeds’ (sabija), he or she experiences a temporary union with sagunā brahma before returning to normal consciousness by the force of unexhausted samskāras. In Sarkar’s teachings, it is only with the total exhaustion of samskāras through either their natural expression in the course of daily life, disciplined practice of meditation (in particular the first lesson of sahaja yoga), or selfless service and sacrifice, that permanent attainment of nirbija savikalpa samādhi is possible. This permanent realisation is mukti or liberation. When this happens, the spiritual aspirant will no longer be able to maintain his or her physical existence, and essentially ‘dies’ so as to merge his or her unit mind with cosmic mind (synonymous with saguna brahma).

In AS, Sarkar describes the attainment of savikalpa samādhi tersely:

When the aham and the citta merge into the Macrocosmic Mahat, the merger is called sagunāsthitī or savikalpa samādhi ... The state of utter destruction of the citta and the aham and the state of all-pervasiveness of the mahat constitute sagunāsthitī [the state of transcendental], or savikalpa samādhi [the trance of determinate absorption].

420 AMI, p. 670.
As seen in the previous chapter, citta is the objective mind consisting of crude, subtle, and causal layers sub-divided into five kośas of sequentially increasing subtlety. Citta is the ‘done I’ or ‘objective I’ portion of the mind that identifies itself with the various external sense objects reflecting on itself. It is spoken of as a mental plate that assimilates the vibrational waves (tannātras) of externally-existing physical or internally-produced mental objects by taking their characteristics of form and colour, taste, smell, touch, or sound. Aham is the subjective mind that has a sense of doer-ship, and constitutes the ego-self of the individual. This subjective portion of the mind feels that it is the experiencer behind the experience and apparently substantiates the existence of objects. When citta and aham are totally dissolved into their cause (mahat), a process Sarkar terms pralaya or praṇāśa (‘utter destruction’), the mind enters into ontological oneness with the cosmic mahat - the vast pervasive sense of pure ‘I’ feeling that witnesses all the happenings and entities in the universe. In this state there is no longer any sense of duality between self and the world:

If, through sādhanā, people can merge their unit minds with the Cosmic Mind of Parama Puruṣa, then the unit minds themselves become the Cosmic Mind; their individual entities are merged in that Cosmic “I”. In that condition, there remains nothing outside. Thus, there is no longer any possibility of physical or psychic clash with any external entity or object. All objects, all ideas, arise out of one’s mind. This is the state of liberation - a state of cosmic bliss far above the domain of mundane pleasures and pains.\(^{422}\)

From the above, it appears that the state of savikalpa samādhi is one of non-duality between self and the universe, accompanied by a subtle pervasive bliss and an insight-knowledge that all ideas and objects emanate from one’s mind. This concurs well with the phenomenology of spirituo-intuitional knowledge discussed in the preceding chapter, whereby a person attaining such knowledge becomes ‘the knower of all objectivities’\(^{423}\) (presumably referring to all physical and mental objects of the universe). Sarkar claims that such knowledge acquired through mastery of savikalpa samādhi is synonymous with ‘complete omniscience’ (rtambharā tatra praṇāśa), an attainment made possible by close proximity of the expanded mind to the shining immaculate cognisance of nirguṇa brahma.\(^{424}\) (A deeper discussion on the nature of omniscient or spirituo-intuitional knowledge has already been offered in Chapter 4, subsection 4.2.3; the process of mind transformation leading to attainment of this knowledge will be covered in Chapter 6.)

Elsewhere, Sarkar mentions that while there is no duality between self and the world, a highly refined duality still exists between self and cosmic consciousness. This subtle duality is characterised by the feeling that ‘I am He’ wherein there remain two entities ‘I’ and ‘He’ connected by a sense of ‘am’.\(^{425}\) This statement concurs with Sarkar’s cosmogony, in which he affirms that the cosmic mahat

\(^{422}\) NSS, p. 224
\(^{423}\) AMI Parts 5-8, p. 552.
\(^{424}\) AMP Part 6, p. 390.
\(^{425}\) NKS, p. 18.
is a theoretically delimited form of the cosmic consciousness wherein the sense of ‘I am’ is present. Thus a union with cosmic mahat would necessarily imply the presence of ‘I’ feeling, however subtle and vast, which separates one from pure, self-less consciousness. Of this sense of cosmic self Sarkar says:

Savikalpa samādhi or determinate suspension comprises the fullness of vidyā prakṛti (introressive force); that is, the full establishment of the introressive momentum … – the absence of any extroverse force (avidyā), and total cessation of the extroverse momentum. In such a state, the ego not only exists, it exists in its total fullness and completeness. This very ego in its Brahma-ic mood evolves the universe, in its Viṣṇu-ic mood it preserves the universe, and in its Sīva-ic mood, it destroys the universe.426

The presence of a vastly expanded yet subtle ego-sense concurs with the observation that Sarkar sees samprajñāta samādhi (= savikalpa samādhi) as a state where the ‘unit citta is converted into Cognitive Faculty and thus the vikalpātmaka action of the mind is suspended, although the samkalpātmaka state of mind is still quite active’.427 Sarkar defines samkalpātmaka as that state of mind when a resolution or decision to perform an action is made but not materialised. It describes a purely subjective mental action. Vikalpātmaka is that state of mind in which the samkalpa or resolution to act is objectively materialised in the external world. Hence samprajñāta samādhi appears to be describing a cognisant state of mind wherein no physical or verbal action can be performed but mental action is still possible. In comparison, Sarkar says that in savikalpa samādhi the vikalpātmaka action of the mind has stopped and the samkalpātmaka function is only ‘nominally active’.428 Thus, the descriptions of samprajñāta samādhi and savikalpa samādhi match up quite well. More importantly, the claim of nominal mental activity in samprajñā or savikalpa samādhi is consistent with the earlier claim (in the preceding paragraph) that a highly subtle and expanded sense of self is still present in savikalpa samādhi.

Apart from a realisation of oneness with the cosmic entity, the attainment of savikalpa or samprajñāta samādhi confers upon the practitioner several other benefits: (1) ‘requisite of reactive momenta’, wherein ‘afflictions due to defective cognition gradually disappear’; (2) ‘loosening of the bondages of reactions’, wherein one no longer accumulates reactions to actions newly performed; and (3) ‘movement towards the undifferentiated state of Cognition’, wherein full Self-knowledge (ātmajñāna) is gradually being expressed as one arrives at close proximity to the resplendent clarity of nirguṇa brahma.429 It is also possible for a sādhaka who attains mastery over savikalpa samādhi to acquire some or all of the occult powers (vibhūtis) normally attributed to the cosmic mind.430 (These powers are discussed under the headings of ‘guru’ in section 5.2 and of ‘higher wisdom: abhiññā and tevijñā’ in section 7.4.)

426 SS Part 3, pp. 32-33.
427 AMP Part 5, p. 313.
428 Ibid.
429 AMI, pp. 670-671.
Mokṣa and Nirvikalpa Samādhi

Mokṣa is a higher soteriological goal than mukti and is said to be the sumnum bonum of Ānanda Mārga praxis. Sarkar describes it on several occasions as the ‘Supreme Stance’ of spiritual practice. Mokṣa is the permanent and irreversible attainment of nirvikalpa samādhi without ‘seeds’ (nirbīja), that is, without any remainder of unexhausted samskāras. Nirvikalpa samādhi is a state beyond savikalpa samādhi and is seen to be the merger of the mind into cosmic consciousness, an ineffable and totally transcendent state beyond the periphery of cosmic mind. It has been equated to three other terms, asamprajñāta samādhi or ‘supraconscious ecstasy’, sahajāvasthā or ‘natural state’, and brahmasadbhāva or ‘God-realisation’, which appear to be synonyms of nirvikalpa samādhi. Sarkar describes nirvikalpa samādhi thus:

When the mahat merges into the Āman, it is called nirgunasthiti (state of objectlessness) or nirvikalpa samādhi (the trance of determinate absorption, or total suspension of the mind) … The totally-absorbed state of the mahat, after merging that “I” feeling in the Citiṣākti [Cognitive Principle] – rather than doing the sādhanā of installing the mahat in the Macrocosmic Mahat – is nirgunasthiti or nirvikalpa samādhi … This state is verbally inexpressible, … it is not mentally apprehensible.

Sarkar sees the state of nirvikalpa samādhi as a state of absolute vacuity, where the mind has been utterly destroyed. Though the mind does not apprehend or experience anything in that state (for mind has been destroyed), it is nevertheless a state of absolute and ineffable bliss that can be verified by the spiritual aspirant immediately after the event:

In this state of absolute vacuity, the spiritual waves of exhilaration that fill the unit entity still continue to flow and trail on for some time even after that state of vacuity, that is, after the mind returns due to unversed samskāras … These very trailing waves of exhilaration and joyous exuberance keep reminding the “mindful” sādhaka [intuitional practitioner] that his or her “mindless” state had been one of absolute bliss.

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430 Sarkar warns that it is at this stage that downfall is likely to occur due to pride and ego-grasping of such powers by the sādhaka. To progress further on the path, full surrender of the self is imperative.
431 TPRS, p. 22.
433 Ibid. The English translation for sahajāvasthā is from The Yoga Tradition, p. 494, and that for brahmasadbhāva is from NSS, p. 208. Cf. P. N. Tiwari, ‘Kabir’s Devotionalism’, in G. M. Bailey and I. Kesarwani-Watson (eds.), Bhakti Studies (Delhi: Sterling Publications, 1992), pp. 159-181. Tiwari states that Kabir offers a model of spiritual practice termed sahaja sādhanā (easy or natural method), which is said to lead one to the mystical trance of sahaja samādhi. On sahaja, Tiwari quotes a commentary on Kabir’s text, Kabirvān: ‘Sahaja is beyond happiness, dualism, the five sense, beyond sensuality/It is the destruction of the gunas/the awareness of one Brahman within one’s consciousness … /these constitute the sahaja state’ (p. 167).
434 AS, p. 15.
435 AS, p. 16.
In nirvikalpa samādhi, both the vikalpātma and samkalpātma functions of the mind have completely ceased; as the mind ‘... loses psychic vitality, the nerve cells, nerve fibres and sense organs also stop functioning.’ 436

While this state is achieved only temporarily when the spiritual aspirant still possesses unexhausted sāmśkāras (sabīja nirvikalpa samādhi), it is possible for him or her to fully exhaust those sāmśkāras and finally merge into cosmic consciousness permanently. As in the attainment of mukti, realisation of mokṣa can be speeded up by performing selfless service and sacrifice as means to exhausting unserved sāmśkāras.

In terms of meditative praxis, this ultimate state is attained only through untainted devotional self-surrender to the divine consciousness, parama puruṣa. The grace (kṛpā) of the guru is instrumental in this endeavour of self-surrender, as it is only by the physical form and presence of the guru – the human embodiment of the infinite, formless brahma – that devotion can be aroused and perfected. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the aspect of brahma that manifests as the human guru is known as tāraka brahma, the ‘liberating cosmic entity’ that serves as the devotee’s personal God psychologically and the aspirant’s spiritual master physically. Tāraka brahma is Sarkar’s alternative to the Indian notion of avatāra, and is regarded by him as the bridge between nirguna and saguna brahma, the unmanifest and the manifest.

Sarkar’s nirvikalpa samādhi can be equated with spiritual knowledge, described in Chapter 4. The two states share similar features of total non-duality between the knower and the known, between self and cosmic consciousness. While Sarkar does not give much description of nirvikalpa samādhi (and by extension, mokṣa), he does speak much about the qualities and features of cosmic consciousness. This can provide us with clues to the nature and phenomenological features of the nirvikalpa samādhi experience, and give us an insight into the soteriological praxis involved in realising this state. This is possible since nirvikalpa samādhi is the state of oneness with cosmic consciousness, and becoming one with cosmic consciousness would necessarily imply becoming one with its nature and features.

In Sarkar’s texts, the nature of cosmic consciousness is often depicted in terms of unsurpassed luminosity, wherein ‘His effulgence outshines even the sun’s radiance.’ 437 Sarkar says:

The sun is not jyotisvarūpa (characteristically self-effulgent), it is He alone who is jyotisvarūpa. In His radiance, there is depth but no severity; there is sweetness but no harshness. Observe His calm brilliance in the firmament of your heart ... 438

In every created entity there exists the existential-I feeling and the ever-wakeful presence of that Supreme Effulgent Entity. 439

436 AS, p. 16.
437 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 370.
438 Ibid.
439 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 435.
From this it appears that Sarkar sees cosmic consciousness in terms of profound ‘radiance’, ‘sweetness’, ‘calm brilliance’, ‘ever-wakeful presence’ that exists in the depths of one’s heart. He also describes cosmic consciousness as akhānda cidaikarasa brahma, the ‘unending flow of cognisance that is brahma’; as śiva, ‘witnessing consciousness’; as puruṣa, ‘the witness-ship that lies quiescent in every entity’; and as ātman, ‘that which is omni-telepathic’. These descriptions portray cosmic consciousness as having the capacity to observe and illuminate the presence of various objects within its ever-dynamic cognitive field. The precise meaning of the term ‘omni-telepathic entity’ is made clear in the following passage (partly quoted in Chapter 4):

A sincere spiritual aspirant understands that Parama Puruṣa is the Prati bodhasatthā (Omni-telepathic Entity). What does this mean? Mind is the perceiver and the apparent knower of objects. The subjective emanations from this perceiving mind are finally reflected in the Cognitive Faculty. Hence the Cognitive Faculty is called the Omni-telepathic Entity. Only when psychic emanations are reflected on the cognitive plate can one acquire some kind of intellectual knowledge. The Omni-telepathic Entity is like a mirror … As this Entity is free from the bondage of mind, obviously He is not bound by spatial, temporal and personal bondages, and hence is not subject to waxing or waning.

So it appears that ātman = śiva = puruṣa, which is in essence parama puruṣa or brahma, is omni-telepathic because everything that the mind perceives or thinks is instantly reflected on the flowing, mirror-like field of awareness that is ātman. The mirror-like nature of the ātman is clearly described by Sarkar:

In spite of being alone and companionless, the Ātman appears to be objectivated due to the involvement of the mind with objects. It is like a mirror; if you place a red flower in front of the mirror, the mirror will also become red; if you place a yellow flower before it, it will turn yellow. Although intrinsically the mirror does not undergo any change, apparently it will look either red or yellow. In the proximity of objects the condition of the Ātman, qualified by the mind, intellect and body, is similar to that of the colourless mirror with various objects before it.

The above indicates that the experience of nirvikalpa samādhi, a state of oneness with cosmic consciousness, is necessarily characterised by the salient features of that very consciousness – radiance, sweetness, calm brilliance, ever-wakeful presence, and dynamic mirror-like awareness. It is possible that the descriptive terms ‘radiance’ and ‘brilliance’ are merely metaphors for clear awareness, which concurs well with the sense conveyed by the term ‘ever-wakeful presence’. In this case, nirvikalpa samādhi would be an experience of unequalled, illuminating, wakeful awareness, accompanied by a ‘depth’ and ‘sweetness’ free from any ‘harshness’. By extension, mokṣa would be a

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441 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 557.
442 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 325.
permanent abidance in this dynamic state of luminous cognisance and sweetness, free of all bondages of mind and body.

One anomaly that surrounds this interpretation is an earlier quote and description of nirvikalpa samādhi as a state of ‘vacuity’ and ‘objectlessness’ entirely beyond the scope of the mind. This suggests that the experience is one of non-cognisance and non-awareness, one in which ‘the lights go out’ and nothing can be apprehended. It may be that it is better described as a non-experience or a contentless experience. However, in the same sūtra, Sarkar takes pains to assert that, far from being a nihilistic, contentless non-experience, nirvikalpa samādhi is an experience that is full of absolute bliss, exhilaration, and joyous exuberance, and appears vacuous only from the point of view of the mind that fails to grasp and objectify that infinite state. For Sarkar, an infinite, objectless, and blissful cognisance that stands as the ultimate spiritual state, while difficult to conceive and even more difficult to describe, can nevertheless be experienced through proper spiritual practices and through selfless devotion.

Another clue that points to the argument that nirvikalpa samādhi is not a state of empty unconsciousness comes from Sarkar himself. In AV, he describes the experience of nirvikalpa samādhi in another way, with reference to the Vaiṣṇava notions of līlābhāva, the playful sporting stance of cosmic puruṣa, and nityabhāva, the original non-qualified stance of cosmic puruṣa.443 Sarkar says that līlābhāva is the stance of parama puruṣa when it is ‘continuing the creation along the processes of saṅcāra and pratisaṅcāra’.444 In other words, nirguna brahma abides in its līlābhāva at the time when a localised portion of itself is being qualified into saguna brahma, and subsequently into the quinquelemental and living universe. As for nityabhāva, he goes on to say that ‘… in nityabhāva, this varied expression is conspicuously absent. … [and] Puruṣa remains in His original stance, original rank, even though He is the source of this entire creation.’445 Thus, a sādhaka who has attained nirvikalpa samādhi, a state of oneness with nirguna brahma (= parama puruṣa), would similarly experience that ultimate state in two ways – from the perspective of nityabhāva or līlābhāva. Sarkar explains:

When the … sādhaka (being associated with Purusottama [Nucleus Consciousness] ) looks at this universe, he sees the universe with men and things and the various movements and actions. He will see different pictures at different angles, although he will look at the same thing from the same place. In the first case, he will see that Saguna Brahma, Purusottama, Bhagavān and the universe are all non-existent, there being only one Supreme Entity – infinite, without any beginning or end, all-pervading – only Nirguna Brahma. He is in His original rank – nityabhāva. In the second case, he sees the universe with people and other living and non-living beings. He sees the universe, with all the varied and kaleidoscopic creation. Which of the two is better is difficult to say because without both of these aspects, it is not possible to realise the madhura bhāva [sweet stance] of Parama Puruṣa.446

443 AV Part 33, pp. 60-61.
444 AV Part 33, p. 60.
445 AV Part 33, pp. 60-61.
446 AV Part 33, p. 61. Underline mine.
From Sarkar’s description, in the passage quoted above, of the two aspects of nirvikalpa samādhi, it appears that this ultimate attainment beyond the scope of the mind is not an inert and void state of unconsciousness. Rather, it is one of total clarity and cognisance, with or without the manifold phenomenal expressions. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, Sarkar suggests, in the above passage, that it is possible for a living practitioner to experience nirvikalpa samādhi in both lilābhāva and nityabhāva, and that abiding in both perspectives without prejudicing one or the other enables the practitioner to realise the madhura bhāva of parama puruṣa. Could it be that madhura bhāva constitutes the living experience of a jīvan-mukta, a fully liberated being while still in the mortal frame? It is to this issue of jīvan-mukta and the possibility of jīvan-mukti as the ‘third’ soteriological goal of AM that we now turn.

The ‘Third State’ of Jīvanmukti?

An important and interesting issue that has often been debated within the Indian spiritual tradition, and advocated by Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta school, is the concept of jīvanmukti, or ‘living liberation’. According to exponents of the concept of jīvanmukti, it is possible to gain liberation or full realisation of characterless ātmā, even while still embodied. The spiritual aspirant who has realised such liberation is known as a jīvanmukta.447 In Sarkar’s texts, there is no mention of this concept. Sarkar most frequently discusses realisation of the highest soteriological goals (mukti and mokṣa) and the stages leading up to them in terms of degrees of unification with parama puruṣa. He does not make it clear whether one can realise mukti and mokṣa while still embodied, and whether they can remain as stable and permanent states throughout one’s mortal life. While the foregoing discussion suggests that mukti and mokṣa can be achieved only post-mortem, necessitating relinquishment of the prakṛti-bound physical body, there are passages suggesting that Sarkar may have been alluding to some kind of ‘third state’ (for want of a better word) or a state of embodied liberation, jīvanmukti.

Of a sādhaka who has attained the sumnum bonum of spiritual practice, he says:

When one is ensconced in the exalted state due to the grace of Guru, what stage does one’s intuition reach? What sort of realisation does one attain? One discovers the divine play of the Infinite Entity in each and every finite manifestation. One realises that the Infinite Entity, who is ever present in His vast cosmic stance, is also ever present in every molecule and atom. One experiences that the entire universe is vibrated and invigorated with His unending cosmic flow. Every entity of this universe, big and small, every minute expression of pain and pleasure of the numerous microcosms, lie within His vast ocean of cosmic bliss. ... One realizes that the Supreme Cognitive Faculty resides in His immutable form while simultaneously

undertaking His tumultuous macrocosmic creation, and is thus the supreme desideratum of every finite entity. …

… Behind this playful stance of the Cosmic Entity lies His eternal immutable stance, which is a passive witness to the everchanging forms of His macropsychic manifestation. When devotees see His mutable forms with genuine spiritual vision they realize that they are already ensconced in His immutable stance. This is the state of supreme realisation. In this state the miseries caused by the binding fetters vanish and the sādhas become illuminated by the sweet touch of the playful, blissful, immutable Parama Puruṣa. This is the supreme spiritual fulfilment.

The above passage suggests that the ‘state of supreme realisation’ and ‘supreme spiritual fulfilment’ consists in being fully immersed in a passive pristine awareness of infinite scope while simultaneously embracing every changing object, every molecule and atom, every living being, and every experience of individual pain and pleasure as vibrative, ‘playful’, and ‘blissful’ expressions of that very same awareness. In the same passage, Sarkar does not give a formal term to designate this ultimate state, a state that appears to contain elements of both līlābhāva and nityabhāva. (These two terms have been discussed under the last heading of nirvikalpa samādhi.) It is līlābhāva in the sense that phenomenal objects – thoughts or things – are present within the field of awareness. It is nityabhāva in the sense that the meditator has dissolved into the ‘immutable’, ‘passive’ witnessing stance of supreme cognisance. Thus, it is apparent that this ultimate state of spiritual realisation of which Sarkar speaks is none other than madhura bhāva, the stance of sweet, unconfined and blissful awareness brought forth by the realisation of nirvikalpa samādhi in its two aspects of līlābhāva and nityabhāva. Perhaps, this stance of madhura bhāva in its permanent form is the ‘third state’, the stance of a jīvan-mukta.

Again, Sarkar speaks of establishment in the ultimate consciousness in terms reminiscent of embodied liberation:

When a spiritual aspirant gets adequately acquainted with His Blissful Entity, we say that he is established in the Supreme Consciousness. At that stage, both inside and outside attain unity. Mind then remains aloof from the attraction of trifles, and real acquaintance is made with the Supreme Being. While the body remains in the mortal world, the soul is merged in the Supreme Soul.

Whether the last sentence quoted above refers to a temporary attainment of nirvikalpa samādhi while in the mortal state, or to a permanent realisation of jīvan-mukti, is not entirely clear. The next passage suggests that the highest fulfilment for a sādhaka is an embodied state of permanent realisation:

The unit entities in which His divine expression is fully manifest are said to have attained the height of fulfilment physically, psychically and spiritually. They realise in the core of their hearts that the entire human life is a “sādhana”. Each and every

448 AMI Parts 5-8, pp. 482-483.
449 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 483.
450 SS Part 2, p. 10. Italics mine.
mundane action of theirs, such as eating, sleeping, dressing and even breathing, are an integral part of that “sādhana.”\footnote{AMI Parts 5-8, p. 431. Italics mine.}

In this case, it appears that Sarkar does admit the possibility of embodied liberation, and that this attainment, closely linked to the realisation of nirvika\-lpa samā\-dhi, is ultimate for a practitioner of AM.

Anindyānanda Rasa Samā\-dhi

Sarkar mentions another meditative state, termed anindyānanda rasa samā\-dhi (unblemished flow of bliss samā\-dhi),\footnote{Translation adapted from SPSSA, p. 265.} that may have an intimate link with the ‘third state’ discussed above. He links anindyānanda rasa samā\-dhi with the hormonal secretion of the pineal gland (associated with the sahasrā\-ra cakra) into the pituitary gland (associated with the ājñā cakra). He says that if a sādhaka is engaged in pure and sublime thinking at the time when the pineal hormone is secreted, the hormone will be able to flow down the left side of the pituitary gland and from there, into plexuses (cakras), glands and sub-glands, nerve fibres, nerve cells, veins and arteries below the ājñā cakra. This overflow of the pineal hormone (which Sarkar terms amrta, ‘nectar’) revitalises and imparts bliss to all the lower cakras, making them healthier and stronger. If, on the other hand, the sādhaka is engrossed in crude or unwholesome thinking at the time of pineal secretion, the pineal hormone gets ‘burnt up at the pituitary plexus’ and he or she does not experience any bliss at the lower cakras.\footnote{AMP Part 4, p. 243.}

Sarkar describes the experience of anindyānanda rasa samā\-dhi as follows:

At the time of pineal secretion a sādhaka goes into samā\-dhi – he or she visualises or experiences a kind of divine aura around the anāhata cakra. The sādhaka realises that he or she is experiencing a divine dip in the holy aura, and feels indescribable bliss in the heart. In that exalted state of realisation, every object of this universe seems to be extremely sweet, and one derives immense bliss, which no worldly object could ever provide. The sun’s rays, the moon beams, the land, the water, in fact everything, appears to be emanating a continuous stream of blissful nectar. … Even a sworn enemy appears to be very sweet at that time. Everything is sweet. … Throughout the blissful experience, a sweet taste is felt. … In Vaiṣ\-ṇava philosophy that stage of samā\-dhi is called madhura bhāva. In Tantra it is called anindyānanda rasa samā\-dhi.\footnote{The experience of inner sweetness (madhura) and the apparent perception of all things in the external world as similarly sweet characterise this state of samā\-dhi. This is reminiscent of an earlier description with regard to the ‘third state’ of AM soteriology, the stance of madhura bhāva, which has both nityabā\-hāva and līlābā\-hāva qualities and a profound sense of everything as playful, sweet expressions of the divine. Like the ‘third state’, attaining anindyānanda rasa samā\-dhi also requires the grace of the sadguru – the human manifestation of tāraka brahma:}

451 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 431. Italics mine.
452 Translation adapted from SPSSA, p. 265.
453 AMP Part 4, p. 243.

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The special characteristic of this samādhi is that it cannot be attained by one’s own personal efforts, but only through the grace of the Guru. … When the all-merciful Tāraka Brahma physically comes to earth in the form of a Sadguru, He helps deserving sādhakas attain this type of samādhi. Even when He is physically absent from this world, He helps deserving persons attain this samādhi through other gurus.\footnote{AMP, pp. 243-244.}

Is it possible that anīndyānanda rasa samādhi is phenomenologically identical to the ‘third state’ of supreme spiritual fulfilment, albeit as a temporary version of the latter? If so, a permanent realisation of anīndyānanda rasa samādhi would be equivalent to the ontological and psychological state of a jīvanmukta, a fully liberated being whose body remains in the physical world but whose consciousness is fully unbound, infinitely vast, and blissfully sweet.

Chandranath Kumar (1998), the oldest living disciple of Sarkar, who is highly regarded as an accomplished yogi within AM, views jīvan-mukta as a real possibility in the path of Tantric spiritual practice. While such a teaching may have been omitted or inconclusively described in Sarkar’s translated and published discourses, one cannot rule out the possibility of its having been taught to various disciples and privately recorded by them. It is with such a possibility in mind that I have consulted and given consideration to secondary and tertiary textual sources of AM. According to Kumar (1998), a jīvanmukta puruṣa is ‘one who has no attachment to his personality or to his personal requirements’.\footnote{AMP Part 4, p. 244.} He goes on to say:

They think of the Cosmic Entity all the time, even when they are not in meditation. They can never think of themselves or their self-attached objects. That kind of person can be called jīvan-mukta. A realised soul means one who is capable of merging their unit mind into that Cosmic Mind at will. That person has realised him, has realised that Cosmic Existence.\footnote{Devashish Donald Acosta (ed.), \textit{When the Time Comes: Conversations with Acārya Chandranath Kumar} (San German: Inner World Publications, 1998), p. 127.}

Kumar regards a jīvanmukta as one who has attained the highest state of nīrbīja nirvikalpa samādhi while still embodied, who, in other words, has realised mokṣa in the physical body. He says that a mokṣa-realised person has freed himself or herself from the bonds of prakṛti and may leave the body at will, but that he or she may choose to remain embodied for a certain length of time if so desired. This is achieved by the potential jīvanmukta taking a resolve or vow to stay on in the embodied state to fulfil certain unfinished tasks, in particular the self-imposed task of saving all beings from bondsages and elevating the human condition. It is possible to speculate that once nirvikalpa samādhi has been permanently attained (that is, mokṣa), the clear, reflexive, and mirror-like awareness of infinite puruṣa shines through the mind in so powerful a way that all duality between the knower and the known is fully dissolved – the jīvan-mukta exists in a perpetual state of non-dual, boundless

\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 127.}
awareness, free from any trace of separative ego and thus full of universal love. Kumar distinguishes two classes of jīvanmukta: ordinary spiritual aspirants who have achieved mokṣa through practice, and special liberated or perfected beings who manifest in the world for the sole purpose of bringing salvation to the world. The first group of jīvanmukta may still regress (but in a gradual way) if they discontinue their regular spiritual practice and only make use of their occult powers to help others. The second group of jīvanmukta have no chance of regression, as they are divine manifestations serving as media through which tāraka brahma (the liberator aspect of cosmic consciousness) works. Such a manifestation can be equated with mahāsambhūti (discussed in Chapter 3), a great being formed through the cosmogonic and evolutionary processes of brahmacakra in order to perform a specific salvational role in the universe.

In relation to mukti, the penultimate goal, Kumar explains that a person who has attained sabīja nirvikalpa samādhi (the highest meditative state with remaining seeds of saṃskāras) and then passes away is still to be considered as one who has realised mukti, not mokṣa. Such a person will have to be reborn in order to complete his or her final task of mokṣa-realisation, though a human body is definitely ensured. In this case, the person will be able to progress rapidly through the levels of spiritual realisation with minimal effort.

Dhruvasmṛti and Dharmamegha Samādhi
Sarkar mentions another state he calls dhruvasmṛti or ‘constant memory’. He defines this as a state ‘when the memory becomes established, unfailing and spontaneous … ’ and regards it as ‘an essential prerequisite for spiritual samādhi and bliss’.\(^{458}\) In this case Sarkar is referring to constant remembrance of, and ideation on, parama puruṣa achieved through diligent meditative practice. As this state of dhruvāsmyṛti appears to necessitate at least a nominal degree of volitional effort, it does not seem to be referring to the highest attainment of effortless liberation. It is more likely to be a state of constant but natural mindfulness of the meditative object, a state conducive to subsequent immersion in savikalpa samādhi. Elsewhere in the same source, Sarkar equates dhruvasmṛti with a type of meditative absorption he calls dharmamegha samādhi or ‘truth-cloud’ samādhi:

So when, through the symphony of meditation and japa, the rhythm of life persists, it is called dharmamegha samādhi. … then loss of memory does not occur. … This state is called dhruvāsmyṛti, or “infallible, eternal memory.”\(^{459}\)

In another source, he speaks of the term ‘dharmamegha’ as referring to a process of mental expansion, much like a cloud (metaphor for the unit mind) attempts to grow and fill up the entire sky (metaphor for cosmic consciousness), bringing all other clouds under its sway.\(^{460}\) Seen in this light, dharmamegha samādhi appears to be a state in which the mind is firmly joined to the flowing process

\(^{458}\) YP, pp. 50-51.
\(^{459}\) YP, pp. 193-194.
of expansion, or has vastly expanded but not yet merged into the cosmic mind. That this state of dhruvāsmrī or dhrarmekṣa samādhi immediately precedes the attainment of savikalpa samādhi can be seen from another of Sarkar’s discourses, in which he gives his own interpretation of the Buddha’s noble eightfold path. In this discourse, Sarkar equates dhruvāsmrī or dhrarmekṣa samādhi with the seventh step of the eightfold path, right mindfulness (samyak smṛti):

The person who is established … in samyak smṛti, that is, who never forgets the Lord, is called – that particular state of mind is called dhrarmekṣa samādhi, that is, the person is established in proper smṛti. That bliss enjoyed by the spiritual aspirant is called dhrarmekṣa samādhi.\(^\text{461}\)

He goes on to say that the attainment of savikalpa samādhi and nirvikalpa samādhi follows on from the meditator’s establishment in samyak smṛti, an attainment he equates with samyak samādhi, the eighth and final step of the Buddha’s eightfold path.\(^\text{462}\) Hence, it follows from the above that establishment in dhruvāsmrī or dhrarmekṣa samādhi precedes the attainment of savikalpa samādhi, and culminates in the realisation of nirvikalpa samādhi.

**Summary of AM Soteriological Goals**

In summary, the soteriological attainments of AM as expounded by Sarkar can be tabulated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attainment</th>
<th>Equivalent Terms</th>
<th>Permanent Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dharmamegha samādhi</td>
<td>Dhruvāsmrī, samyak smṛti</td>
<td>Vastly expanded mind, but yet to be merged into cosmic mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savikalpa samādhi</td>
<td>Samprajñāta samādhi</td>
<td>Mukti (unit mind merged into cosmic mind)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nirvikalpa samādhi</td>
<td>Asamprajñāta samādhi, sahajāvasthā, and brahmaśadbhāva</td>
<td>Mokṣa (unit mind merged into cosmic consciousness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>? Anindyānanda rasa samādhi</td>
<td>Madhura bhāva, ‘state of supreme realisation’ and ‘supreme spiritual fulfilment’</td>
<td>? Jīvanmukti (permanent state of embodied liberation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mukti (= permanent savikalpa samādhi) and mokṣa (= permanent nirvikalpa samādhi) thus form the two pinnacles to which the entire soteriological enterprise of Sarkarian Tantra is directed, while a third state, jīvanmukti, is a possible ultimate realisation attainable by the sādhaka of AM.

\(^{460}\) AMP Part 6, p. 390.

\(^{461}\) AV Part 30, p. 65.

\(^{462}\) AV Part 30, pp. 65-66.
These soteriological goals are based solidly on Sarkar’s ontological and theological views regarding *saguna-nirguna-tāraka brahma* and *brahmaakra*. Also, each of them depends on specific spiritual and meditative practices designed to lead to it. These practices will be the focus of the latter half of Chapter 5 and the whole of Chapter 6.

### 5.3 The Fundamentals

The fundamentals of spiritual practice in Sarkar’s AM are based solidly on traditional Tantric conception and praxis, namely (1) the crucial need for a perfect and fully-realised guru; (2) the necessity for Tantric dǐkṣā or initiation; (3) the essential role of the mantra in awakening one’s dormant spirituality and elevating one’s mind to its highest level and deepest state of realisation; and (4) the essence of AM ideology visually represented in the yantra (symbolic diagram) of AM, the pratīka. These fundamentals will be discussed in turn under separate headings.

**Guru**

Sarkar attaches great importance to the role of the guru and the event of dǐkṣā (‘initiation’) in the overall soteriological journey of the spiritual aspirant. Identifying the guru with brahma, Sarkar sees him as the transmitter of divine knowledge in the form of spiritual and meditative practices to the aspirant who has developed intense desire for spiritual enlightenment. This transmission takes place formally through the act of dǐkṣā, an initiation of the disciple-to-be into the practice of Tantric meditation. Instructions on meditation technique are usually accompanied by the prescribing of a personal mantra (a mental tool consisting of Sanskrit syllables to be silently repeated). Sarkar believes that the vibration of the mantra has to suit the overall bio-psychological make-up of the individual and is to be carefully selected for optimal efficacy. He has authorised his trained ācāryas (spiritual instructors) to initiate potential students in his absence, emphasising that it is the ‘vibrational force’ of the guru (i.e. Sarkar himself), present in the mantra and working through the medium of the ācārya, that actually performs the initiation.

Sarkar defines the term guru as ‘one who dispels darkness’, darkness that prevails in the physical, psychic, and spiritual strata of human existence. In order to fulfil his or her role as one who dispels physical, psychic, and spiritual darkness, the guru has to possess several essential qualities. First, the guru has to be conversant with the most precise details of sādhanā or ‘spiritual practice’, and able to teach these practices to others. He or she must also have ‘thorough and authentic scriptural knowledge’[^463] as well as mastery of the different languages in which the scriptures are written. He or she needs to possess comprehensive knowledge and intellect and be able to convince others to take up the path of spirituality. In Sarkar’s view, the guru also ‘must possess the capacity both to punish, and

to love, or bless, his disciples”; for ‘love and punishment should go together, and the degree of
punishment should never exceed the degree of love’.464

Such an ideal guru in the spiritual realm is also termed a mahākula, one who not only has
elevated and established his or her own kundalini at the highest level, but also possesses the capacity
to lead others to the same exalted position. Sarkar considers Sadāśiva and Kṛṣṇa as two historical
personalities who could be called mahākulas. They are also said to be the two previous
manifestations of tāraka brahma (see Chapter 3), who is the personalised aspect of brahma that
liberates living beings and guides global human society toward morality and bliss. In this connection,
Sarkar mentions the possibility of varying degrees (koti) of pure consciousness (brahma) manifesting
in unit beings (jīva), resulting in divine manifestations of different capacities and powers.465 In line
with his cosmology, Sarkar sees all unit beings as jīvakoti – unit manifestations of consciousness –
that possess ordinary levels of ability and potency available to any typical living entity. A greater
manifestation of the power of consciousness is said to be found in īśvarakoti beings, who may be
gurus possessing a special power to accomplish tasks that are normally considered difficult or
impossible by jīvas. Sarkar speaks of three grades of īśvarakoti gurus in order of increasing power:
(1) kalāvatāra gurus, (2) amśavatāra gurus, and (3) khandāvatāra gurus. These three grades of
īśvarakoti gurus are said to have appeared in the world in good number, and to have carried out their
roles in various places and time periods before leaving the world. However, the highest grade of
manifestation is the brahmakoti or pūrṇavatāra guru, who is the expression of the full power of
consciousness. Such a guru comes into the world in order to ‘educate people, to create a Cosmic
vibration in the world – and that vibration continues to guide society as long as it exists.’466 The
brahmakoti or pūrṇavatāra guru is thus synonymous with the mahākula, the human manifestation of
tāraka brahma. The īśvarakoti gurus are also termed kaulas, spiritual personages who have realised
the ‘secret’ (kula) of self-realisation and who are able to impart that wisdom to others.

Hatley (2000) suggests that for AM, the opposition of the two brahmakoti gurus, Sadāśiva and
Kṛṣṇa, is resolved by making Sarkar the latest incarnation of tāraka brahma, with Sadāśiva and Kṛṣṇa
merged in his person.467 The identification of Sarkar with tāraka brahma by his followers is not
entirely without basis. An examination of Sarkar’s discourses reveals that though he never explicitly
identifies himself with Sadāśiva and Kṛṣṇa combined, he does assert that ‘only Brahma is the guru, no
one else’.468 He goes on to say that ‘Brahma alone directs the units to the path of emancipation
through the media of different receptacles or bodies’;469 and that ‘the one formless, beginningless and

466 Ibid., p. 37.
467 Hatley, The Dialectics of Bliss, p. 22.
468 AS, p. 34.
469 Ibid.
infinite Parama Brahma (Supreme Consciousness) … alone has revealed Brahmavidyā (intuitional science) to us through the medium of the name and form of Ānandamūrtijī.⁴⁷⁰

According to Sarkar, tāraka brahma is given the appellation bhagavān, ‘the Lord who possesses the six bhagas (special attributes)’.⁴⁷¹ Thus, the sadguru, who is the human manifestation of tāraka brahma is also honoured as bhagavān, the Lord of all bhaktas or devotees. Sarkar sees bhagavān as possessing the following qualities: (1) all vibhūtis or supernatural powers, (2) vīrya or vigour and commanding ability, (3) yaśa or reputation (both positive and negative), (4) śrī or charm, (5) jñāna or non-dual knowledge of the ātman, and (6) vairāgya or non-attachment.⁴⁷² In particular, the vibhuūtis are eight in number and consist of (a) anīmā (ability to become minute), (b) mahimā (ability to become very large), (c) laghimā (ability to become very light), (d) iśitva (ability to understand, witness and direct actions of all entities), (e) prakāmya (ability to assume any form), (f) vaśitva (ability to control forces of nature), (g) prāpti (ability to actualise any intent), and (h) antaryāmitva (ability to see into the nature of any entity).⁴⁷³ (These vibhūtis will be discussed and compared with their Buddhist counterparts in Chapter 7.)

Sarkar emphasises that in addition to the spiritual qualifications listed above, the guru needs to possess expertise in the psychic realm, which is cruder than the spiritual. The guru has to be ‘aware of the nature of the human mind – what it is made of, how it should be elevated step by step from crude to subtle, how all the unit minds can march together in unison towards the goal – in a word, he must know both the theoretical and the applied sides of psychology’.⁴⁷⁴ Besides knowing the structure of the mind, the guru needs to be ‘conversant with the style in which the human mind functions, and also in the method to control and guide it properly’,⁴⁷⁵ in other words, he must know the process of the mind and how it can be trained and developed. As in the spiritual sphere, the guru has to be learned in the humanities and in all branches of human knowledge, so that he or she can teach and inspire others most effectively.

In terms of the physical world, Sarkar sees the guru as teaching humanity the methods to solve all worldly problems – ‘problems with food, clothing, education and medical treatment’.⁴⁷⁶ To Sarkar, a true guru has to ensure that all mundane problems of his or her disciples are solved so that psychic growth and spiritual progress can occur.

Followers of AM would argue that on all three counts listed above, Sarkar amply fits the role of guru: he meets all the criteria in the physical, psychic and spiritual spheres. According to them, Sarkar’s spiritual ideology and praxis in the spiritual stratum, psychology and biopsychology in the psychic stratum, Yogic exercises and treatment methods and Progressive Utilisation Theory in the

⁴⁷¹ See SPSSA, p. 75.
⁴⁷² See SPSSA, pp. 75-76.
⁴⁷³ Ibid.
⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.
physical stratum, all qualify him to be called a guru. Furthermore, AM portrays Sarkar as a charming, powerful guru who exhibits all the six attributes of bhagavān and thus the focal point of devotion.

Sarkar mentions a range of other qualities (together with the several listed above) that a guru should possess:

The kula guru … must be modest, soberly dressed, and have right conduct, right livelihood and a pure mind. In the spiritual field, he must be learned in theory and skilled in practice. It is not sufficient for the guru to be learned in theory only. He should be highly intellectual and benevolently inclined. He should lead a normal family life; then only can he act as a preceptor to a person leading a normal family life … He himself must be established in dhyāna and other spiritual practices. He should be well versed in theory and skilled in the practice of mantra. Mantra is that, contemplation and meditation upon which leads to liberation from all worldly bondages. The kula guru knows the mantras that have been proven and also knows how these are applicable to individuals. The guru must govern the disciple and also love him. Those who only administer to or only love the disciple are not worthy of the dignified position.477

It is interesting to note that Sarkar sees the family person instead of the celibate monastic as qualifying for the role of guru. This is akin in spirit to the antinomian and anti-hierarchical character of Indian Tantrism, in which distaste for class distinctions and priestly hegemony is evident. Also, Sarkar stresses the importance of the mantra in meditation, in line with classical Tantric thinking.

In addition to his typology of gurus in terms of their degree of manifestation of cosmic consciousness, Sarkar distinguishes three classes of gurus in terms of ability to guide their disciples to the final goal. The first, adhama (‘lowest or worst’) guru, may give some discourses but is not concerned with the conduct or progress of the disciple. He or she cannot impart anything lasting to the disciple, and may even accept the disciple’s offerings and later leave him or her.

The second, madhyama (‘middling’) guru, may impart some practices and guide the disciple to some degree. Such a guru is not able to lead the disciple to the highest attainment because of either his or her own lack of attainment or lack of effort in guiding the disciple on the proper path. He or she is said to be able to influence another by the power of his or her vijñānamaya kośa or hiranmaya kośa, the fourth and fifth layers of the mind respectively. A madhyama guru is able to exert the influence of either (1) his or her vijñānamaya kośa over the atimānasa kośa of the student, or (2) his or her hiranmaya over the vijñānamaya kośa of the same. Sarkar applies the term gandharva vidyā to the first case, and the term daivī vidyā to the second case.478 A madhyama guru exercises gandharva vidyā and daivī vidyā by means of eloquent, insightful speeches, and kīrtana or chanting and the like.479

The third, uttama prathama (‘highest and best’) guru, teaches the proper practices and ensures with strict discipline and selfless love that the disciple follows them correctly. Such a guru, also

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478 SS Part 1, p. 64.
known as a sadguru or ‘immutable/perfect master’, acts to keep the disciple on the right path until the final goal is reached.\textsuperscript{480} The only person that can claim to be sadguru is the human embodiment of tāraka brahma himself, the mahākāula (= brāhmakoti or purṇāvatāra). The uttama prathama guru exerts the power of the ātman (= puruṣa) over the hiraṇmaya kośa of the student, inspiring him or her with spiritual bliss. This power of the ātman over the hiraṇmaya kośa is termed brāhma vidyā.\textsuperscript{481}

In addition to these three forms of vidyā that a guru may exert on the disciple, Sarkar mentions three other forms of kośa influence that he considers negative or unwholesome. First, he refers to the influence of the atimānas kośa of one person over the manomaya kośa of another as rākṣasī or paisācika vidyā (‘demonic influence’).\textsuperscript{482} This form of kośa influence is commonly practised by practitioners of avidyā Tantra, who may use such powers for selfish or unwholesome motives. Second, he applies the term bhūta vidyā (‘hypnotism’)\textsuperscript{483} to the influence of the manomaya kośa of one person over the kāmamaya kośa of another. This is akin to the use of psychological suggestion by powerful or charismatic personalities in order to mesmerise their audience. Third, Sarkar refers to the influence of the kāmamaya kośa of one person over the annamaya kośa of another as ‘the force of physical attraction’.\textsuperscript{484}

The various types of gurus as conceived and discussed by Sarkar can be correlated and tabulated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification 1</th>
<th>Classification 2</th>
<th>Classification 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Īśvarakoti guru:</td>
<td>Kaula</td>
<td>Adhama or madhyama guru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) kalāvaiāra</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) amśāvatāra</td>
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<td>(3) khandāvatāra</td>
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| Brahmakoti guru (or pūrnāvatāra) = manifestation of tāraka brahma. | Mahākāula = manifestation of tāraka brahma. | Uttama prathama guru = manifestation of tāraka brahma. |

\textit{Dīkṣā}

The most important event in the spiritual journey of an aspirant is dīkṣā, or ‘initiation’. This refers to the transmission of spiritual energy and meditative technique from the guru to the disciple at a time when the disciple is ready. It occurs only when the disciple-to-be has an intense urge to realise brahma, the cosmic entity that is simultaneously the experience of limitless and metempirical happiness known as ānanda or ‘bliss’. This intense spiritual desire is reciprocated when brahma, in

\textsuperscript{479}SS Part 1, p. 64 and SPSSA, p. 164.
\textsuperscript{480}SPSSA, pp. 208-209.
\textsuperscript{481}SS Part 1, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{482}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{483}Ibid.
the form and function of the living guru (embodied or otherwise), appears to the disciple and initiates him or her onto the spiritual path.

Sarkar defines ‘initiation’ as ‘resort to a new avenue of progress’ and concedes that the English word does not fully convey the meaning of the Sanskrit dīkṣā.\(\textsuperscript{485}\) He borrows from classical Tantra to define dīkṣā thus:

The process which produces the capacity to realise the inner import of mantra and which expedites the requital of the saṃskāras, or reactive momenta, is called dīkṣā.\(\textsuperscript{486}\)

Sarkar describes dīkṣā as having two phases, vaidikī dīkṣā and tāntrikī dīkṣā. He views vaidikī dīkṣā as the initial phase, when the spiritual aspirant is requesting divine guidance on the path of spirituality. This is the stage when the disciple-to-be first realises the need for spiritual practice and is sincerely asking for God to guide the intellect ‘unto the path of bliss, unto the path of supreme blessedness’.\(\textsuperscript{487}\) At this stage, there is as yet no transmission by the guru of the practical method for spiritual development.

Tāntrikī dīkṣā is the second phase of initiation, when the disciple-to-be encounters the guru and receives actual transmission of spiritual practice from him or her. Sarkar further divides tāntrikī dīkṣā into three sub-phases: (1) dīpanī (‘showing the torchlight’), (2) mantrāghāta (‘hit of the mantra’), and (3) mantra caityana (‘consciousness power of the mantra’). Dīpanī is the transmission, from guru to disciple, of the ethical disciplines of yama-nīyama (social and personal codes of conduct) and of the practice of śuddhis (preparatory withdrawal processes). These disciplines and practices help illuminate and pave the way for the mind to go deeper into its true nature – pristine consciousness – by creating a harmonious equilibrium within and without the mind. Regarding dīpanī, Sarkar says:

Before proceeding with the japa of the mantra, the torch light to guide the mind in a proper frame and, during the process, psychic association with the meaning are essential … One cannot perceive any object howsoever valuable in a dark room. Similarly, without this beacon, one cannot correctly make use of any mantra, howsoever effective.\(\textsuperscript{488}\)

The second sub-phase, mantrāghāta, is the ‘striking’ and awakening effect of the mantra on the sleeping kundalinī of the disciple, which is transmitted to the disciple by the guru during dīkṣā. Sarkar believes that the acoustic vibrations of the mantra, when spoken directly by the guru to the disciple or when later recited inwardly by the disciple, have the effect of arousing the dormant spiritual potential lying at the base of the spine in the mūlādhāra cakra. This potential (discussed in Chapter 4) is the force of innate consciousness residing in the human body-mind system that awaits

\(\textsuperscript{484}\) Ibid.
\(\textsuperscript{485}\) DOT Vol. 2, p. 143.
\(\textsuperscript{486}\) DOT Vol. 2, p. 142.
\(\textsuperscript{487}\) DOT Vol. 2, p. 144.
awakening and full actualisation. For this to occur, the mantra used has to be a siddha mantra (‘proven or effective mantra’) so that a resonance between the acoustic roots of the mantra and the mind of the disciple can be obtained. (The nature and functions of the mantra will be discussed in the last part of this section).

Mantra caitanya, the third sub-phase of tāntrikī dīkṣā, is technically the movement of the kundalinī up along the susumnā following application of the striking force of the mantra on the kundalinī. Sarkar defines mantra caitanya as ‘ … the condition where, with the help of a particular śabda (‘sound’), a person establishes parallelism between his or her external physical vibration and his or her internal ectoplasmic vibration, and then raises this to the spiritual level’. \[489\] In this parallelism, the disciple begins to link his or her mind with the cosmic mind. Sarkar says:

When … a person coincides his individual rhythmic vibration with the rhythmic vibrations in the realm of this … universe [made up of the five fundamental factors], from that moment onwards his rhythms become vibrated with mantra caitanya … individual rhythms have to be made parallel to the Cosmic rhythms…\[490\]

In this way, the ‘consciousness power’ infused into the mantra and contained within it through the spiritual force of the guru, is unleashed as the continual repetition of and ideation on the mantra gradually synchronises the disciple’s rhythm with the cosmic rhythm.

**Mantra**\[491\]

Sarkar defines mantra as mananāt tārayet yastu sa mantraḥ parikārtitaḥ. For this, he gives several almost identical translations. The first is ‘that which, when contemplated on, leads to freedom from [all sorts of] bondages is called a mantra’. \[492\] Another translation of the same phrase is ‘that collection of sounds meditation on which leads to liberation’. \[493\] Yet another translation is ‘mantra is that particular word whose repetition or auto-suggestion or outer-suggestion helps the microcosm free itself of all the fetters of physical and psychic life’. \[494\] From these statements, it can be gathered that a mantra is a word made up of a collection of sounds (śabdas) that has liberative potency when contemplated by a spiritual practitioner. For Sarkar, every mantra is ‘sonic or vibrational and is

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\[488\] SPSSA, p. 257.
\[489\] DOT Vol. 1, p. 49.
\[490\] Ibid.
\[491\] For a detailed discussion on mantra in Tantrism, see Agehananda Bharati, The Tantric Tradition (London: Rider and Company, 1965), pp. 101-163. Bharati explains mantra as follows: ‘mantra is meaningful not in any descriptive or even persuasive sense, but within the mystical universe of discourse. … Mantra is verifiable not by what it describes but by what it effects: if it creates that somewhat complex feeling-tone in the practising person, which has found its expression in the bulk of mystical literature such as Tantra, then it is verified; or in other words, the principle of verification of mantra lies in its emotive numinous effect as well as in the corroboration of such effects in religious literature’ (pp. 102-103). In Sarkar’s terminology, the meaning of the term ‘bhavā’ or ‘ideation’ encompasses the ‘complex feeling-tone’ or ‘emotive numinous effect’ mentioned by Bharati.
\[492\] DOT Vol. 2, p. 42.
\[493\] DOT Vol. 1, p. 48.
vibrating simultaneously in the Cosmic system and in the unit body’. A state called mantra siddhi is reached when, ‘… with the help of a mantra, a person finally establishes the parallelism of the unit ectoplasmic vibration with the Cosmic vibration’. It can be argued that this stage of mantra siddhi is identical with the attainment of savikalpa samādhi, merger of unit and cosmic minds. In the process of attaining mantra siddhi, a transition stage known as mantra caitanya occurs, which, as previously discussed, forms the third sub-phase of the initiation process, dīkṣā, and occurs when the dormant kundalini is awakened and starts moving up the suṣumnā. It is possible that mantra caitanya occurs each time the disciple meditates conscientiously following initiation, and manages to awaken the power of the mantra during the period of meditation.

Sarkar makes it clear that for a mantra to be effective in the disciple’s meditative practice, that is, for mantra caitanya to occur, the selected mantra has to suit the sanskāras of the individual concerned. This is so that the disciple is able to more easily link his or her own physico-psychic vibrations with the vibration of the cosmic mind. Additionally, the individual is to have feelings of universal kinship with and love for the world, in order that inner-outer parallelism in the person can be attained. Sarkar describes three intrinsic characteristics a mantra must have in order to be effective. First, an effective mantra needs to be pulsative, that is, it has to be of two syllables to flow with the rhythm of inhalation and exhalation of the breath. The rhythm of the mantra is thought to induce slow and deep rhythmic breathing, which is in turn conducive to mental calmness and poise. Second, the mantra needs to be incantative, that is, its acoustic properties have to be such that they can connect the totality of physical, psychic, and spiritual vibrations of the individual (also termed jaivī satta or ‘entitative rhythm’) with the infinite, straight-line vibration of the cosmic mind (also termed bhūmā prāṇa or ‘cosmic rhythm’). To Sarkar, the most effective incantative rhythms are found in the Sanskrit language, which is thought to originate from ancient yogis who discovered the fifty acoustic roots of the Sanskrit language located in the fifty glands and sub-glands clustered around the cakras of the human body. For Sarkar, an effective incantative mantra has to be in Sanskrit. Third, a potent mantra also needs to be ideative, that is, it has to possess a specific meaning and associated feeling that centre around the inseparability of the individual and the cosmic entity. Sarkar explains:

Idea is mental tendency … and practice leads to expansion and attainment … If one repeatedly meditates on Parama Puruṣa, the continued association will cause the curved psychic waves of the individual to approximate to the straight radiation of the Cosmic Consciousness … The Supreme knowledge “Aham Brahmaṁ brahmaṁ” (I am Brahma) leads out of all ignorance; nothing else can cause enlightenment. But if this truth remains confined to utterance alone it is worthless. The ideational flow in the “Soham” mantra has to be imbibed by continuous suggestions, and this is not possible by mere repetition. This psycho-spiritual principle is the discovery of Tāntra … The Tāntrikas assert that mere japa [repetition] cannot prove fruitful unless there is

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494 DOT Vol. 1, p. 69.
495 DOT Vol. 1, p. 49.
496 DOT Vol. 1, p. 49.
497 SPSSA, p. 259.
rhythmic parallelism in the waves of the unit mind and the flow of the mantra …
Without ideational concept, all repetition of a mantra is a waste of time.\textsuperscript{498}

In addition to the three essential features of a mantra, there is one other factor, perhaps the
most important factor of all, that needs to be considered. This has to do with the ‘empowerment’ of a
mantra by the guru’s spiritual force, so that it acquires the status of a siddha mantra. In Sarkar’s
view, a perfect guru or mahākaula has the capacity to infuse certain acoustic vibrations in the cosmic
mind with spiritual vitality and power, so that these acoustic roots become ‘highly-charged’ siddha
mantras. This process of empowering the mantra by a mahākaula is known as puraścaraṇa. A
siddha mantra, when given to a disciple and used properly and regularly, is highly efficacious in
awakening the disciple’s kuṇḍalinī and elevating it towards the sahasrāra cakra. In other words, the
guru-empowered siddha mantra is the primary means by which a disciple progresses on the path of
spiritual meditation. Sarkar says:

Those who can move the collective ectoplasm through the medium of their ectoplasmic
rhythm can awaken new power in śabda through their own ectoplasmic strength. The
awakening of this power in śabda is called puraścaraṇa in Sanskrit. And those who
can perform such a tough task are called Mahākaula. They alone are worthy of
the status of guru and no one else. When a Mahākaula awakens vibrations in the universal
ectoplasmic body through the medium of particular śabdas, those śabdas [are also
altered and] acquire the status of siddha mantras. A spiritual aspirant can only achieve
perfection through the medium of those siddha mantras. Other mantras are not
able to lead to success, and spiritual aspirants cannot awaken them.\textsuperscript{499}

In AM, Sarkar has given a siddha mantra ‘Bābā Nām Kevalam’ for regular individual and collective
chanting as a preliminary practice prior to formal meditation. Known as the universal mantra, it is
also used for formal meditation practice and is usually taught to beginners. (A more detailed
discussion of spiritual practice methods will be undertaken in section 5.5.)

Sarkar comments on another mantra that he considers to be an example of a siddha mantra,
the favourite Tibetan prayer: \textit{Om Maṇi Padme Hūṃ.}\textsuperscript{500} Giving his interpretation of the mantra, he
says that \textit{om} symbolises supreme consciousness, \textit{parama puṇuṣa}, in its creative, maintaining, and
destructive aspects; \textit{manipadma} is the mūlādhāra cakra, the location of the kuṇḍalinī force; and \textit{hūṃ}
is the acoustic root-sound of spiritual struggle as the kuṇḍalinī makes its way from mūlādhāra up to
the topmost cakra. Sarkar says:

So, ‘Using \textit{aum}, I remember Parama Puṇuṣa; and \textit{manipadma} is the seat of that coiled
serpentine, that sleeping divinity, in the human body. I remember that entity also.’
\textsuperscript{501}

\textsuperscript{498} \textit{SPSSA}, p. 261.
\textsuperscript{499} \textit{DOT} Vol. 1, p. 52.
\textsuperscript{500} \textit{DOT} Vol. 1, pp. 79-81 and \textit{AV} Part 33, p. 72.
\textsuperscript{501} \textit{DOT} Vol. 1, p. 79.
… There are so many depraving forces … When you want to fight against the mind, a particular flow is created in your mind … The acoustic root of that flow is hūṃ. … The hūṃ sound is created. The hūṃ sound is the acoustic root of fight. 502

While Sarkar explains the ideation behind this mantra, he does not explicitly recommend its practice to his disciples. Thus, his followers do not regard the use of the mantra ‘Om Mani Padme Hūṃ’ as part of AM spiritual praxis.

Yantra of AM: The Pratīka
Sarkar designed a visual diagram called the pratīka, which is said to represent the essence of AM philosophy and practice, and is used as a device for visual contemplation and protection. 503 The pratīka consists of a six-pointed star made up of two equilateral triangles, one pointing upward and the other pointing downward. The upward-pointing triangle represents action (karma) – the outgoing flow of energy through selfless service to humanity, while the downward-pointing triangle represents knowledge (jñāna) – the inward quest for spiritual enlightenment through meditation. Within the two superimposed triangles are a rising sun with effusing rays and a svāstika (an ancient Indian symbol) embedded within the sun. The sun in the centre of the six-pointed star represents advancement, all-round progress, while the svāstika represents the ultimate goal of the spiritual aspirant’s journey – spiritual victory or salvation. The basic element of the svāstika is the cross, with the horizontal line representing śakti or prakṛti, the operative and creative principle, and the vertical line representing śiva or puruṣa, the supreme cognitive principle. The ‘tails’ of the cross are oriented in a clockwise direction, and indicate that the spiritual force needed to awaken and raise the coiled kundalini has to be applied in the anti-clockwise direction. When such a force is applied, the svāstika rotates accordingly in the anti-clockwise direction (see Appendix D to aid conceptualisation of this process).

Sarkar is said to have exhorted his followers to ‘protect in all respects and at all costs the dignity’ of the pratīka. 504 In day to day practice, all AM practitioners wear a small, circular pratīka around their necks as a reminder of the ideology and as a protective device against potential negative forces unleashed by immoral avidyā Tantric practitioners. The use of the pratīka, the yantra of AM, strongly suggests a connection to the traditional Tantric practice of the yantra. The similarities and differences between the AM pratīka and traditional Tantric yantras, in terms of purpose and actual usage, will be explored in Chapter 8.

5.4 Context of Praxis: Nature and Systems of Tantra
In his discourses, Sarkar gives several closely related definitions of the term ‘Tantra’. First, he quotes a scriptural definition of Tantra as taṃ jādyāt tārayet yastu saḥ tantrah parikṛttitah, meaning ‘Tantra

502 DOT Vol. 1, p. 80.
503 AMSSP, pp. 32-33. See Appendix D of this thesis for a visual representation of the pratīka.
504 AMSSP, p. 32.
is that which liberates a person from the bondages of staticity. According to him, the Sanskrit syllable *tam* (the first syllable of the word *tantra*) is the acoustic root of staticity, where staticity denotes the forces of inertia and ignorance that block the physical, psychic and spiritual growth of the person. Second, Sarkar defines *tantra* as ‘the practical process that leads to one’s expansion and consequent emancipation’. This definition is based on his understanding that *tan* is the Sanskrit verb root meaning ‘to expand’.

Sarkar endows his brand of *tantra* with several characteristics. First, he distinguishes the tradition of *tantra* from Veda (‘knowledge’) by emphasising the essentially practical nature of *tantra* in contrast to the ritualistic focus of the Vedas. He also claims that *tantra* involves both internal meditative practice and external struggle against hostile forces, and serves to fully develop the innate qualities of the human mind and spirit:

The process of *tantra* progressively develops the qualities latent in human beings and at the same time eliminates the defects. In *tantra*, therefore, there is no question of the path being as sharp as a razor's edge. Because of this spirit, a practitioner of *tantra* becomes elevated and attains mastery over a hostile environment. *Tantra* does not accept the teachings of the Vedas that human beings should move internally, and carefully avoid any association with their environment ... In *tantra*, there is a nice blending between the internal *sādhana*, an ongoing psychic process, and physico-psychic *sādhana*.

In the above passage, physico-psychic *sādhana* is the struggle with external forces or inner weaknesses enacted in the external environment that hinder the disciple’s spiritual progress. For example, Sarkar says:

So *tantra* advises, “Jump into your environment without the least hesitation. Don’t be afraid. Fear will leave you step by step. Tomorrow you will not be as fearful as you are today, the day after you will be even less fearful, and ten days from now you’ll notice that you are completely fearless.”

Another major disagreement between Sarkar’s *tantra* and the Vedic tradition is in relation to caste and class segregation. He sees the caste system as opposed to the creation of a well-knit, equitable, and egalitarian society, and positively harmful to the total actualisation of a human being’s potential. He is emphatic about *tantra* giving full scope for the ‘all-round development’ of a human being, with every person having equal status in society. To him, ‘there cannot be any compromise between *tantra* and the caste system’.

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505 DOT Vol. 2, p. 36.
507 DOT Vol. 2, pp. 132-133.
508 DOT Vol. 2, p. 133.
A second and main feature of Sarkar’s Tantra is its emphasis and focus on the development of human vigour in the process of shattering all pāśas (‘bondages’) and ripus (‘enemies’) of the mind and transforming animality into divinity. Regarding Tantra, he says:

It represents a pactless fight. Where there is no fight there is no sādhanā. Under such circumstances Tantra cannot be there, where there is no sādhanā, no fight. It is an impossibility to conquer a crude idea and to replace it by a subtle idea without a fight … Hence Tantra is not only a fight, it is an all-round fight. It is not only an external or internal fight, it is simultaneously both. The internal fight is the practice of the subter portion of Tantra. The external fight is a fight of the crueler portion of Tantra … The practice for raising the kulakunḍalinī is the internal sādhanā of Tantra, while shattering the bondages of hatred, suspicion, fear, shyness, etc. by direct action is the external sādhanā.510

Sarkar uses the example of Tantric practitioners who perform their meditation in cremation grounds to overcome their fear and shyness, to illustrate his principle of Tantric fight and vigour. In this path of Tantric struggle, Sarkar cautions the practitioner against misuse of mental and spiritual powers gained through inward meditation and outward fight. He asserts that the ultimate goal is not occult or worldly power but parama puruṣa alone, and that practice should be grounded solidly on ethical principles:

If sādhakas remain vigilant and alert regarding the principles of Yama and Niyama, that is, the cardinal moral principles, there is little chance of their degradation. Rather with their developed mental and occult force, they will be in a position to render better service to humanity and to utilise their intellects in a better way.511

Systems and Types of Tantra
Sarkar sets forth his path of practice within the context of five systems of Tantra. These five Tantric systems represent a division he makes from the perspective of spiritual praxis, and he correlates them with the five traditions of Puranic Hinduism in medieval India – Śaivācāra, Śaktācāra, Vaiṣṇavācāra, Gāṇapatyācāra, and Saurācāra. In Sarkar’s definition, Śaiva Tantra stresses the cultivation and attainment of knowledge and the psychological elimination of caste or social distinctions; Vaiṣṇava Tantra focuses on devotion and selfless surrender; Śākta Tantra teaches the acquisition and judicious application of power; Saura Tantra emphasises medicine and astronomy; and Gāṇapatya Tantra is concerned with social leadership and social unity amongst variant social groups. Sarkar characterises his AM as a happy blending of Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Śākta Tantra, emphasising equally the practice of knowledge, devotion, and action, though devotion is ultimately privileged.512 Elements of Saura Tantra and Gāṇapatya Tantra can be seen in Sarkar’s teachings in relation to his Yogic remedies and treatment, and his social philosophy of Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT) and neohumanism.

511 DOT Vol. 2, p. 28.
512 DOT Vol. 2, p. 5.
In addition, Sarkar divides Tantra into two main divisions according to geography - the Gauḍīya school and the Kāśmīrī school.\footnote{DOT Vol.2, p. 217.} According to him, the Gauḍīya school of Tantra is less involved in rituals and accentuates the practical dimension, presumably referring to spiritual praxis; while the Kāśmīrī school is more ritualistic and less practical. (It is questionable whether proponents of these two schools would accept Sarkar’s characterisation of them.) He does not specifically identify himself with either of these two traditions, though an examination of his discourses suggests that he emphasises the practical dimension of Tantra more than its ritualistic dimension. An exploration of Sarkarian soteriological praxis reveals a noticeable lack of ritualistic practices and an almost exclusive attention to meditation and a range of supportive practices such as yoga āsanas (special physical postures), sāttvika (‘sentient’) diet, ethical codes, kīrtana (chanting and dancing to God’s name) as preparation for meditation, and altruistic service.

Another polarity Sarkar introduces to his praxis is the opposition between vidyā and avidyā Tantra. He defines vidyā Tantra as ‘an approach of positive ideas towards the world’, and avidyā Tantra as ‘an approach of negative ideas’ the following of which will make one’s mind crude.\footnote{DOT Vol. 2, p. 236.} He mentions that a person following the path of positive ideas may attain name, fame, and social status but fail to attain parama puṇuṣa or even the higher lokas (layers of the macrocosmic mind). He advocates the transcending of both the vidyā and avidyā paths by constant ideation on the supreme consciousness and disregarding both ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ ideas - a path he calls madhyama mārga (‘middle path’), which, to him, is synonymous with what the Buddha calls majjhimā patipadā (in Pali). Presumably, Sarkar regards his ānanda mārga, based on realisation of parama puṇuṣa as its final goal, as an example of madhyama mārga. However, Sarkar’s description of the characteristics of vidyā Tantra is not entirely unambiguous, as highlighted by this quotation:

Tantra, as you know, is divided into two branches – Vidyā and Avidyā. Śiva formulated all the Tantras, and thus all Tantrics regard Śiva as their supreme and final shelter. In all schools of Tantra there are certain rules, and these are compulsory for practitioners of both Vidyā and Avidyā Tantra. The difference between the two is that Avidyā Tantra invariably leads one towards crudification, and ultimately annihilation; whereas Vidyā Tantra leads one from crude to subtle, and invigorates the human life, mind and soul – in fact, the whole existence – with exuberant joy.\footnote{DOT Vol. 2, p. 237.}

While Sarkar says, on the one hand, that following the path of positive ideas or vidyā Tantra will not lead to parama puṇuṣa, he says, on the other hand, that the same vidyā Tantra leads one ‘from crude to subtle, and invigorates the human life, mind and soul … with exuberant joy’. This anomaly can be resolved to some extent by examining the next quotation:
One may also strive to make the mind more subtle while endeavouring to exercise greater control over the mundane world. This is the path of Avidyā Tantra. In this endeavour the practitioners remain totally preoccupied with the attainment of name, fame, prosperity, and material enjoyments - these are their goals. The purpose of their spiritual practice is to make the mind increasingly subtle, in order to be able to exercise further control, not only over the physical world, but over the crude minds of other microcosms as well. Their goal is not noble, and will result in their ultimately being converted into inert matter. So the final result of Avidyā Tantra is extreme crudity.\footnote{\textit{DOT} Vol. 2, p. 238.}

This implies that it is possible to be transforming the mind towards subtlety through spiritual practices, and yet be crucifying it in the long term through ignoble motivations and ideas. If such a practice, motivated by ‘negative’ or ignoble aims, can be defined as avidyā, then vidyā Tantra would imply a form of spiritual practice motivated by ‘positive’ or noble aims (such as helping the weak and downtrodden, or relieving the suffering of oneself or others). Seen in this light, vidyā Tantra may bring about increasing happiness and success for oneself and others but may not necessarily result in the realisation of the highest state, merger with parama puruṣa. For this, an approach involving parama puruṣa as the sole and final goal is essential. In the case of vidyā Tantra, a person who initially takes up spiritual practice with noble aspirations and ideals is likely to progress towards the highest ideal of parama puruṣa in due course. It can then be said that vidyā Tantra has the potential, though this may not be realised, to lead a person from crudity to subtlety and finally even beyond all duality of vidyā and avidyā to the supreme soteriological goal.

\textit{Stages of Sarkar’s Tantric Practice}

In contextualising his soteriological praxis, Sarkar delineates several models of the variations and stages of Tantric practice, some of which form an important part of the practice of AM. The first of these models describes the division of Tantric practice into three distinct and sequential stages – paśvācāra (or paśubhāva), vīrācāra (or vīrabhāva), and divyācāra (or divyabhāva).\footnote{\textit{DOT} Vol. 2, pp. 43-45.} The second model sub-divides the stage of paśvācāra into four distinct sub-stages, sub-divides vīrācāra into two sub-stages, and identifies divyācāra with the sub-stage of kulācāra.\footnote{\textit{DOT} Vol. 2, p. 44.} The third model divides ānanda mārga practice into three stages: śākta, vaiṣṇavīya, and śaiva.\footnote{\textit{DOT} Vol. 2, p. 238.}

In the first model, the three stages of paśvācāra, vīrācāra, and divyācāra are meant to portray the gradual progress of a Tantric sādhaka (spiritual practitioner) as he or she develops on the path. The first and initial stage, paśvācāra (‘animal way’) or paśubhāva (‘animal ideation’), is when the human mind is dominated by animal-like instincts and external pressure is required for discipline and control. When, through sustained and consistent effort, a sādhaka is firm in ethical conduct and obtains relevant guidance in the process of meditation, he or she enters the stage of vīrācāra (‘heroic way’) or vīrabhāva (‘heroic ideation’). In this second stage, the sādhaka is able to maintain proper
ideation on brahma and progresses on the path by means of both external discipline and internal desire for spiritual realisation. The sādhaka has internalised proper ethical principles and engages in an inner struggle with negative propensities that bind and crudify his or her mind. When the sādhaka is firmly established in this stage, that is, when they have fully controlled their conduct and transmuted their instincts into divine love, the third stage of divyācāra (‘divine way’) or divyābhāva (‘divine ideation’) is attained. In the third stage, the sādhaka has successfully overcome all negativities and ‘rising above petty selfishness, identifies himself or herself with the collective interest, [and] becomes one with parama puruṣa’.

Following the Viśvasāra Tantra, Sarkar further divides paśubhāva into the sub-stages of vaidikācāra, vaiṣṇavācāra, śaivācāra, and dakṣinācāra; divides vīrabhāva into the sub-stages of vāmācāra and siddhāntācāra; and identifies divyābhāva with kulācāra.\footnote{DOT Vol. 2, p. 135.} He does not define and describe these sub-stages, with the exception of vaidikācāra, dakṣinācāra, and vāmācāra. According to him, vaidikācāra ‘has no deep principles, but is merely a set of ritualistic and showy observances and practices’, and thus is the ‘lowest grade of sādhanā’.\footnote{Ibid.} Dakṣinācāra sādhana describes the path of practice wherein the sādhaka is afraid to engage in the fight against the bondages of prakṛti but instead propitiates the cosmic operative principle through devotional prayers and eulogies. Sarkar considers this approach to be defective and ineffectual in gaining self-realisation. Vāmācāra sādhana, in contrast, describes the sādhaka’s ‘random and relentless fight’ against prakṛti’s bondages with courage and valour, but without the guidance of a fixed and sublime goal. Sarkar considers this approach to be equally ineffective in attaining liberation, as spiritual power gained through struggle may be misused and bring harm to self and others.

As an alternative to all the above approaches, Sarkar recommends the path of madhyamācāra sādhanā, or the ‘Middle Way’, where the sādhaka fights and struggles with prakṛti, ever maintaining the goal of brahma fixed in view. Identifying this path with AM, he says:

> They move forward towards the spiritual effulgence, or Brahmajyoti, tearing the veil of darkness of Avidyā. Ānanda Mārga accepts the path of Madhyamācāra sādhanā, because in this process sādhakas have a fixed goal. A purposeless and random fight usually does not bring victory, rather it causes unnecessary wastage of time and energy.\footnote{DOT Vol. 2, p. 90.}

In his madhyamācāra sādhanā or AM, Sarkar discerns three specific stages of practice which can either be fused into one, or remain separate – śākta, vaiṣṇaviya, and śaiva. He considers true
spiritual practice to be a ‘happy combination of these three stages’ with each stage having equal importance.\textsuperscript{524} In the first stage of practice, a disciple is regarded as a śākta, defined as:

\ldots one who is determined to awaken his or her cognitive faculty and fight against the negative influence of the static principle. Such a person struggles ceaselessly against psychic impurities and physical ailments in individual life, and against social evils and economic disparity in collective life. A Śākta is not afraid of the crushing load of unhappiness in life, and never surrenders to pessimism, but fights against the miseries of life with revolutionary zeal.\textsuperscript{525}

Sarkar considers the śākta stage as the time when the reaping of past samskāras is most acutely felt due to the immense fight against prakṛti. The sādhaka develops and utilises the faculties of jñāna (knowledge) and karma (action) predominantly, since struggle necessarily involves action and knowledge of action, that is, knowledge of how to struggle and act. As the sādhaka understands that his or her sorrows and afflictions are results of past actions, he or she does not shrink away from difficulties but instead embraces them with grace, dignity, and courage. The sādhaka only hopes to attain parama puruṣa in the joyful struggle against suffering and problems.

In the second vaisnāvīya stage, spiritual practice is characterised by ‘the endeavour to throw oneself into the current of Cosmic bliss and float towards the supreme goal’.\textsuperscript{526} This is the stage when the sādhaka has developed sufficient courage and inner strength to assume a stance of radical letting go of self and all things. The sādhaka has no task other than to surrender totally to the unfolding of the cosmic will, and everything and everyone is seen as part of the infinite flow of blissful reality. Sarkar describes it thus:

The mundane obstacles, the friends and foes, merge in the Vaiṣṇavite sādhakas’ world of blissful ideation. With whom will they fight? They feel that the entire universe is an unbroken divine play composed of Rādā and Kṛṣṇa. In this stage, there is a clear dominance of action and devotion. Vaiṣṇavite sādhana is a blissful flow indeed.\textsuperscript{527}

The entire expanse of space and time through which the sādhaka travels as he or she blissfully proceeds from the circumference into the nucleus of the universe (puruṣottama) is termed metaphorically by Sarkar rūpasāgara or ‘ocean of beauteous forms’ and rasāmyṛtasindhu or ‘ocean of bliss’.\textsuperscript{528} In this stage, the faculties of karma and bhakti (devotion) are predominant while jñāna is secondary. At the culmination of the second stage, the sādhaka merges his or her mind into the cosmic mind and attains either savikalpa samādhi (which is temporary) or mukti (which is permanent). It is

\textsuperscript{524} DOT Vol. 2, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{525} DOT Vol. 2, p. 5-6.
\textsuperscript{526} DOT Vol. 2, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{527} DOT Vol. 2, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{528} Ibid.
not entirely clear from Sarkar’s discourses which of the two soteriological attainments is meant. The only clue to this experience is his assertion that:

The moment before the final merger, sādhakas realise that the Entity who has come in the form of happiness is their dearest Lord, and the Entity who has come in the form of sorrow is also their dearest Lord. They feel the divine joy of the Cosmic play.\(^{529}\)

In the final and third progression, the sādhaka enters into the śaiva stage, completely and unconditionally renouncing his or her mind to brahma without any trace of self or any expectations:

In the absence of mind they cannot enjoy the sweetness of the divine play any longer. At that supreme stage of surrender lilānanda is transformed into nityānanda. When sādhakas become ensconced in nityānanda they are said to have attained the Šaiva stage.\(^{530}\)

For Sarkar, the śaiva stage represents the culmination of the entire path of Tantric practice, dominated by the faculty of non-dual knowledge or jñāna par excellence.

The various stages of Tantric practice enumerated by Sarkar can be correlated as shown in the following table, based upon a comparison of phenomenological features of each stage of practice between the three schemas offered by him. From such a comparison, it can be deduced that the practice of madhyamācāra or AM – which entails a certain degree of spiritual maturity and a clear vision of the ultimate – begins at least after the stage of vāmācāra, one in which a relentless but blind struggle against the forces of prakṛti is said to be predominant. Since the first, or sākta stage in Sarkar’s madhyamācāra entails a vigorous fight of the practitioner against prakṛti, albeit with a clear vision of supreme brahma in mind, it can be placed within vīrācāra, a stage characterised by heroism and courage. The second and third stages, vaishnavīya and śaiva, will then fall under the category of divyācāra or kulācāra, the final stage of practice in the first two schemas:

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<tr>
<th>Schema 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>Paśvācāra</td>
<td>Vaidikācāra</td>
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<td>Siddhāntācāra</td>
<td>(1) Sākta</td>
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<td>Divyācāra</td>
<td>Kulācāra</td>
<td>(2) Vaishnavīya</td>
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\(^{529}\) DOT Vol. 2, p. 18.  
\(^{530}\) Ibid.  

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The Five Makāra of Sarkarian Tantra

A well-known concept in classical Tantra is that of the pañcamakāra, the ‘five ma sounds’ or ‘five M’s’. The term pañcamakāra refers to a set of five Tantric practices commonly regarded as antinomian ritualistic practices, namely: madya (‘wine’), māmsa (‘meat’), matsya (‘fish’), mudrā (‘parched grain’), and maithuna (‘sexual intercourse’). According to Sarkar, these five practices have a crude as well as a subtle interpretation, with the subtle interpretation being identical with the path of yoga. Sarkar views these practices as having been taught by Sadāśiva to cater for people with varying capability to control base animal-like propensities. For those with strong attachment to physical enjoyment, the crude pañcamakāra are recommended to assist them in their spiritual practice in the midst of worldly enjoyment:

While carrying out this practice, they will limit the degree of their indulgence. By limiting the use of objects of enjoyment they will gradually increase their psychic power, and will ultimately rise above the allure of enjoyment … The practice of this pravṛttimūlaka [controversial] pañcamakāra will gradually take them to the nivṛtti path.531

For those with stronger minds and weaker desires, the subtle pañcamakāra are prescribed. Sarkar affirms that AM is based on the subtle pañcamakāra and offers his explanation of what these practices are.

Regarding madya, normally translated as ‘wine’, Sarkar comments on two Sanskrit verses, which he translates thus:

One who experiences the intoxicating joy from drinking the sudhā, or somadhāra, secreted from the Brahma-randhra [pineal gland] is called a madya sādhaka.532

Intense love for Nirvikāra Nirañjana Parama Brahma leads to the annihilation of thought, intellect and ego, and appears as an intoxication, which may be termed a madya sādhana.533

To Sarkar, the somadhāra, literally ‘nectar’, secreted from the brahma-randhra (which he identifies with the sahasrāra cakra, whose physiological correlate is the pineal gland) is a hormone that causes an intoxicating ‘divine joy’ in the vicinity of the pituitary gland and invigorates the lower glands of the body. Sarkar explains that since the pineal gland secretion is partially controlled by the moon (which he calls soma), the hormone secreted is known as somarasa or somadhāra. The phrase ‘nirvikāra nirañjana parama brahma’ in the second verse quoted above refers to the ‘formless, stainless supreme consciousness’ that is the object of the sādhaka’s devotion and love. To Sarkar, madya sādhana thus

531 DOT Vol. 2, p. 47.
533 DOT Vol. 2, p. 49.
involves the experience of divine joy through the secretion of the pineal gland as a result of intense love for the supreme consciousness during meditation or other spiritual practices.

Sarkar defines mānṣa (literally ‘meat’) as ‘control over speech’ or ‘surrendering all actions to God’:

Mā means “tongue”, and it is through the tongue that words are uttered. One who “eats” or controls those words is a mānṣa sāḍhaka.534

One who surrenders all one’s actions, good, bad, righteous, sinful, wicked – even the attainment of prolonged penance – to Me, is called mānṣa.535

For Sarkar, meat is not recommended as food for yoga practitioners and so cannot be the true meaning of the concept of mānṣa. To him, mānṣa is conscious control of speech coupled with a selfless surrender of all actions good or bad to brahma.

The next makāra, matṣya (literally ‘fish’), is defined by Sarkar in terms of biopsychology and has, according to him, nothing to do with eating fish:

One who eats the two fish that swim, one through the Ganges (representing the idā nāḍī) and the other through the Yamunā (the pingalā nāḍī) – that is, one who takes the breath flows of the left nostril and the right nostril to the trikuṭi [concentration point of the ājñā cakra] and suspends them there by purṇa kumbhaka [holding the inhalation] or śūnya kumbhaka [holding the exhalation] – is a matṣya sāḍhaka.536

… When a person feels all the pains and pleasures of others as one’s own pains and pleasures, this sentient feeling is called matṣya sāḍhanā.537

According to Sarkar, the second quotation is taken from the sayings of Sadāśiva, though he gives no textual reference. It appears that Sarkar’s own interpretation concurs with the two verses above. He speaks of matṣya as the practice of a form of prāṇāyāma or ‘vital force control’ and the state of universal empathy or compassion.

Sarkar asserts that mudrā (literally ‘parried grain’), the fourth makāra, has nothing to do with food or grain but is concerned with keeping the good company of wise and spiritually-minded people:

Bad company leads to bondage; good company leads to liberation. Having understood this supreme truth, one should avoid bad company. This shunning of bad company is called mudrā sāḍhanā.538

534 Ibid.
535 Ibid.
536 DOT Vol. 2, p. 50
537 Ibid.
538 Ibid.
The fifth and final makāra, maithuna (literally ‘sexual union’) is perhaps the most controversial and well-known of the five M’s of Tantra. For Sarkar, the crude interpretation of maithuna as sacralised sexual intercourse, though not prescribed as part of AM praxis, is nevertheless not condemned as wrong or sinful. He sees maithuna or sacralised sex as a transitional practice for spiritual aspirants with crude propensities to gradually develop self-restraint, a practice to be finally renounced when they are ready. For Sarkar, however, maithuna is to be interpreted metaphorically as the process of raising the dormant spiritual force of kundalinī and uniting it with paramaśīva (‘nucleus consciousness’) at the sahasrāra cakra:

The lowest vertebra of the spinal cord is called kula. In this part of the mūlādhāra cakra is located the kulakūḍalini, or datī śakti [divine energy]. The purpose of maithuna sādhanā is to raise the kulakūḍalini and unite it with Paramaśīva at the sahasrāra cakra.539

With Tantra as the overall context for Sarkarian praxis, we are now ready to examine how Sarkar constructs his Yogic path of practice in terms of the commonly accepted framework of Patañjali’s āstāṅga yoga (eight-limbed yoga) and the largely original structure of the Sixteen Points of AM.

5.5 Sarkar’s Appropriation of Patañjali’s Āstāṅga Yoga
Sarkarian praxis is aimed at the twin goals of mukti and mokṣa, and arguably also at realising the state of embodied liberation termed jīvanmukti. Sarkar contextualises his path of practice within the harmonious blend of Śākta, Vaiṣṇava, and Śaiva Tantra, emphasising the virtues of, and necessity for, all-round struggle and human vigour. Operationally, he borrows the structure of the eight-limbed yoga (āstāṅga yoga) of Patañjali to define and explain the range of spiritual practices required for realising the summum bonum. The eight-limbed yoga traditionally consists of yama (code for social balance), niyama (code for personal integration), āsana (physical posture), prāṇāyāma (control of vital energy), pratyāhāra (mental withdrawal), dhāraṇā (concentration), dhyāna (meditation), and samādhi (suspension of mind in consciousness). Sarkar redefines the factors of the eight-limbed yoga, particularly the principles of yama and niyama, and correlates some of these factors with perfection of the layers of the mind (kośas). Regarding the eight-limbed yoga, he says:

Human existence consists of the five kośas and spiritual practice is eightfold. This spiritual practice is called Dharma. Why is Āstāṅga Yoga called Dharma? The purpose of Dharma is to attain perfect happiness and perfect happiness is the attainment of the soul, there being only partial happiness in each kośa. So long as the soul is not attained every kośa has to be perfected. Each kośa has to be taken care of … The annamaya kośa is perfected through āsanas (physical postures). Yama and niyama sādhanā perfect the kāmamaya kośa. The manomaya kośa is perfected through prāṇāyāma. Through pratyāhāra the atimānasa kośa is perfected. The vijnānamaya

kośa is perfected through dhāranā and the hiranmaya kośa through dhyāna. Only
dhyāna samādhi gives access to the soul.  

In addition to Patan`jali’s eight-limbed yoga, Sarkar discusses the noble eightfold path (āryāstāngamārga) of the Buddha in several of his discourses. In so doing, he re-interprets the Buddha’s eightfold path in the light of AM’s cosmoeastheic philosophy. He advocates the practice of these eight principles, but does not use them as an overall framework for his AM praxis. I will briefly discuss Sarkar’s understanding of the noble eightfold path at the end of this section.

Yama and Niyama

For Sarkar, the foundational disciplines of yama (codes for social balance) and niyama (codes for personal integration) are crucial for the overall success of the spiritual quest and are the means by which spiritual aspirants are kept on the path of morality. He often warns against the practice of spirituality for the sake of acquiring occult powers or other personal gains, as this will harm both the practitioner and society if the practitioner’s morality is not well established. Regarding morality, Sarkar says:

Morality is the foundation of sādhanā (spiritual practice). It must, however, be remembered that morality or good conduct is not the culminating point of the spiritual march … Sādhanā in its very start, requires mental equilibrium. This sort of mental harmony may also be termed as morality … Moral ideals must be able to furnish human beings with the ability as well as the inspiration to proceed on the path of sādhanā … the ultimate end of moralism is the attainment of Supreme Bliss … In the sādhanā of Ānanda Mārga, moral education is imparted with the ideal of oneness with Brahma, because sādhanā is not possible without such a moral ideation.

In terms of psycho-spiritual effects, the practice of yama and niyama serves to perfect the kāmamaya kośa (layer of desire of the mind) by regulating various mental desires and aversions and channelling them towards the highest goal, brahma. Yama consists of five principles, namely ahimsā (non-harming), satya (truthfulness), asteya (non-stealing), brahmacārya (leading a divine life), and aparigraha (non-indulgence). Niyama also consists of five principles, namely śauca (purity), santoṣa (contentment), tapaḥ (penance), svādhyāyā (clear understanding of spiritual subjects), and iśvara pranidhāna (seeking the shelter of the Lord).

Sarkar defines ahimsā as ‘not inflicting pain or hurt on anybody by thought, word or action’. He stresses that ahimsā does not mean absolute non-violence as the very process of existence necessarily involves some form of killing. He cites the examples of ploughing the land,

540 SS Part 1, p. 62.
542 Ānandamūrti, A Guide to Human Conduct (Manila: Ānanda Mārga Publications, 1991), pp. 2-5. This is Sarkar’s main text on ethical and mental training as preparatory practices for meditation.
respiration, and prophylactic medical treatment, to illustrate the futility of viewing *ahimsā* as absolute non-violence. He argues that such activities conducted for the mere survival of the species cannot be considered a violation of *ahimsā*, since there was no intention of deliberate hurt or harm. He also rejects the definition of *ahimsā* as non-application of force, arguing that there are instances when force has to be applied to prevent greater harm or to defend justice. To illustrate his case, he cites the examples of self-defence against unjust military invasion, peace administration and crime control by the police force, and corrective punishment in the spirit of rectification. He says:

> In all actions of life, whether small or big, the unit mind progresses by surmounting the opposing forces. Life evolves through the medium of force. If this force is not properly developed, life becomes absolutely dull.  

However, Sarkar advocates wise consideration and sensitivity when selecting food for dietary consumption. He gives two essential guidelines:

> First, as far as possible, articles of food must be selected from among those items in which development of consciousness is comparatively little; that is, if vegetables are available, animals should not be slaughtered. Secondly, under all circumstances before killing any animal having developed or underdeveloped consciousness, it must be considered whether it is possible to live in a healthy body without taking such lives.

He argues that since there are innumerable cells in the human body, which in turn are made up of the food that is consumed, the type of food ingested will determine the nature of these cells. The nature of living cells will in turn affect the quality of the mind, an important principle to be remembered and followed by spiritual practitioners. In short, Sarkar understands *ahimsā* to be the careful guidance of one’s thoughts and actions so as not to cause pain or be unjust to others, while recognising the need for use of physical and/or mental force in certain situations.

Sarkar defines *satya*, the second principle of *yama*, as ‘proper action of mind and the right use of words with the spirit of welfare’. He sees the practice of *satya* not as a blind adherence to truth per se but as using one’s rationality and sensitivity when thinking or speaking the truth in the spirit of benevolence. In other words, he gives scope for the withholding of truth in special circumstances on rational and compassionate grounds:

> Even though the objective of a *sādhaka* is to achieve that ultimate entity, in the process *sādhakas* have to deal with the relativity of their surroundings. Humans are rational beings: they possess in varying degrees the capability to do what is necessary or good

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543 *GHC*, p. 7.
544 *GHC*, p. 11.
545 *GHC*, pp. 15-16.
546 *GHC*, p. 23.
for humanity. In the realm of spirituality such thought, word or action has been defined as *satya*.\(^{547}\)

He cites the example of misdirecting a potential murderer away from an escaping refugee to illustrate a specific situation when factual truth is withheld for the sake of saving a life.

Sarkar defines *asteya*, the third principle of *yama*, as ‘not to take possession of what belongs to others’ or ‘non-stealing’.\(^{548}\) He describes four types of stealing, all of which are to be avoided by a spiritual aspirant, namely: physical theft of material objects; mental theft, that is, having an intention and thought of stealing though not necessarily enacting it for fear of criticism or apprehension; physically depriving others of what is due to them; and mentally depriving others of what is due to them, that is, planning but not actually carrying out the act of depriving others of their due. Sarkar cites paying inadequate train fares (especially by political leaders or religious missionaries), tax evasion, bribery, and selling adulterated goods, as illustrative of violation of this principle.

Sarkar gives a new slant to the concept of *brahmacārya* by defining it as ‘to remain attached to *Brahma*’.\(^{549}\) He rejects the traditional interpretation of *brahmacārya* as celibacy and instead explains it as a subtle process of contemplation whereby every object is seen as an expression of the divine:

The meaning of practising *Brahmacārya sādhana* is to treat the objects with which one comes in contact as different expressions of *Brahma* and not as crude forms. By means of such an ideation even though the mind wanders from one object to another, it does not get detached from *Brahma* because of the Cosmic feeling taken for each and every object … Many misinterpret *Brahmacārya* to mean preservation of semen. It should be remembered that neither the words *Brahma* nor *cārya* has any relevance to the word “semen”.\(^{550}\)

He sees the practice of *brahmacārya* as a means of transforming *preya* (‘attraction towards the mundane’) into *śreyā* (‘attraction towards ultimate reality’) and *kāma* (‘desire for finite objects’) into *prema* (‘desire for the Infinite’). In light of this principle, Sarkar advocates a controlled sex life for married practitioners without any unhealthy suppression or repression, while stating that ordained monks and nuns who work as full time missionaries should observe celibacy so that more time and energy can be channelled into their work. He stresses that there is no difference in status between family practitioners and ordained monastics in AM, and that the traditional superiority of monastics over married practitioners is but an exploitative mechanism perpetrated by those of priestly or religious class who want to keep the masses under control. Sarkar goes so far as to assert that ‘a family person is like a strong tree which is self-supporting, while the *samnyāsi* is like the vine which

\(^{547}\) *GHC*, p. 24.  
\(^{549}\) *GHC*, p. 31.  
\(^{550}\) *GHC*, p. 32.
twines around the tree for its support.”\textsuperscript{551} Sarkar regards brahmacārya as pre-eminent amongst all the principles of yama, owing to its deep spiritual significance and implications. This is expressed in the second lesson of sahaja yoga, a set of six meditative lessons taught by Sarkar to his disciples (to be examined in Chapter 6).

For Sarkar, while brahmacārya implies ‘control over subjectivity’ in the case of enjoyment of a material object, aparigraha implies ‘control over objectivity’.\textsuperscript{552} That is, the practice of brahmacārya is directed internally towards control of the mind while aparigraha is directed outwardly towards control of external objects. He defines aparigraha as ‘non-indulgence in the enjoyment of such amenities and comforts of life as are superfluous for the preservation of life’.\textsuperscript{553} Aparigraha is to be practised in the context of compassionate justice and fairness for all, and is to be adjusted in relation to changes in time, place, and person:

Aparigraha is an endless fight to reduce one’s own objects of comfort out of sympathy for the common people, after ensuring that individuals are able to maintain solidarity in their physical, mental and spiritual lives for themselves and their families. … In practising aparigraha the objects of pleasure will increase or decrease with person, place and time, but the definition of aparigraha, as mentioned above, will be applicable to all people, in all countries and at all times.\textsuperscript{554}

The five principles of niyama are deeper practices, each of which according to Sarkar, ‘carries equal weight in the mundane, supramundane and spiritual strata’\textsuperscript{555} He considers ṭīvara pranidhāna (seeking the shelter of the Lord) as the most important practice amongst the five principles of niyama, just as brahmacārya is the most important of the five principles of yama. He explains that brahmacārya and ṭīvara pranidhāna are the two main practices, with the other eight practices being subordinated parts of the two.

The first aspect of niyama is śauca, which means ‘purity or cleanliness’\textsuperscript{556} both outer (relating to the body and environment) and inner (relating to the mind). Sarkar explains śauca as:

The proper use of soap, water or other cleansers to keep the body, clothes or surrounding clean, is external cleanliness. By this cleanliness physical objects with which people are directly associated are cleaned and made fit for use.\textsuperscript{557} … Cleansing the mind is a far more laborious job than cleansing the body, clothes, house, etc. Intelligent people should not therefore allow their mental purity to be stained. You must always guard against the tempest of passion: you must not yield to such storms.\textsuperscript{558}

\textsuperscript{551} AMP Part 3, pp. 170-171.
\textsuperscript{552} GHC, p. 40.
\textsuperscript{553} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{554} GHC, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{555} GHC, p. 48.
\textsuperscript{556} GHC, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{557} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{558} GHC, p. 51
Sarkar sees the various instincts for pleasure and selfish motives as driving forces that ultimately cause distortions in the mind. These distortions result in psychological complexes, which Sarkar calls ‘dirt of the mind’ that require cleansing. He advocates application of effort through spiritual practice (sādhanā) as the main method for cleansing the mind. This sādhanā takes the form of cultivating a selfless and universal attitude towards all beings, and deliberate training in behaviours diametrically opposed to negative, selfish traits:

… the impurity of selfishness … has to be burnt and melted in the fire of sādhanā. … The feeling of selflessness, the feeling of universalism is the only remedy to remove mental impurities. People who have fascination or temptation for any material object can gradually remove that mental pollution arising out of selfishness by adopting just the reverse course. … only selfless service to humanity and the effort to look upon the world with a cosmic outlook can lead one to be established in mental śauca.  

The second aspect of niyama is santoṣa, which Sarkar defines as ‘a state of proper ease’. He sees the mind as constantly seeking new and varied objects of gratification, possessing ever-increasing desires that know no end. He identifies santoṣa with inner contentment:

Contentment is not at all possible if the individual is running after carnal pleasures like a beast. … santoṣa sādhanā lies in being content with the earnings of normal labour, without any undue pressure on the body and mind. To remain contented, one has to make a special type of mental effort to keep aloof from external allurements. Sarkar advocates the practice of ‘autosuggestion’ and ‘outer suggestion’ as ‘two effective methods to detach the mind from its lower tendencies’. In his view, an inner change elicited by consciously thinking thoughts opposite to the mean or negative tendencies in the mind constitutes autosuggestion (e.g. meditative contemplation on benefits of contentment), while change elicited by constant conveyance of such opposing ideas through the sense organs constitutes outer suggestion (e.g. listening to a spiritual talk on contentment). For santoṣa, however, Sarkar advocates autosuggestion as the method of choice. He emphasises that practising santoṣa does not mean allowing oneself to be exploited or oppressed by others who wish to take advantage of one’s simplicity. A heroic spirit to fight for one’s legitimate rights is strongly recommended, even as excessive desires are to be curbed.

Tapah, the third aspect of niyama, means ‘to practise penance to reach the goal’. It is to render service to others who need help in a spirit of self-sacrifice and universal love. For service to

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559 GHC, p. 52-53.
560 GHC, p. 56.
561 Ibid.
562 GHC, p. 57-58.
563 GHC, p. 58.
564 GHC, p. 59.
qualify as tapah, it has to involve some form of inconvenience or discomfort to the ego, a sacrifice of the self for the greater good, and a sense of cosmic ideation:

There must be one and only purpose behind the practice of penance and that is to shoulder the sorrows and miseries of others to make them happy, to free them from grief and to give them comfort. ... Those who look upon the served only as an expression of the cosmos and look after their comforts selflessly develop devotion or love for the Supreme in a short time.  

To Sarkar, the practice of tapah helps greatly in expanding the mind and facilitates the process of meditation on the Supreme, īśvara praṇidhāna. He warns, however, that tapah has to be practised with intelligence and clear knowledge of priorities of need. He urges practitioners to be wary of opportunists and to give only to those who really need assistance:

Your responsibility is greater for those who are weaker, poorer, less educated, more ignorant and downtrodden in comparison with you. Your responsibility is very little for those who are above your level, who are better off and more powerful than you. Therefore you will have to ascertain with discrimination where your responsibility lies and to what extent; otherwise all your time, energy and labour employed in tapah will be in vain.  

Sarkar defines svādhyāya, the fourth aspect of niyama, as ‘clear understanding of any spiritual subject’; it involves, in addition to reading or hearing about spiritual topics, an understanding of the significance and underlying idea of what is being read or heard. He warns against a superficial interpretation of svādhyāya as mere reading or touching the scriptures with one’s head or making ritual offerings, a view which has been perpetrated, according to him, by many religious teachers for selfish reasons and personal vested interests:

Nowadays reading religious scriptures without grasping the meaning is also considered to be svādhyāya. Religious professionals have misguided the public by their misinterpretation of the term svādhyāya. ... Those with vested interests seek to keep the public away from the true spirit of the sāstras because this facilitates their exploitation.  

In the practice of svādhyāya, Sarkar advocates a proper grasp of the idea and spirit behind the words in any scriptural writing, and cautions that the same word may carry ‘different meanings in different

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565 Ibid.
566 GHC, p. 61.
567 GHC, p. 63.
568 GHC, p. 65.
569 Ibid.
570 GHC, p. 68.
contexts’. In a sense, Sarkar is here expressing his view on textual hermeneutics that has practical and soteriological relevance for followers of his ānanda mārga.

Īśvara praṇidhāna is the final and most important aspect of niyama, which Sarkar defines as ‘to establish oneself in the Cosmic Idea – to accept Īśvara as the only ideal of life’. He explains that the term ‘Īśvara’ has two meanings, namely ‘the controller of this universe’ or ‘He who controls the thought-waves of this universe’, and ‘the witnessing counterpart of the objective Prakṛti where the static principle is dominant’. Regarding the second definition, he says:

It is the witnessing entity of the causal world, it is the magnified essence of praṇā, it is an entity free from all bondages. ... to a sādhaka Īśvara is understood to be nothing other than Saguna Brahman or God.

In other words, Sarkar equates Īśvara with saguna brahma, the qualified or attributional cosmic consciousness within which the universe exists. As Īśvara, saguna brahma functions as the witnessing entity (sākṣībhūta) and the wisdom (praṇā) that observes and knows the totality of the created world.

He further defines praṇidhāna as ‘to understand clearly or to adopt something as a shelter’, and he understands Īśvara praṇidhāna to mean the adoption of God as the supreme shelter, towards whom the sādhaka moves with increased speed. Regarding the method of practice, he says:

Īśvara praṇidhāna a is absolutely based on bhāva or ideation – it is a mental effort in its entirety. ... One will have to detach the mind from worldly propensities while meditating upon Īśvara (God). First the mind will have to be withdrawn from the limited “I” feeling, and focussed at a point. Then one will take the thought of the Macrocosm around that point with the help of the ideation of the mantra prescribed according to one’s own sāmkāra (mental potentiality). He is the subtlest Entity, therefore He can be realised only through feeling and by no other means. ... One’s ideation should be expressed mentally and the mind should be its witnessing entity.

Sarkar identifies this mental ideation on God with mānasika japa (mental recitation), as opposed to vācanika japa (loud verbal recitation) and upaṁsū japa (soft verbal recitation). He views mānasika japa as the most effective means of practice of Īśvara praṇidhāna: it allows the mind to rise above all tendencies and flow with great force and speed towards supreme bliss. He recommends that Īśvara praṇidhāna be practised both individually and collectively, maintaining that group practice of God ideation can generate a powerful mental force that accelerates progress and solves all problems. It is important to note that while Īśvara praṇidhāna is technically placed under niyama, the second ‘limb’

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571 GHC, p. 67.
572 GHC, p. 69.
573 GHC, p. 68.
574 GHC, pp. 68-69.
575 GHC, p. 69.
576 GHC, pp. 69-71.
of the eightfold yoga, the nature and process of its practice rightfully places it under pratyāhāra and dhyāna, the fifth and seventh ‘limbs’ respectively of the eightfold yoga. It also constitutes the first lesson of sahaja yoga, the set of six Tantric meditation techniques taught by Sarkar to his disciples. (More details on īśvara pranidhāna will be examined under these separate headings.)

Āsana
After yama and niyama, the third ‘limb’ of the eightfold yoga is āsana (postures). Sarkar defines āsanas as ‘postures comfortably held’ and sees their aim as eliciting physical comfort and psychic composure in one who practises them. Together with proper diet and adequate physical labour, āsanas are meant to perfect the annamaya kośa or the ‘layer’ of the physical body. Āsanas are to be practised with unimpeded airflow in the left nostril, as the left nostril is the termination point of the idā nādi, through which subtle, introversial energy flows. Sarkar recommends a total of forty-two different āsanas as part of the entire spiritual path, though there exist many more in traditional haṭha yoga.\(^{577}\) He sees the main function of āsanas as correcting the defects of glands and sub-glands and regulating the optimal secretion of their hormones. This in turn assists in controlling the activity of various vṛttis in the cakras, with which the glands and sub-glands are intimately related:

Mental expression is brought about through the vṛttis, and the predominance of the vṛttis depends on different glands of the body. There are many glands in the body and from each there is a secretion of a particular hormone. If there is any defect in the secretion of hormones or any defect in a gland, certain vṛttis become excited … If a person wants to control the excitement of these propensities, he or she must rectify the defects of the glands. Āsanas help the sādhaka to a large extent in this task, so āsanas are an important part of sādhanā.\(^{578}\)

In addition to āsanas, Sarkar recommends a set of fifteen different mudrās (‘gestures’) and bandhas (‘locks’) that he deems necessary and helpful for physical and mental health. According to him, these mudrās and bandhas are similar to āsanas, but incorporate more ideation and require no restriction on nostril flow.

Prāṇāyāma
The fourth ‘limb’ of the eightfold yoga is prāṇāyāma or ‘the process of breath control along with the imposition of the ideation of Supreme Consciousness’.\(^{579}\) To Sarkar, prāṇāyāma is the main technique for perfecting the manomaya kośa or ‘mental layer’, as it helps to calm and concentrate the mind, thereby increasing its apperceptive power. This is achieved through controlling the ten vāyus (collectively known as prāṇāh) in the body by special techniques of breathing with or without mental ideation. According to Sarkar, prāṇāyāma is of two main classes: haṭha-yaugika prāṇāyāma and

\(^{577}\) CC Part 3, p. 23.
\(^{578}\) Ibid. See CC for more detailed instructions on and rules regarding the practice of AM āsanas.
\(^{579}\) YP, p. 149.
yudhiṣṭhira prāṇāyāma.\textsuperscript{580} Haṭha yaugika prāṇāyāma involves concentration of mind on a specific point without accompanying cosmic ideation. Yudhiṣṭhira prāṇāyāma involves fixing the mind on a point of concentration together with ideation on the Supreme. Sarkar regards yudhiṣṭhira prāṇāyāma as part of spiritual practice by virtue of its inclusion of cosmic ideation. A specific technique of yudhiṣṭhira prāṇāyāma is sādhārana prāṇāyāma, which constitutes the fourth lesson of sahaja yoga taught by Sarkar (to be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6). Other techniques that form part of daily spiritual practice include sahaja prāṇāyāma, viśeṣa prāṇāyāma, and āntar prāṇāyāma, all of which are to be taught by the most senior teachers of AM known as purodhās. Information on these techniques is currently unavailable to me. Sarkar also teaches a set of five different prāṇāyāma techniques designed specifically for therapeutic and healing purposes, which are separate from the techniques connected with spiritual practice.\textsuperscript{581} Four out of the five techniques appear to belong to the category of haṭha-yaugika prāṇāyāma.

Pratyāhāra

The fifth ‘limb’ of the eightfold yoga as taught by Sarkar is pratyāhāra, which he defines as ‘the withdrawal of the mind from external objectivity and.goading the withdrawn mind toward Parama Puruṣa’.\textsuperscript{582} The practice of pratyāhāra is considered to perfect the atimānasa kośa, or the ‘higher mental’ layer, as the sādhaka progressively gains control over his or her propensities. As the atimānasa kośa is the layer of mind where samskāras first find expression through the propensities, control over these propensities would mean mastery of this mind layer.

According to Sarkar, pratyāhāra consists of four stages, namely yatamāna, vyātireka, ekendriya, and vaśikāra. Yatamāna is defined by him as ‘a conscious effort to transcend the negative influence of the propensities’, which involves the firm resolution to follow the spiritual path in spite of temptations to the contrary as a result of various propensities.\textsuperscript{583} It is a preliminary stage in the practice of pratyāhāra where propensities are not yet controlled but where a firm determination to control them is present.

In the second stage of pratyāhāra, which Sarkar terms vyātireka, the sādhaka experiences partial control over his or her propensities. Sarkar says that for a sādhaka in the stage of vyātireka, ‘some propensities may be controlled at one time, but uncontrolled at another time’.\textsuperscript{584} He cites the example of a person who may have control over physical desires but experiences an increase in anger.

The third stage, ekendriya, is the stage where all propensities are under control but only temporarily. This is when certain propensities may assert themselves strongly owing to unexhausted samskāras that are deeply embedded in the mind. While this is a relatively advanced stage of

\textsuperscript{580} YP, p. 150.
\textsuperscript{581} CC Part 3, pp. 69-73. This work contains details on the practice of therapeutic prāṇāyāma techniques. The spiritual techniques mentioned earlier in the text, except for sādhārana prāṇāyāma, have not been described in print.
\textsuperscript{582} YP, p. 149.
\textsuperscript{583} AMI Parts 5-8, p. 583.

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pratyāhāra according to Sarkar, it is nevertheless incomplete as the pāśas (fetters) and ripus (enemies) of the mind are yet to be totally controlled. While a sādhaka at this stage may experience great bliss and concentration of mind and acquire some occult powers, there is a high likelihood of the pāśas and ripus expressing themselves through the mind and the indriyas (sensory or motor organs with associated nerves, nerve fluid, and brain site).\footnote{585}

In the fourth stage, when all the indriyas are fully controlled and the mind is completely subservient to the ātman (unit consciousness), actual pratyāhāra or vaśikāra siddhi (attainment of vaśikāra) is said to be reached:

This is real pratyāhāra, or vaśikāra siddhi, for it means Prakṛti has merged into the Supreme Cognitive Principle. This is called Kṛṣṇaśarana [taking shelter in Kṛṣṇa] in devotional psychology. The importance of pratyāhāra sādhanā is immense, because it involves a harmonious blending of knowledge, devotion and action. … Pratyāhāra begins with vigorous action and culminates in selfless devotion.\footnote{586}

For Sarkar, the development of pratyāhāra unfolds from the initial phase of vigorous struggle against all inner and outer obstacles to the final phase of selfless devotion to the Supreme. In vaśikāra, the attitude of vigorous struggle that Sarkar terms śākta bhāva (ideational stance of śākta) finds its consummation. Through struggle, the potential of devotion is gradually realised and finally develops into the fullness of selfless surrender, which he terms vaiśṇava bhāva (ideational stance of vaiśṇava).\footnote{587} With perfect surrender, the final goal is attained as the mind dives into parama puruṣa.

It appears from the above that Sarkar is expanding on the meaning of the term pratyāhāra to include meditative realisations technically belonging to the categories of dhyāna and samādhi. (I will elaborate on Sarkar’s redefinition of pratyāhāra in subsection 6.3.3.)

Dhāraṇā

The sixth ‘limb’ of Sarkar’s path of practice is dhāraṇā, which he defines as ‘locating the mind firmly in an area or region of the body’.\footnote{588} Dhāraṇā perfects the vijñānamaya kośa by developing the essential qualities of viveka (discrimination) vairāgya (non-attachment) latent in this kośa. According to Sarkar,

This involves concentrating upon the respective controlling points of the fundamental factors located within the human body. That is, the mind is to be fixed on specific cakras [plexuses] and engaged in Cosmic ideation.\footnote{589}

\footnote{584}Ibid.\footnote{585}AMI Parts 5-8, p. 583.\footnote{586}AMI Parts 5-8, p. 584.\footnote{587}Ibid.\footnote{588}YP, p. 151.\footnote{589}Ibid.
The specific technique for dhāranā can be found in Sarkar’s third lesson of sahaja yoga, which aims at regulation of and control over the five fundamental factors in the body in the service of subtler spiritual development. (This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.) In connection with dhāranā, Sarkar mentions a related but distinct practice termed śodhana, which he translates as ‘refinement’ or ‘purification’.\(^{590}\) This practice involves concentration on the cakras in a fluid and dynamic manner with accompanying cosmic ideation, and forms the fifth lesson of AM sādhanā (sahaja yoga). Sarkar recognises that this particular spiritual practice of cakra śodhana is an innovation not included in the traditional eight-limbed yoga.

Dhyāna

Dhyāna is the seventh ‘limb’ of the eightfold yoga, which Sarkar defines, in accordance with Patañjali, as ‘the unbroken flow of mind towards the supreme goal’.\(^{591}\) Dhyāna perfects the hiranyāmayo kośa, as it involves channelling the mind into a single stream of expansion towards the supreme consciousness, which is devotion. Sarkar emphasises that dhyāna is dynamic, in contrast to dhāranā, which is static, and he compares dhyāna to a ‘thread of molasses’ that appears still even though a continuous flow is present.\(^{592}\) As mentioned in Chapter 4, the essential quality of hiranyāmayo kośa is intense attraction to or devotion for the supreme, which is awakened and perfected by dhyāna. Technically, dhyāna is the practice of meditation wherein the mind is gradually expanded and pure consciousness is increasingly reflected on the purified ‘mirror’ of the mind.

Sarkar mentions two related aspects of dhyāna, which he terms prāṇidhāna and anudhyāna.\(^{593}\) Prāṇidhāna is the process of focussing all propensities onto a single point and directing that pointed mind towards parama puruṣa. In order to achieve this, Sarkar says that there has to be a parallelism of acoustic rhythm and mental rhythm, referring to the synergistic use of both mantra incantation and mantra ideation (i.e. cognitive, volitional and affective immersion in the mantra’s meaning). When both ideation and incantation are simultaneously present, the first aspect of dhyāna, prāṇidhāna, is said to be also present. When, however, there is mere incantation without ideation, a condition known as japakriyā (‘act of repetition’) rather than dhyāna is present. Anudhyāna, the second aspect of dhyāna, is said to be the dynamic movement of attention towards parama puruṣa, a continuous ‘chasing after’ the supreme goal in spite of the mind being repeatedly distracted from it. Sarkar describes anudhyāna like this:

Anudhyāna means you have accepted that Supreme Self as the object of ideation, but suppose your Lord does not want you, suppose you are a sinner and your Lord does not want that you should get Him; He will try to dart away from you, but in that case, you will have to chase him mentally. This chasing of yours is called Anudhyāna. You

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\(^{590}\) YP, p. 151.
\(^{591}\) Ibid.
\(^{592}\) SS Part 18, p. 85.
\(^{593}\) SS Part 18, pp. 82-86.
must say, ‘O my Lord, I may be a sinner but I won’t spare you, I must catch you.’
When this mentality functions it is Anudhyāna.\textsuperscript{594}

Progress in dhyāna is correlated to the rise of the kuṇḍalinī traversing the various cakras through the central channel, suṣumṇā. Sarkar says:

So dhyāna is meditation on the Supreme Entity so that there is an incessant upward movement of the mind towards Parama Puruṣa.\textsuperscript{595}

In Sarkar’s sahaja yoga, the final ideational phase of the first lesson and the entire sixth lesson are essentially practices of dhyāna; the first lesson, technically a process of pranidhāna, leads the practitioner to savikalpa samādhi, and the sixth lesson, technically a process of anudhyāna, to nirvikalpa samādhi.

Samādhi
The eighth and final ‘limb’ is samādhi, defined by Sarkar as ‘merger of the unit consciousness in Cosmic Consciousness’. Sarkar views it not as a particular lesson but as a result of all the preceding practices. As discussed in Section 5.1, the two main types of samādhi are savikalpa samādhi and nirvikalpa samādhi, corresponding to mergence into saguna brahma (qualified cosmic consciousness) and nirguna brahma (unqualified cosmic consciousness) respectively. (Sarkar mentions other types of samādhi attainable by the meditator – these will be discussed in Chapter 6.) Nevertheless, as the attainment of samādhi may only be temporary because of the store of unexhausted saṃskāras, it is essential to maintain the momentum of practice so that samādhi can be repeatedly attained, the fetters and enemies of the mind progressively overcome, and the saṃskāras gradually exhausted. Only in this sense can samādhi be described as a practice on the eightfold path of yoga.

In summary, the eight limbs of Sarkar’s aṣṭāṅga yoga are meant to develop and perfect the five kośas of the mind in the process of brahma realisation. (More on the process of kośa perfection will be discussed in Chapter 6.) The development and perfection of the five kośas of the mind can be correlated with the practices of Sarkar’s aṣṭāṅga yoga as follows:\textsuperscript{596}

\textsuperscript{594} SS Part 18, pp. 85-86.
\textsuperscript{595} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{596} Ibid.
### Aṣṭāṅga Yoga Practice | Kośa of Mind Perfected
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1. **Yama** | Kāmamaya kośa (crude mind)
2. **Niyama** | Annamaya kośa (physical body)
3. **Āsana** | Manomaya kośa (subtle mind)
4. **Prānāyāma** | Vījñānamaya kośa (subliminal mind)
5. **Pratyāhāra** | Atimānasa kośa (supramental mind)
6. **Dhāranā** | Hiranmaya kośa (subtle causal mind)
7. **Dhyāna** | Ātman (pure consciousness)
8. **Samādhi** | 

Two other factors, lying outside the framework of the aṣṭāṅga yoga, contribute to the development of the annamaya kośa, namely (1) proper diet, which in this case means a sentient diet (see section 5.5 for an elaboration on this), and (2) proper amount of physical labour or exercise. The correlations between aṣṭāṅga yoga factors, the six lessons of sahaja yoga, and the kośas developed will be highlighted in Chapter 6.

**The Buddha’s Noble Eightfold Path**

The noble eightfold path (āryaṭāṅga mārga) of the Buddha summarises the entire path of Buddhist praxis for the attainment of nibbāna (Pali) or nirvāṇa (Sanskrit), the ultimate state of enlightenment. Historically older than Patanjāli’s eight-limbed yoga, the Buddha’s noble eightfold path consists of (1) right understanding or view (samyag drṣṭi), (2) right intention (samyak āsanaka), (3) right speech (samyag vāk), (4) right action (samyak karmāṇā), (5) right livelihood (samyag ājīva), (6) right effort (samyag vyāyāma), (7) right mindfulness (samyak smṛti), and (8) right concentration (samyak samādhi).

In his enumeration of the Buddha’s eightfold path, Sarkar changes the order, whether deliberately or mistakenly, of the eight factors of spiritual practice. He places samyak karmāṇa (factor number 4 in the Buddhist enumeration) between samyag vyāyāma (factor number 6) and samyak smṛti (factor number 7), effectively changing the sequential order of the entire path. In terms of the Buddhist numbering of the eightfold path, Sarkar’s version is: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 4, 7, 8.

Sarkar interprets samyag drṣṭi, factor 1 of the eightfold path as enumerated by him, as variously (1) ‘to see with intuition’, (2) ‘to see properly’, and (3) to ‘know what one is and what one’s goal is’, which is parama puruṣa. He defines samyak sāmkalpa, factor 2, as having a clear ‘mission in life’ and possessing ‘firm determination’ to attain it, and samyag vāk, factor 3, as the

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596 A2nandamitra provides a similar table in SPSSA, p. 160.
597 SPSSA, p. 160.
601 SS Part 19, p. 83. I switch between this source and YP depending on which of the two provides a clearer definition of relevant terms. In both cases, the essential meaning of the terms remains unchanged.
proper orientation of ‘all expressions, sensory or motor movements’\textsuperscript{603} or ‘proper use of all your motor organs, efferent organs.’\textsuperscript{604} He goes on to define samyag ājīva, factor 4, as ‘proper physical and psychic occupation’,\textsuperscript{605} or physically having a wholesome, non-harmful livelihood and mentally occupying one’s mind with pure, non-harmful thoughts. Samyag vyāyāma, factor 5, is ‘proper exercise of your physical body, ... psychic body, ... and spiritual body’,\textsuperscript{606} equated with proper physical exercise, intellectual development, and spiritual meditation. Samyak karmāntā, factor 6, is starting and completing one’s work with ‘proper zeal’ and ‘proper sincerity’;\textsuperscript{607} while samyak smṛtī, factor 7, is ‘proper memory’;\textsuperscript{608} or remembering in every moment ‘whatever is congenial to the spirit of ... human progress’, namely the ‘name’ and ‘idea’ of parama puruṣa.\textsuperscript{609} Finally, Sarkar defines samyak samādhi, factor 8, as ‘proper suspension of mind ... in Parama Puruṣa’;\textsuperscript{610} which, if permanent, is mokṣa, salvation.

I will cursorily analyse, compare, and contrast Sarkar’s and the Buddha’s separate enumerations of the noble eightfold path in Chapter 7.

5.6 The Sixteen Points

For his disciples, Sarkar not only provides a complex metaphysical philosophy of mind and the universe, but also formulates a comprehensive set of Tantric spiritual practices aimed at total and balanced development of human consciousness. Contextualised within Śākta, Vaiśṇava and Śaiva Tantrism and set out in the framework of āstāṅga yoga, the day-to-day practices of AM are further systematised and delineated by Sarkar in the form of the Sixteen Points. Codified by him in 1971,\textsuperscript{611} the Sixteen Points constitute a comprehensive set of methods and disciplines for transmuting physical energy into mind, and mind into consciousness; they are to be followed by all disciples with firmness, devotion and love. While the āstāṅga yoga framework outlines the steps and sequence of practice, Sarkar’s Sixteen Points detail the actual methods and practices involved. Sarkar exhorts:

There is nothing disorderly in the kingdom of the Lord. Follow an orderly and systematic life as per sixteen cardinal points and get yourself crowned with success in all the strata of life.\textsuperscript{612}

The life of the person becomes mechanical if he remains overwhelmed with the sentiment that one must do such acts, one must perform such service, one must rise in

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{603} SS Part 19, p. 83.
\item\textsuperscript{604} ‘Lord Buddha’s Cardinal Principles’, p. 2.
\item\textsuperscript{605} SS Part 19, p. 84.
\item\textsuperscript{606} ‘Lord Buddha’s Cardinal Principles’, p. 3.
\item\textsuperscript{607} SS Part 19, p. 85.
\item\textsuperscript{608} SS Part 19, p.85.
\item\textsuperscript{609} ‘Lord Buddha’s Cardinal Principles’, p. 3.
\item\textsuperscript{610} SS Part 19, p. 86.
\item\textsuperscript{611} Vijayānanda, Ānandamūrti as I Knew Him (Calcutta: Ānanda Mārga Pracāraka Samgha, 1994), p. 51.
\item\textsuperscript{612} Tarak, Ānanda Mārga Social and Spiritual Practices (Calcutta: Ānanda Mārga Pracāraka Samgha, 1990), p. 3. This is the main source for my discussion on Sarkar’s Sixteen Points. Another tertiary source is Jitendra Singh & Bhāskarānanda, Biopsychology of Spiritual Practices: Science behind the Sixteen Points of Ānanda Mārga Practices (Ānandanagar: Gurukula Publications, 2000).
\end{itemize}
this manner and sit in this manner, and so on. Happiness disappears there. For this reason, such ritualism cannot be called real Karma. In the absence of love, penance undergone for show only is fruitless. All ritualistic devotion, sham penance, counting the beads, are meant only for public show. True love and the Supreme Goal are lost sight of. Brahma cannot be attained through any show actions, because in ritualistic thoughts the sweetness of happiness is lacking. Divine Bliss is easily available only to those who base their sādhanā on love.613

Connected to the Sixteen Points are a set of social conduct rules divided into fifteen śīlas (‘ethical disciplines’), forty social norms, and Caryācarya rules. These conduct rules regulate the day-to-day conduct of Tantric sādhakas who have been initiated into the path of AM and are meant to promote both individual growth and collective welfare. (They will be discussed later in this section.)

The Sixteen Points are divided into two parts, the first being jaiva dharma (‘path for maintenance of life’) and the second bhāgavad dharma (‘path to salvation’).614 Jaiva dharma consists of seven points relating to the physical health and development of the individual: (1) the urinary organ should be washed with water after urination; (2) males should either be circumcised or keep the foreskin pulled back at all times; (3) joint hair of the body should never be cut; (4) males should always use a kaupīna or laṅgota (a type of supportive underwear similar to the loincloth traditionally worn by Indian ascetics); (5) vyāpaka šauca, or half bath, should be performed before meals, āsanas, meditation, and sleep; (6) full bath should be performed according to the prescribed Yogic system; (7) a sādhaka’s diet should be sāttvika or ‘sentient’ in nature. While Sarkar lists the Sixteen Points in his social treatise, Caryācarya Part 2, he does not elaborate on these points in that treatise. For the purpose of the present study, details of the Sixteen Points are obtained primarily from secondary AM sources and from Sarkar’s own words interspersed throughout the primary texts.

Jaiva Dharma
The first and second points of jaiva dharma relate specifically to maintenance of hygiene and restraint of sexual desire. Sarkar’s argument is that deposits of urinary sediment in the genitals due to lack of proper washing and unretracted foreskin (for males) can cause sexual excitation and excessive sexual desire, which will divert the mind away from spiritual subtlety. Washing the excretory organs after urination also helps to prevent accumulation of residual urine that might cause infection. Related to the first two points is the fourth point of wearing supportive underwear known as laṅgota for males. This serves the purpose of protecting and firmly supporting the male genitals, as well as preventing their excessive stimulation through movement. Sarkar does not give any specific instruction on this fourth point for females.

The third point of not cutting joint hair is, according to Sarkar, aimed at maintaining proper function of the thyroid gland. He sees thyroid function as inversely proportional to the function of the lymph glands located at or near body joints, such as the armpits and the pubic area. The joint hair and

613 AMSSP, p. 4.
pubic hair maintain an optimal temperature for the normal functioning of the lymph glands. If this hair is cut, these lymph glands become excessively active, resulting in the thyroid gland becoming less active owing to the inverse relationship between the two. A consequence of reduced thyroid function is abnormal secretion of thyroid hormones, resulting in psychological disturbances.

The fifth point, regarding half-bath or full-bath, relates to the need to keep the body cool and clean prior to important and heat-generating activities such as eating, āsana-practice and meditation. While sleep does not generate body heat, having a cool and clean body aids in a restful and deep sleep essential for health. Sarkar sees the digestive processes that follow food consumption as heat producing, and also the practice of yoga postures, which though gentle, requires energy and concentration that comes from metabolism. A cool body will assist in keeping the body comfortable and preventing over-heating of sensitive glands and sub-glands. Sarkar regards the practice of Tantric meditation as one that can generate tremendous amounts of heat due to the movement of the kūndalinī through the central channel. This movement may encounter obstacles and blockages in the form of impurities in the cakras, and heat is produced as a result of frictional forces caused by the kūndalinī piercing the blocked cakras. The half-bath involves rinsing the mouth and pouring cool water over selected parts of the body including the face, eyes, elbows and hands, knees and feet, ears and back of neck, navel and genitals.

Sarkar recommends the full-bath according to the Yogic system as his sixth point. He recommends three time periods as most suitable for having a bath because of the predominance of sentient force in the environment. These times are forty-five minutes before and after dawn (morning sandhyā), forty-five minutes before and after noon (noon sandhyā), and forty-five minutes before and after sunset (evening sandhyā). The temperature of the water used for bathing has to be equal to or lower than the body temperature to prevent excessive heating of the skin. The specific method of bathing involves wetting the navel first, followed by the lower back portion directly opposite the navel, the crown of the head and down the spine, and finishing with a thorough bath of the whole body. Sarkar explains that pouring water on the crown of the head and down the spine refreshes and energises the nervous system, and prepares the body for the bath. The bath culminates in recitation of the bath mantra while the body is still wet and facing a source of light. This exercise is meant to help integrate spirituality into activities of daily life, and to vitalise the body by absorption of light via the focussing effect of water drops on the skin.

The seventh point involves consumption of sentient or sāttvika food, thought to be most appropriate and beneficial for spiritual practitioners because of its harmonising and subtilising effects. According to Sarkar’s cosmology, the sentient force (sattva guṇa), like the mutative and static forces, is present in all created objects in the entire universe. Foods are likewise categorised according to the type of force dominant in them. Static food is viewed as harmful to the mind and may or may not be harmful to the body. Such foods primarily have a dulling and de-energising effect on the mind.

614 AMSSP, pp. 5 and 10.
Mutative food is thought to be good for the body but may or may not be good for the mind. Such foods can cause restlessness and excessive activity in the mind. Sentient food is considered good for both body and mind, producing sentient cells and facilitating elevation of the mind:

If cells are affected by food and water, and if the nature of the cells affects the nature of the human mind, obviously human beings should eat the correct diet, because food and mind are closely related to each other. Any food item, whether good or bad, must not be taken indiscriminately because it may lead to mental degeneration. Sincere spiritual aspirants must follow the dictum: Āhāraśuddhau sattvaśuddhiḥ [“a sentient diet produces a sentient body”].

Sentient food is lacto-vegetarian in nature and consists of all fresh vegetables, legumes and bean products, wheat and wheat products, most fruits, and milk and milk products, with the exception of garlic, onion, mushroom, and eggs. The last four items are classified under static food because of their toxic, de-energising, and heat-and gas-producing effects on the body and mind.

Bhāgavad Dharma
The next nine of the Sixteen Points of AM are collectively termed the ‘path to salvation’ or bhāgavad dharma, and are concerned with the psycho-spiritual development of the disciple. These items are: (8) observing fast as prescribed; (9) doing sādhanā regularly; (10) observing uncompromising strictness and faith regarding the sanctity of the  ėṣṭa (goal); (11) observing uncompromising strictness and faith regarding the sanctity of the ādāraśa (ideology); (12) observing uncompromising strictness and faith regarding the sanctity of the Supreme Command; (13) observing uncompromising strictness and faith regarding the sanctity of the Conduct Rules; (14) remembering the content of one’s oaths always; (15) compulsory regular participation in weekly dharmacakra (group meditation) at the local jāgrti (yoga centre); and (16) observing C.S.D.K. (conduct rules, seminar, duty, and kīrtana).

A. Upavasa
The eighth of the Sixteen Points (also the first point of bhāgavad dharma) is upavasa or ‘fasting’. Sarkar exhorts his disciples to abstain from food and water on ekādaśī, the eleventh day after the day of the full or new moon. The reason he gives is that on this day, the moon exerts a stronger gravitational pull on the body and causes the liquid and gaseous factors in the body to rise up. This upward rise in the gases and liquids results in congestion of the head and chest, accompanied by mental disturbance. An empty digestive tract is supposed to counteract this congestive and disturbing effect, creating improved physical and mental balance and giving the digestive system a much-needed rest. Fasting is also thought to limit the production of seminal fluid from lymph, and therefore to help in restraint of sexual desire. Family members of AM are required to fast twice a month while

615 YP, p. 3.
missionary monks and nuns fast four times a month, the additional days of fasting being the full and new moon days.

B. Sādhana
The ninth point is sādhana, ‘effort for completion’. Sādhana is the conscious effort made by an individual to realise the spiritual goal of liberation or salvation, and constitutes the essential spiritual practices needed to reach that goal. It primarily consists of the meditational systems of sahaja yoga, kāpālīka yoga, and viśeṣa yoga. In addition, it includes performance of four basic kinds of service or yajña, which Sarkar has defined in his own way. The first is bhūta yajña or ‘service to the created world’, which Sarkar understands as caring for and maintaining animals, plants, and inanimate objects in a spirit of seeing everything as expressions of the Supreme. Next is pīṭr yajña or ‘service to ancestors’, which is performed through remembrance of and salutation to ancestors during the recitation of the bath mantra. The third type of service is nr yajña or ‘service to humanity’, consisting of four sub-types: śudrociṭa sevā, or serving others through physical labour; vaiśyocita sevā, or serving others through financial means; kṣattriyocita sevā, or serving those in distress with physical prowess and valour; and viprocita sevā, or serving others through spiritual or intellectual teaching. The fourth type of service is adhyātma yajña, or service to the Supreme through engaging in spiritual contemplation during formal meditation and throughout the day. Sādhana also includes the practice of kīrtana (singing and dancing to God’s name), pañcajanya (waking up at five in the morning for meditation), and guru sakāśa (taking shelter in the guru). Sarkar defines pañcajanya as the specific time of five o’clock in the morning, when the spiritual and sentient vibration is especially strong and most beneficial for meditation. He advocates devotional singing of his self-composed songs – Prabhāt Śaṅgī; the practice of kīrtana; and silent meditation during this time.

C. Iṣṭa
The tenth of the Sixteen Points admonishes the disciple to uphold the sanctity of the iṣṭa (goal) with unshakeable faith and strictness. Iṣṭa is defined as the ‘goal towards which we are moving, the personalised aspect of the Absolute, best suited to us’. In concrete terms, iṣṭa is the divine consciousness in the form of the guru or spiritual master, who guides the disciple on the path of emancipation through his instructions and example. AM followers identify the iṣṭa as Sarkar himself, the Tantric guru. On a more abstract level of meaning, iṣṭa is the infinite parama puruṣa that all sincere spiritual aspirants seek to realise, the non-reifiable source, ground, and goal of the universe.

D. Ādaraṇa
The next item, ādaraṇa, is the ‘ideology’ of AM, the practical path by which the disciple progresses towards his or her iṣṭa. Sarkar gives a philosophical definition of ādaraṇa with reference to a related

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616 *AMSSP*, p. 16.
concept of bhāva or ‘idea’. He defines bhāva as a state of psycho-spiritual parallelism wherein the psychic waves of the individual mind have attained parallelism with the spiritual waves of the ātman. This psycho-spiritual parallelism is the mechanism underlying the state of samādhi, which occurs when the unit mind merges into the ātman following complete transformation of psychic waves of limited wavelength into straight-line waves of infinite wavelength. Sarkar goes on to say:

When this bhāva or idea is conceived on the psychic level, it is “ideology”. Ideology, therefore, is the conception of idea and nothing else. Hence when we call some materialistic or political principles of a person, party, nation or federation an “ideology”, it is a wrong use of the term. “Ideology” involves in it a spiritual sense; it is an inspiration which has a parallelism with the Spiritual Entity.  

In other words, Sarkar sees ideology as a spiritually inspired set of concepts and ideals conceived in the post-samādhi state that serves to guide and direct the spiritual aspirant on the path of enlightenment. He stresses that ideology should be rational and non-dogmatic in nature, free of superstitions, and scientific in its approach:

Even if a boy says something logical, it should be accepted; and even if the lotus-born Brahma says something illogical it should be rejected like straw. What is dogma? Dogma is an idea with a rigid boundary line, which won’t allow you to go beyond the periphery of that boundary line. Thus dogma goes against the fundamental spirit of the human mind. The human mind won’t tolerate anything rigid. It wants movement – not only movement, but accelerated movement. So you should be vocal in fighting the influence of dogmas. Spirituality stands for evolution and elevation, not for superstitions or pessimism. 

In our Ānanda Mārga, spiritual practices are scientific and systematic and based in rationality. Fear and superstition have no part in it.

Sarkar has described his ideology as one that combines ‘subjective approach with objective adjustment’, meaning that the inner subjective quest for God- or self-realisation is to be integrated with an outer objective engagement with the world. In other words, transformation of the self is not separate from transformation of society through selfless service and alternative social structures based on the spirit of universal love he calls neohumanism. Neohumanism is a perspective and emotional attitude characterised by deep, unbounded love for inanimate objects, plants, animals, human beings, and all life forms in the universe – it is unconditional love for the universe itself born out of non-dual realisation of the cosmic mind.

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617 IAI, p. 63.  
618 BG, p. 79.  
619 TPRS, p. 104.  
620 TPRS, p. 106.  
621 TPRS, p. 98.
In short, the eleventh point calls upon the disciple to be uncompromisingly strict and faithful to the spiritually inspired ideology of non-dogmatism, rationality, and integration of profound spirituality with active world engagement – an ideology that forms the essential path leading to final emancipation for both self and society. This ideology is expressed in the spiritual and social philosophies of Sarkar, rooted as they are in his appropriation and re-interpretation of the Indian episteme of Tantra.

E. Supreme Command

The twelfth point exhorts the disciple to ‘observe uncompromising strictness and faith regarding the sanctity of the Supreme Command’. The supreme command is the quintessential injunction given by Sarkar to all his disciples, which encapsulates the ideals and way of life of ānanda mārgīs (followers of AM). It exhorts all ānanda mārgīs to practise sādhanā twice a day regularly, based solidly on the moral principles of yama and niyama, and to endeavour to guide others onto the path of spirituality.

F. Conduct Rules

The thirteenth point relates to observance of AM conduct rules, which consist of yama and niyama, the fifteen śīlas, the forty social norms, and a host of other rules collected together in Ānanda Mārga Carīcārya Part 2. As these rules are extensive and to some extent repetitive, they will not be discussed here except for the list of fifteen śīlas or ‘rules of behaviour’. These fifteen rules of behaviour regulate the personal conduct of ānanda mārgīs and are deemed important for the maintenance of inner equilibrium and the cultivation of inner strength necessary for deep meditation. They are: (1) forgiveness; (2) magnanimity of mind; (3) perpetual restraint on behaviour and temper; (4) readiness to sacrifice everything of individual life for ideology; (5) all-round self-restraint; (6) sweet and smiling behaviour; (7) moral courage; (8) setting an example by individual conduct before asking anybody to do the same; (9) keeping aloof from criticizing others, condemning others, personal abuse and all sorts of groupism; (10) strict adherence to the principles of yama and niyama; (11) if any mistake has been committed unknowingly or unconsciously through carelessness, admitting it immediately and asking for punishment; (12) even while dealing with a person of inimical nature, keeping oneself free from hatred, anger and vanity; (13) keeping aloof from talkativeness; (14) obedience to the structural code of discipline; and (15) sense of responsibility. Sarkar does not make

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622 CC Part 2, p. 22.
623 The supreme command is located at the front of each volume of Sarkar’s collected discourses and reads as follows: ‘Those who perform sādhanā twice a day regularly, the thought of Parama Purusa will certainly arise in their minds at the time of death. Their liberation is a sure guarantee. Therefore every Ānanda Mārgī will have to perform sādhanā twice a day invariably. Verily this is the command of the Lord. Without yama and niyama, sādhanā is an impossibility. Hence the Lord’s command is also to follow yama and niyama. Disobedience to this command is to throw oneself into the tortures of animal life for crores of years. That no one should undergo torments such as these, that everyone might be enabled to enjoy the eternal blessedness under the loving shelter of the Lord, it is the bounden duty of every Ānanda Mārgī to endeavour to bring all to the path of bliss. Verily is this a part and parcel of sādhanā, to lead others along the path of righteousness.’
clear what the ‘structural code of discipline’ is, and no definition is given in any of Sarkar’s published discourses or AM’s secondary texts.

G. Oaths
The fourteenth of the Sixteen Points is constant remembrance of one’s oaths made during the process of initiation. These oaths relate to the promise to avoid all evil actions; to perform good actions; and to maintain the confidentiality of the Tantric meditative techniques transmitted. The disciple is meant to recall these oaths every morning upon awakening and to apply them in life. Another essential oath is the one prescribed by Sarkar for his disciples soon before his death in 1990, which requires all practitioners of AM to devote their entire being to the elevation and liberation of all living and non-living entities in the universe.  

This oath is akin to the bodhisattva vow of Mahāyāna Buddhism, but extends beyond it to include all inanimate objects, since all things and all life-forms are seen as pulsative expressions of pure consciousness and are to be embraced with compassion and love.

H. Dharmacakra
The fifteenth point pertains to regular participation in weekly group meditations known as dharmacakra held at the various local AM centres. Sarkar greatly emphasises the need for weekly dharmacakra, saying that this is a time for spiritually minded people to come together for mutual support and company. He calls this external satsānga or the ‘company of the Absolute’ in the form of pure-minded fellow practitioners, as opposed to internal satsānga – inner closeness to the Absolute through meditation. Sarkar affirms:

Even a gold vessel needs polishing occasionally. Not maintained, it gathers dust and dirt and loses its lustre. Similarly, even a good person, a spiritual aspirant needs proper maintenance, for in a world of constant change, care must be taken that the change be always towards the better or the higher. Keeping good company is essential for this positive development … [and] is conducive to liberation and salvation.  

He also makes it clear that attendance at weekly dharmacakra can be a tremendous boost to one’s meditative progress:

In collective īśvara pranidhāna the combined mental efforts work together, and so give rise to the expression of the higher signs in a very short time … do not miss the opportunity of collective īśvara pranidhāna whenever some of you conveniently meet together. The indomitable mental force aroused as a result of collective īśvara

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624 CC Part 2, p. 20. See CC and the secondary text AMSSP for details of conduct rules not spelled out in the thesis.
625 Dharmavedānanda, Who’s Afraid of the Tantric Guru, p. 407. This oath, later known as the Mahāprayāṇa Oath, reads: ‘All my energy, all my mind, all my thoughts, all my deeds are to be goaded unto the path of the collective elevation of human society, without neglecting other animate and inanimate objects, right from this moment until the last point of my living on this earth.’
626 TPRS, p. 29.
pranidhāna will help you solve any problem, great or small on this earth. It is for this reason that you should always be zealous to attend weekly dharmacakra regularly.\textsuperscript{627}

I. C.S.D.K.
The sixteenth and final point is observance of C.S.D.K.: conduct rules, seminar, duty, and kīrtana. Conduct rules have been mentioned under the thirteenth point, and their appearance here constitutes a replication, a phenomenon that occurs frequently in Sarkar’s delineation of AM’s moral and social codes. A probable explanation for this anomaly is that these instructions were most likely given and repeatedly stressed with additional content on several different occasions. When compiled in one book (namely Ānanda Mārga Carvācarya Part 2), the repetitiveness and replication of some of the rules become apparent. Seminars (S) are formal teaching and learning sessions conducted by senior mārgiś or ācāryas (monks and nuns of AM) to help all members to increase their grasp of AM philosophy. Duties (D) are tasks that have been allocated to any mārgi by an ācārya or mārgi in an organisational position, and are to be done with dedication and zeal by the mārgi concerned. Kīrtana (K) is the singing of, and dancing to, the universal mantra of AM, ‘bābā nām kevalam’, which is to be practised as a supportive technique prior to formal meditation. In conjunction with kīrtana, Sarkar prescribes two other dances, known as kauśikī and tāndava, which are meant to aid physical health and spiritual development, and are to be practised twice a day.

Sarkar is said to have designed kauśikī specifically for women in 1978 for the development of confidence and inner strength. As tāndava consists of strenuous jarring movements that may hurt the female reproductive organs and stimulate the secretion of the male hormone, testosterone, its practice is proscribed by Sarkar for women. In its place, they are to practise kauśikī.

While dancing kauśikī, one seeks to establish the link between the microcosm and the Macrocosm. This process is commonly known as mysticism. Kauśikī pertains to the innermost kośas, the layers of existence. Kauśikī dance is like the blossoming of the innermost Self.\textsuperscript{628}

Kauśikī is a spiritual dance consisting of a sequence of sixteen movements performed in rhythm to the chanted mantra ‘bābā nām kevalam’, accompanied by a specific ideation with each direction of movement. It is supposed to be a remedy for twenty-two specific diseases and an aid in developing strength, flexibility, cardiovascular fitness and endurance.

Sarkar also recommends tāndava as a specifically spiritual dance for men. According to him, tāndava was invented by Sadāśiva some seven thousand years ago and is meant to develop the courage and vigour of a spiritual warrior. It is said to have a masculinizing effect on the body and to develop a firm determination to struggle against all forms of fear and inertia. Involving vigorous jumping from

\textsuperscript{627} GHC, pp. 75-76.
\textsuperscript{628} AMSSP, p. 22.
one foot to the other, with the raised knee crossing the point of the navel, heart or throat, tandava is performed with the ideation of a spiritual warrior:

‘I will face the fear of death, which surrounds me on all sides, and overcome it with the power of the life force of my mind. No force will deter me from my goal. No evil tendency, no enemy, no bondage can shake my determination to be victorious. I dance light, strong and graceful to the joyful rhythm, the indomitable beat of my Cosmic Father’s will. Victory to the Supreme Father.’

In soteriological terms, the Sixteen Points aim at sublimating physical energy (bhāvanī śakti) into psychic energy (bhairavī śakti), psychic energy into spiritual energy (kauśikī śakti), and spiritual energy into supreme consciousness (citiśakti or puruṣottama). (In Chapter 3, I discussed the cosmogonic conversion of kauśikī śakti into bhairavī śakti and finally into bhāvanī śakti. The sequence of spiritual evolution replicates the cosmogonic process but in reverse order.) Also, the Sixteen Points can be seen to affect and develop all the kośas simultaneously: the first seven practices of jaiva dharma predominantly control the annamaya kośa and kāmamaya kośa, while the following nine practices of bhāgavad dharma predominantly affect the manomaya kośa through to the deepest hiraṇmaya kośa. These correlations are highlighted in the following tables based on my analysis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sixteen Points (Jaiva Dharma)</th>
<th>Kośas Developed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Use of water on urinary organ</td>
<td>Annamaya kośa and kāmamaya kośa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Circumcision or retraction of penile foreskin for males</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Maintenance of joint hair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Use of laṅgota (tight fitting underwear)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.Vyāpaka śauca (half bath)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Bath according to prescribed system</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Sentient (sāttviṣka) diet</td>
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</tbody>
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629 AMSSP, p. 83.
630 DOT Vol. 1, pp. 2-3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sixteen Points (<em>Bhāgavad Dharma</em>)</th>
<th><em>Kośas Developed</em></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. <em>Upavasa</em> (fasting)</td>
<td><em>Annamaya kośa, kāmamaya kośa, and manomaya kośa</em> by:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) cleansing body</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(b) abandoning sensual attachment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(c) enhancing willpower of the mind</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. <em>Śādhanā</em> (spiritual practice)</td>
<td>All five mental <em>kośas</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. <em>Īṣṭa</em> (Ideal or Goal)</td>
<td>All five mental <em>kośas</em> by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) directing all propensities in all <em>kośas</em> towards <em>īṣṭa</em> through ādarśa, which is devotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. <em>Ādarśa</em> (Ideology)</td>
<td>(b) performance of <em>sādhanā</em> twice daily and devotional effort to lead all beings towards spirituality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Supreme Command</td>
<td><em>Kāmamaya kośa, manomaya kośa, and atimānasa kośa</em> by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Conduct Rules</td>
<td>(a) restraint of sense-desires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) engaging in inspirational thoughts, altruistic motivation, and wholesome actions and service</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Oaths</td>
<td>All five mental <em>kośas</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Weekly Dharmacakra</td>
<td><em>C.S.D.K. (Conduct rules, Seminar, Duty, Kīrtana + Kauśikī + Tāndava)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td><em>C, S, D – kāmamaya kośa and manomaya kośa</em> <em>K – annamaya kośa</em> + all five mental <em>kośas</em> especially the deeper ones due to ideative and devotional component of dances.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Sixteen Points can also be regarded as essential physico-psycho-spiritual practices that, through the perfection and expansion of the *kośas*, expand the unit mental plate (*citta*). They increase the magnitude of the *citta* (mental plate = ectoplasm) and cause it to progressively burst through the linings of the *aham* (sense of doership = ectoplasm) and the *mahat* (sense of self-existence = endoplasm), resulting in oneness with the all-pervasive and underlying ground of unconfined consciousness (*parama puruṣa*).\(^{631}\)

In summary, the Sixteen Points of AM are a set of strict and demanding disciplines involving physical, psychic, and spiritual effort from the practitioner. Designed by Sarkar for the total development and perfection of the human being, these points represent AM’s Tantric path in its entirety, a path that promises to lead the individual to the twin goals of liberation and salvation, and to secure bliss for society and all of creation. The ascetic nature of many of AM’s practices perhaps reflects Sarkar’s appropriation of traditional Tantric vows tinged with ascetic elements of Jaina praxis, in the service of meditative and spiritual growth. To the essentially spiritual and subjective quest, he

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\(^{631}\) Jitendra Singh and Bhāskarānanda make a similar point in *Biopsychology of the Spiritual Practices*, p. 76. Our interpretations of ectoplasm and endoplasm differ in that they equate ectoplasm with *citta* and endoplasm with *aham*, while I equate ectoplasm with both *citta* and *aham* taken together and endoplasm with *mahat*. (See subsection 4.2.1 for my interpretation of Sarkar’s models of mind.)
adds the idealistic and socially revolutionary goals of selfless service and societal transformation. Inayatullah, a noted Sarkarian scholar, makes the following comment on Sarkar’s setting of practically impossible goals for his disciples’ service and missionary work:

This could be read as an effort to provoke actions beyond human capacity, actions which require assistance from a greater source of agency. An interesting difference is here discernible between Sarkar and Tantrik gurus of the past; rather than, as a test of character and preparation for spiritual initiation, having the disciples build houses out of stone only to destroy them again and again (as with Milarepa and his guru Marpa in Tibetan Tantra), Sarkar’s proverbial stone houses are in fact houses for the poor and disadvantaged and do have value to society and not the self alone. Of course as a spiritual guru, a Tantrik guru, his goal may have been as much to inspire greater bhakti [devotion] and ego-surrender in his disciples as to transform society. 632

5.7 Overview of Ānanda Mārga Practice Frameworks

In this chapter, I have detailed the overall soteriological framework of Sarkar’s spiritual praxis, discussing (1) its ultimate soteriological goals, (2) the fundamental pre-requisites for Sarkar’s Tantric practice, (3) the Tantric context of and spiritual developmental sequence in Sarkar’s AM, (4) the sequential listing of practice steps and principles in terms of Patañjali’s aṣṭāṅga yoga, and (5) the complete system of spiritual practice methods encapsulated in the Sixteen Points. In line with my dialogical hermeneutic and phenomenonology, these findings do not represent some reified and unchanging ‘essence’ of Sarkar’s teachings, but rather a dynamic field of meaning production that speaks to a modern reader such as myself and that at the same time attracts my epistemological assent by the force of its historically effective truth claims.

In line with traditional Indian thinking, Sarkar conceives of the final goal of spirituality as Self- or God-realisation, in the twin aspects of mukti and mokṣa. Traditionally, the distinction between mukti and mokṣa has not always been clearly demarcated. Sarkar departs from tradition by making a clear distinction between these two attainments, defining mukti as permanent realisation of oneness with cosmic mahat or saguṇa brahma, and mokṣa as permanent realisation of oneness with unqualified cosmic puruṣa or nirguṇa brahma. When the state of oneness with saguṇa brahma is only temporary owing to unrequired saṃskāras buried in the mind of the practitioner, that attainment is called savikalpa or samprajñāta samādhi. Similarly, the state of temporary oneness with nirguṇa brahma is termed nirvikalpa or asamprajñāta samādhi. Sarkar also calls nirvikalpa samādhi the state of brahmasadbhāva or sahajāvasthā, the latter term denoting that this ultimate state is one of ease and naturalness, a primordial state of the mind prior to the distorting influence of prakṛti. He sees mokṣa as superior to mukti in terms of teleological finality, and nirvikalpa samādhi as superior to savikalpa samādhi in terms of meditative attainment. A loosening or total disappearance of the bondage of prakṛti is essential to the attainment of mukti or mokṣa respectively.
Sarkar appears ambivalent about the possibility of a third soteriological goal, that of jīvan-mukti or embodied liberation. Some passages in Sarkar’s texts suggest a state akin to attainment of jīvan-mukti, which he calls ‘the state of supreme realisation’ or ‘the supreme spiritual fulfilment’. In particular, the attainment of īlābhāva and nityābhāva together enables the sādhaka to realise the sweet stance of madhura bhāva, a mode of being highly suggestive of jīvan-mukti. Sarkar’s soteriology mirrors his ontology and cosmology, neatly matching the twin goals of mukti and mokṣa with the twin ontological modes of saguna brahma and nirguna brahma. Whether the third state of jīvan-mukti correlates with the mode of tāraka brahma is unclear, although circumstantial evidence exists for just such correlation.

On a different note, Sarkar’s soteriology is not isolated from the social and the political, insofar as his monistic and arguably non-solipsistic cosmology enables the formulation of a social ideology that is intrinsic to the AM movement. It can be argued that his synthesis of the spiritual and the social as two parts of the one whole of AM reflects the integral spirit of Tantra.

In keeping with the Tantric tradition of guru-veneration, Sarkar espouses guruvāda (guru-doctrine) as a central feature of his soteriology. He defines a suitably qualified guru as one who has fully realised parama puruṣa and who has the power to raise the kuṇḍalinī of others on a massive scale. Such a sadguru or perfect master, according to Sarkar, is none other than the mahāsambhūti (‘great manifestation’) of tāraka brahma, the personalised and liberating aspect of parama puruṣa. He or she is given the title mahākaula or ‘great knower of the secret of liberation or salvation’ and is regarded as the uttama prathama guru or ‘highest and best guru’. Sarkar enumerates many qualities of the sadguru, among which perfect knowledge of spiritual practices, strict discipline, and selfless love rank as the most important. He sees the conjunction of the sadguru and the disciple in a life-transforming event known as tāntrikī dīkṣā or ‘Tantric initiation’. During dīkṣā, the guru’s spiritual energy (guruśakti), the proper meditation technique, and the disciple’s personal iṣṭa mantra are transmitted from teacher to disciple, awakening and raising his or her dormant kuṇḍalinī. According to Sarkar, a truly efficacious mantra, apart from being empowered by a sadguru, has to be (1) pulsative – that is, the mantra has to flow smoothly with the rhythm of the breath; (2) incantative – that is, the mantra needs to have acoustic properties that can link the individual rhythm (jaivī sattā) with the cosmic rhythm (bhūmā prāṇa); (3) ideative – that is, the mantra has to have an expansive and subtle meaning centred on the feeling of non-duality between individual and cosmic consciousness; and (4) suited to the samāskāra of the individual practising the mantra. In his conceptualisation of the

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633 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 483.
634 Compare this with Ānandamitra’s comment in SPSSJ, p. 259: ‘When one can maintain continual parallelism between his own rhythm and the Cosmic rhythm, he becomes a jīvan-mukta, a liberated soul. For him, every particle of dust in the universe is as sweet as honey, and his existence, too, is as sweet as honey to the universe.’
635 See When the Time Comes, p. 127: Chandranath Kumar identifies a class of jīvan-muktas with divine manifestations serving as media through which tāraka brahma acts; this suggests that the mode of being of such jīvan-muktas is a state of oneness with tāraka brahma.
salvific tools of mantra and initiation, Sarkar appears to be in keeping with certain key ideas of traditional Tantra. While Sarkar does not claim that he is tāraka brahma, the emphasis on the figure of the guru, on the guru’s indispensability and his supernatural powers in the ideology of AM lead to an inevitable self-styling of Sarkar as the sadguru.

Apart from the essential pre-requisites of Sarkar’s spiritual praxis, correct and effective practice of AM requires an appreciative understanding of its Tantric context and overall sequence of spiritual development. Sarkar distinguishes his brand of Tantra from the Vedic tradition by repeatedly emphasising the practical, contemplative, and non-discriminatory nature of Tantra as opposed to the ritualistic and caste-oriented focus of the Vedas. He also highlights that Tantra, as he understands it, is characterised by a spirit of vigorous struggle against all physical, mental and spiritual obstacles, and aims to develop the qualities of human vigour and energy. He contextualises his AM within the framework of the five systems of Śaiva Tantra, Śākta Tantra, Vaiṣṇava Tantra, Gānapatya Tantra and Saura Tantra, in which the first three systems predominate. He considers AM practice as a happy blending of the practices of Śaiva Tantra, Śākta Tantra, Vaiṣṇava Tantra, with a balanced emphasis on the development of knowledge or wisdom (jñāna), selfless action (karma), and devotion (bhakti). Within the context of Tantric struggle, Sarkar details the progression of human development in three main stages: (1) paśvācāra (‘animal way’) or paśubhāva (‘animal ideation’), (2) virācāra (‘heroic way’) or virabhāva (‘heroic ideation’), and (3) divyācāra (‘divine way’) or divyabhāva (‘divine ideation’). He further describes three stages of spiritual practice (sādhana): (1) śākta, (2) vaisnava stage, and (3) śaiva stage. A comparison of these three stages of sādhana with the preceding three stages of human progress suggests that AM practice begins at the stage of virācāra and progressively culminates in the stage of divyācāra.

In common with traditional Tantra, Sarkar mentions the five M’s of madya (‘wine’), māṁsa (‘meat’), matsya (‘fish’), mūrdhā (‘parched grains’), and maithuna (‘sexual union’), but stresses that they are to be interpreted metaphorically in AM as referring to ethical and spiritually helpful behaviour (e.g. māṁsa = control of speech; and mūrdhā = keeping virtuous company), meditative experience (e.g. madya = experience of divine bliss due to pineal secretions) and inner practices (e.g. matsya = control of vital force flowing through the idā and pīṅgalā naḍīs; and maithuna = merging of śakti into śiva by means of intense spiritual practice). It is possible that Sarkar is attempting to demystify esoteric practices of traditional Tantra in order to render his brand of Tantra more palatable to the contemporary audience. Such an attempt would also be in keeping with his philosophy of rationalisation and non-dogmatism, although whether he succeeded in rendering AM entirely free of dogmatic content is debatable.

Sarkar operationalises his path of practice using the framework of Patañjali’s aṣṭāṅga yoga, a sequential listing of eight practice steps. He generally follows the traditional interpretation of aṣṭāṅga

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636 See Sarkar’s frequent usage of terms such as ‘scientific’, ‘rationality’, and ‘rationalisation’, in e.g. YP, p. 164: ‘...the process of transmutation and diversion of different psychic pabula in a scientific manner’ and p. 165: ‘...creating more scope for rationality and rationalisation on the different planes of existence...’
yoga but occasionally redefines some of its terms to suit his own ideology. Each of these steps affects and develops a particular layer (kośa) of the mind, rendering the mind purer, more crystalline, and thus more able to reflect the brilliant luminosity of parama puruṣa. Sarkar’s six lessons of meditation (sahaja yoga) embody and operationalise the steps of the aṣṭāṅga yoga, and will be discussed in Chapter 6. Sarkar freely appropriates the Buddha’s noble eightfold path, giving an idiosyncratic sequencing and interpretation of the path factors. It is unclear why Sarkar refers to the Buddhist path when much of his philosophy and praxis is derived from Hindu systems such as Yoga and Sāṃkhya (to be explored in Chapters 7 and 8). The incommensurability of Buddhist anātman and Hindu ātman does not appear to have been addressed by Sarkar even as he freely appropriates the Buddhist eightfold path. However, he does redefine steps of the eightfold path in light of his ideas on parama puruṣa and samādhi, a process that can be cautiously labelled as a ‘Hinduisation’ of Buddhist doctrine in the service of personal philosophical construction.

The actual soteriological practices prescribed by Sarkar are set within the Sixteen Points of AM. These sixteen practices have their specific effects on the various kośas of the mind. More importantly, they are designed to systematically transmute physical energy into psychic energy, psychic energy into spiritual energy, and spiritual energy into the blissful cognitive faculty in a step-wise fashion until the final goal of identity with parama puruṣa is reached. While original in structure and formulation, the Sixteen Points are made up of components derived from Yogic, Tantric, and devotional praxes and can thus be said to be traditional in many ways. To this blend of traditional elements are added Sarkar’s personal innovations, such as the dances of kauśikī and tāndava, and the supreme command. In Chapters 7 and 8, we will discuss Sarkar’s links with traditional Indian spiritualities more deeply.
Chapter 6
Ānanda Mārga: Practice and Transformation

6.1 Spiritual Disciplines

As social and spiritual preceptor of AM, Sarkar prescribed a range of disciplines for the development of the body, the training and expansion of the mind, and the realisation of the infinite consciousness within; and he gave principles and strategies for the re-structuring and renewal of human society. In this chapter, I shall focus solely on the psycho-spiritual disciplines aimed at brahma-realisation and the mechanisms and dynamics of spiritual growth as one progresses on the AM path.

Range of Disciplines and Methods

I aim not only to analyse the psycho-spiritual practice methods taught by Sarkar, but also to describe how these methods relate to AM’s soteriological goals. Sarkar teaches the integral practice of the threefold Yogic disciplines of jñāna, karma, and bhakti yoga, the spirit of which informs a set of Tantric meditative techniques known as sahaja yoga (the yoga of natural ease) or rājādhīrāja yoga (the ‘king of kings’ yoga). Sahaja or rājādhīrāja yoga essentially operationalises several limbs of the eightfold yoga but extends beyond them in terms of both content and mechanics. Sahaja yoga is primarily based on the theory and practice of kundalinī yoga and involves the use of mantra, visualisation, concentration, and ideation. While these techniques eventually aim at raising the kundalinī from the lowest to the topmost cakra, they do not directly manipulate the force of kundalinī but instead work on strengthening and purification of the cakras, development of one-pointedness and open awareness, and the experience of pure devotion. Jñāna yoga will be discussed in section 6.1.1; karma yoga in section 6.1.2; bhakti yoga in section 6.1.3; and the six lessons of sahaja yoga in section 6.1.5.

A preliminary to formal meditation is the practice of kārta (discussed in section 6.1.4), devotional singing and chanting of the universal mantra of AM, ‘Bābā Nām Kevalam’, accompanied by rhythmic dancing. The mantra is sung or chanted to different tunes, some composed by AM members and some by Sarkar himself, all of which represent musical styles from the various countries and cultures into which AM has spread. The practice of kārta is aimed at preparing the body and more importantly the mind for deep meditation, by inducing a state of relative concentration, devotion, and detachment from gross thoughts and distractions.

Advanced meditative practices accessible only to AM ācāryas, both ordained and lay, are kāpālikā and viśeṣa yoga. For Sarkar, both men and women, householders and renunciates, are entitled to be trained as ācāryas. Renunciates ācāryas are celibate monks and nuns (sāṃnyāsins) who have dedicated their entire lives to missionary work. Family ācāryas are men and women who lead normal family and societal lives but with the authority to teach meditation and spirituality, and to initiate potential aspirants. The two forms of meditation – kāpālikā and viśeṣa yoga – are highly
esoteric; printed information about them is unavailable, to the best of my knowledge. However, there are scanty and extremely brief references to these meditation techniques interspersed throughout AM’s primary and tertiary texts, and it is from these that the information in section 6.1.6 is drawn. It is likely that there are other esoteric meditation techniques deliberately kept secret and away from general access, a policy firmly embedded in the Tantric tradition. These techniques may have been imparted by Sarkar to certain selected individuals and kept secret for reasons not clearly stated. One possible reason is that these techniques are kept secret in the interest of public safety, on the grounds that they are highly potent and potentially dangerous if misused by unqualified persons or persons with ill intent. Naturally, such undocumented techniques will not be discussed here.

Amongst all soteriological techniques, Sarkar privileges the cultivation of bhakti or devotion, which he equates with the highest non-dual knowledge. The types of bhakti, its relation to the ‘pinnacled intellect’ or agrayābuddhi, and its culmination in kevala bhakti and mokṣa will be explicated. In particular, the concept of neohumanism – love for all beings and the entire cosmos – will be discussed in section 6.2 as an essential component of the liberation of self and intellect. The practical cultivation of neohumanism is very much linked to the blossoming of devotional sentiment and inspires the efforts of AM practitioners to bring about positive social transformation.

Section 6.3 will explore the dynamics and mechanisms underpinning the dawning of pure consciousness in the process of spiritual development. This spiritual journey takes place within the dialectical interplay of the forces of vidyā and avidyā, and involves a meticulous process of physico-psycho-spiritual transmutation and elevation. The mechanisms of consciousness liberation involve biopsychological changes, transformation of mind-states through the stages of samādhi, the upward movement of the kundalinī through the susumnā, and the mediating activity of microvita – an expression of the guru’s grace (kṛpā).

Nature of Spiritual Path and Ideal
Before delving into these disciplines, a brief discussion on the nature of the spiritual path (dharma sādhanā) and of the ideal spiritual practitioner (sādhaka), as understood by Sarkar, is warranted here. Sarkar terms the second half of his Sixteen Points bhāgavad dharma, ‘the Lord’s Path’, a term which he also applies to his entire ideology and praxis, AM. He says that ‘to long for and run after the Great is dharma’ and that ‘dharma should always be practised.’ He views the fundamental nature or characteristic (dharma) of human beings as intrinsically thirsting for infinite happiness or bliss (ānanda), which can only be found in brahma. This innate nature (dharma) of humanity shares four salient characteristics with the spiritual path that leads to the Lord, or bhāgavad dharma: (1) vistāra (‘expansion’) – continual expansion of the mind toward the infinite brahma and consequent blooming

637 Conversations with AM ācāryas have revealed the possible existence of techniques with names such as microvita sādhanā, bhairava sādhanā and madhura sādhanā, though to date I have found no documentary evidence of such techniques. It is likely that such techniques are reserved for selected initiates in keeping with the tradition of Tantric secrecy.
of universal love; (2) rasa (‘flow’) – constant alignment of the mind’s dynamism with the universal
sport or play (līlā) of brahma, or total surrender to parama puruṣa; (3) sevā (‘service’) – inner
(meditative) and outer (social or physical) acts of unconditional service motivated by a spontaneous
sense of oneness with brahma in oneself and in all things; and (4) tathāti (‘stance of Thatness’) – the
result of the first three characteristics, which is ‘enconcement in Parama Puruṣa.”

Sarkar conceives of the ideal spiritual practitioner as a sadvipra, a term that implies a
spiritually inspired intellectual grounded in truth, morality, and benevolence. The sadvipra ideal is
one that all AM practitioners strive to attain, and one that may bear a relationship to the spiritual status
of jīvanmukti, a permanent state of living liberation. However, it is an ideal that extends beyond the
traditional Indian notions of siddha, arhat, and bodhisattva by virtue of the social, physical and
environmental dimensions present within its overall soteriological intent. The sadvipra perhaps comes
closest to the Buddhist bodhisattva, a being who strives for enlightenment for the sole purpose of
bringing all sentient beings to liberation; a sadvipra, however, is said to broaden his or her
soteriological concern to include not only all sentient beings but also the inanimate world (e.g. care for
and proper utilisation of mineral or metallic resources) and the natural environment (e.g. protection of
flora, oceans, lakes, rivers).

In particular, Sarkar distinguishes the sadvipra from a conventional yogī, whose sole intent is
personal liberation; he describes the sadvipra as a socio-spiritual revolutionay who strives to integrate
the subjective realisation of spiritual consciousness and the objective transformation of society and the
world. According to him, an AM practitioner is essentially a contemporary tāntrika, one who
challenges the delusory structures of his or her own mind and the oppressive, exploitative, duḥkha-
eliciting structures of human society, through a combination of Yogic exercises, Tantric meditation,
altruistic service, and an alternative system of socio-economics and politics based on universal love
(neohumanism).

Sarkar sees a sadvipra as having developed all four ‘mentalities’ (varṇas) of human
psychology in a balanced way: the mentality of (1) a vipra – an intellectual and possessor of
knowledge both secular and religious; 461 (2) a kṣatriya – a warrior who ‘through incessant fight …
[has] acquired the mental capacity to control matter as they choose’; 462 (3) a vaiśya – a capitalist or
business-minded person who ‘profit[s] by trading and broking without being directly involved in
production’; 463 (4) a śūdra – a labourer or worker who is intellectually dull and who ‘by nature is

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638 AS II.6-7, pp. 19-20: Brhadesanāpranidhānica dharmah tasnāddharmah sadākāryaḥ.
639 NSS, pp. 154-156.
640 Sarkar redefines the traditional notion of varṇa (‘caste’) as the predominant psychology, which is neither
hereditary nor fixed within any person, of each of the four social classes in the social cycle as articulated in his
philosophy of PROUT.
642 Human Society, p. 155.
643 Human Society, p. 133.
always absorbed in material thoughts’. In other words, a sadvipra is to have integrally developed the qualities of intellectual strength and acuity, fearlessness and heroism, enterprise and dynamism, and the willingness to work hard and serve others. Of such ideal sadvipras, Sarkar says:

Sadvipras are those whose efforts are all directed towards the attainment of Bliss. … Sadvipras will wage a ceaseless, pactless struggle against immorality and all sorts of divisive tendencies. … Those spiritual revolutionaries, who work to achieve such progressive changes for human elevation on a well-thought out, pre-planned basis, whether in the physical, metaphysical or spiritual sphere, by adhering to the principles of morality, are sadvipras. … People will recognise sadvipras by their conduct, their devotion to service, their dutifulness and their moral integrity. These sadvipras will declare firmly, ‘All human beings are of the same caste,’ ‘All human beings have equal rights,’ ‘All human beings are brothers and sisters.’ … [Sadvipras] have a correct philosophy and a correct spiritual practice based on the principles of morality (yama and niyama) … [they] work for the good of all countries, for the all-round emancipation of humanity … [and they] will be the guiding personalities of the society of tomorrow.

In the context of the spiritual path and ideal discussed above, I will now explore the various methods of psycho-spiritual progress practised by followers of AM.

6.1.1 Jñāna Yoga

In Sarkar’s soteriological praxis, a balanced approach to the development of the faculties of intellect-cum-intuition, action, and devotion is essential. Sarkar identifies the intellectual-cum-intuitional approach with jñāna yoga, the actional approach with karma yoga, and the devotional approach with bhakti yoga. These three approaches constitute, for him, the ways and means of realising union of microcosm and macrocosm, of unit consciousness and cosmic consciousness. In practice, these three approaches are integrated in the daily spiritual life of AM practitioners, though in theory, it is possible to analyse them separately. Sarkar himself recommends a combined practice of jñāna, karma, and bhakti yoga as the most rapid and effective way of realising parama puruṣa:

If a person lacks knowledge [jñāna] and action [karma] and calls the Macrocosmic Entity on the strength of devotion [bhakti], it is not altogether impossible to attain Him, but that path is somewhat inconvenient. That is why I say that even though one’s mission may be fulfilled through devotion alone, it is better to complement devotion with knowledge and action. … Those sādhakas who advance maintaining a balanced adjustment among the three will ultimately realise the Supreme Entity.

644 Human Society, p. 156.
645 TPRS, pp. 155-162.
646 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 474.
The Place of Jñāna in Sarkar’s AM

In this section, the first approach of jñāna yoga as conceived by Sarkar will be discussed. Sarkar defines jñāna yoga as the path of practice that develops and utilizes the faculty of knowledge or the intellect. According to him, true jñāna is spiritual knowledge and not the ordinary, conceptual knowledge that concerns the world:

One is to attain Him, to come in contact with the Divine Father, by jñāna, karma, and bhakti. What is jñāna? Jñāna is spiritual knowledge, not mundane knowledge. Mundane knowledge is distorted knowledge. It is not knowledge at all. Spiritual knowledge is true knowledge. But what is spiritual knowledge? One must know what one is, what one's goal is. This is spiritual knowledge. 647

It appears that although Sarkar sees knowledge as useful for a spiritual practitioner, he rates it as secondary to devotion:

Those who are real devotees will not neglect karma (action) and they will also acquire knowledge necessary to perform real action. Knowledge and action cannot take a devotee to Parama Purusa – devotion can. But for serving humanity, for objective adjustment, knowledge and action are essential. Devotees will have to learn this. 648

In Sarkar’s view, a spiritual aspirant who has knowledge and action but lacks devotion cannot attain the highest liberation. Knowledge and action are important in so far as they aid in the cultivation of devotion:

So knowledge and action will help you in developing devotion, but your unification with the Supreme Self will be established with the help of devotion only. Where there is action, and where there is knowledge, but there is a lack of devotion, nothing can be done. 649

There is, however, evidence of some ambivalence regarding the position of knowledge and intellect in the AM path of practice. While Sarkar seems to extol devotion over knowledge on many occasions, there is at least one occasion when he does the opposite, elevating the path of knowledge (here identified with the śaiva approach) over the path of surrender (here termed prapatti mārga):

The first question that the jñāna mārgās pose whenever they see an object, whether psychic or spiritual, is invariably, ‘What is this?’ Their next question is, ‘What is its source or origin?’ Then they proceed further along that line to another source of knowledge where both reflection and refraction end. That is, the mind of the inquirer reaches a point where it fails to comprehend that plate on which the processes of reflection and refraction operate. The point where the mind loses its capacity to

647 BG, p. 80.
648 BG, pp. 178-179.
649 BG, pp. 83-84.
analyse or compare further is the Supreme Point; and this is the Śaiva cult of knowledge. Judged in this light, Ānanda Mārga philosophy also supports the Śaiva cult as it strives for the further enrichment and advancement of the cult of knowledge. It encourages the development of intellect and wisdom, and thus motivates people to acquire more and more knowledge. This is a great boon for humanity, as the highest treasure of human beings, which distinguishes them from the other creatures, is their intellectual superiority. … Therefore, this philosophical consciousness, which can also be called ‘Ānanda Mārga consciousness’, will lead humanity to greater intellectuality. And the constant pursuit of intellectuality leads one to its furthest point, the place where intuition begins … the path of sādhanā is not devoid of intellect or intuition; rather it is based on intuition … the non-Śaiva cult, which I prefer to call prapatti mārga, is said to have a serious defect; it hampers, at the very outset, the development of humanity. It states that whatever is happening in this universe is due to the Cosmic will, without which not even a single blade of grass can move. This doctrine is called prapattivāda. A jñāna mārgī says in refutation, ‘Well, it is a hundred percent true that nothing in this universe, not even a blade of grass, can move without His will. This is exactly what we wish to discover in jñāna mārga: that He desired it, and then the blade of grass moved. What is the harm if we want to find out how His desire causes everything to happen?’ And here lies the difference between the two cults, and the superiority of the Śaiva cult over the non-Śaiva cult.\textsuperscript{650}

The above passage indicates unambiguously that intellect-intuition has an edge over mere devotion on the spiritual path, which seems to contradict the preceding quotation on the soteriological finality of devotion. This anomaly can be resolved when we examine Sarkar’s conception of intellect (buddhi) and intuition (bodhi). In his cosmology, Sarkar defines intellect as the faculty that develops owing to the surplus of aham over citta, and intuition as the faculty that develops owing to the surplus of mahat over aham, in the unit mind. Thus the path of intellectual enquiry or knowledge leads ultimately to the realm of intuition associated with pure mahat or existential ‘I’, the apparent subjective and detached witness of the mind and sensory objects. But as mahat is the last veil between the mind and the ātman, arriving at mahat through intellect and intuition still falls short of the ultimate realisation. The next step requires a radical letting go of the apparent subject, which coincides with the highest ātman-knowledge and the highest devotion. Hence, spiritual devotion can be viewed as the final practice following a rigorous path of intellectual and intuitional enquiry, while blind devotion without prior enquiry is unequivocally inferior as a soteriological practice.

Regarding the exact nature of knowledge, it is clear that Sarkar distinguishes between mundane knowledge and spiritual knowledge. It is possible, however, that there is a subtle yet distinct difference between provisional and final spiritual knowledge. He asserts that knowledge (jñāna) of one’s true nature and one’s ultimate goal is only the first step towards taking the proper and required action (karma) in order to reach that goal. Along the path of spiritual practice and action, it is again knowledge (jñāna) of relevant and effective practices that assists the practitioner to move closer to the goal. These two kinds of jñāna appear to be provisional forms of spiritual knowledge that facilitate the commencement and continuation of the spiritual path:

\textsuperscript{650} YP, pp. 44-45.
If one knows what one is, what one’s desideratum is, then one will have to move toward the terminus of his life. This movement, this practical approach, this actional approach, is called *karma*... Now when you go to perform an action, you will have to learn the skill of performing it. Hence there is a need for knowledge.

Final spiritual knowledge can be identified with devotion (*bhakti*), which in Sarkar’s definition is nothing other than knowledge of the ātman (ātmajñāna):

This very spiritual knowledge alone is devotion. Knowledge finally transforms itself into devotion after constant effort. That is, when knowledge realises that nothing is to be effected by it, then alone it surrenders to devotion.

In Sarkar’s view, devotion is paradoxically both a means and an end of the path, a practice for self-realisation as well as the fruit of that practice itself. In the initial stages of the path, devotion arises when the amount of *karma* or selfless service exceeds the amount of jñāna or intellectual knowledge. This devotion then engenders a surrendering of the ego that results in a glimpse or initial realisation of *parama puruṣa*, which subsequently strengthens the practice of jñāna, *karma*, and *bhakti* in an ever-progressing virtuous cycle. The ultimate realisation is reached with the attainment of *kevala bhakti* (complete devotion), where the devotee, the devotional act, and the object of devotion merge into one. *Kevala bhakti* is synonymous with ultimate spiritual knowledge or ātmajñāna.

From the above discussion, it can be argued that while Sarkar places knowledge below devotion in terms of soteriological effectiveness, it is only provisional spiritual knowledge that he is downplaying, not ultimate ātman-knowledge. In the final analysis, ātman-knowledge is devotion, and devotion is ātman-knowledge. It can be argued that the distinction between knowledge and devotion breaks down at the ultimate stage, and neither can be privileged over the other.

*The Practice of Jñāna Yoga*

In practical terms, Sarkar appears to have envisaged *jñāna yoga* in four distinct ways:

1. *Jñāna* as discriminative insight into the difference between the pure ‘I’ feeling (*mahat*) and the luminosity of consciousness (*citiśakti* or ātman), an insight that he calls *vivekakhyāti* (‘ensconcement in discrimination’) or *viṣaya ka samāpatti* (‘ultimate dissolution of microcosmic object’);

2. *Jñāna* as clear conception of every *kośa* of the mind in terms of (a) its nature and characteristics, and of (b) where one *kośa* ends and the next *kośa* begins – a form of knowing arguably synonymous with focussed intuitional knowledge (*aparokṣabhāṣa*) (see subsection 4.2.3);

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651 *YP*, p. 80.
652 *YP*, p. 178.
653 *YP*, p. 124.
(3) Jñāna as omniscient knowledge (trikāladarśinī sarvajñā) of all things in the universe, whether past, present or future, acquired through establishment in savikalpa samādhi; this form of knowledge is synonymous with spirituo-intuitional knowledge (aparokṣānubhūti) discussed in subsection 4.2.3;

(4) Jñāna as ultimate spiritual knowledge (aparokṣa bodha) of parama puruṣa, wherein the knower, the knowing, and the known become one in an ineffable, transcendent state of cosmic cognisance – nirvikalpa samādhi.

Sarkar stresses that apparent ‘emptying’ of the mind in states of meditative absorption does not indicate that samādhi is devoid of knowledge. He explains that in samādhi, the conscious, subconscious and unconscious minds fuse into one, and the mind remains ‘full of knowledge’, knowledge that he calls prajñā. In Chapter 3, I mentioned prajñā as the technical name of purusottama (nucleus consciousness) in its stance of witnessing the kāmamaya kośa of the unit mind. Here, the term ‘prajñā’ may imply a similar witnessing function of the mind in the absence of sensory perceptions, perhaps suggesting a form of subtle awareness of the pure ‘I’ feeling (mahattattva), a mental state of bliss (ānanda), or extra-cerebral memory and information embedded in the cosmic causal (unconscious) mind.

(1) Jñāna as Vivekakhyāti:

In the path of jñāna, Sarkar attaches great importance to the search for the essence of one’s self, the essence of spirituality. To him, this essence lies in the very depths of one’s mind and can be discovered by turning the attention inwards, even in the midst of worldly existence:

The essence of dharma, spirituality, is hidden in guhā. There are several meanings of guhā in Sanskrit. One indicates the cave wherein God resides. It is unwise to leave the world, to leave service to humanity and go to the Himalayas to attain Paramapurusa. Well! This universe itself is Paramapurusa – where will you go by leaving it? … If He wishes you to achieve Him, you can get Him here and now. What He sees is your aspiration for Him. Remember it – that at every step of your life He is testing whether you have been able to arouse love for Him in your mind … The other meaning of guhā is ‘I am’, that is, the essence of dharma, Paramapurusa, is hidden in your own ‘I-ness’. That which is hidden in your own ‘I-ness’ – is it essential for you to go to the Himalayas in search of it?655

For Sarkar, knowing and attaining the supreme consciousness is not a distant, almost impossible goal, but rather a concrete experience that can occur in the present moment. It only requires a pure heart of love and a clear recognition of the mind’s true nature through sādhanā:

654 AV Part 33, p. 56.
Why speak of attaining Him in the future? You have already attained Him; you are simply not able to see Him. … The Supreme Consciousness is there in you as the oil is in the oilseed. Crush the seed through sādhanā and you attain Him; separate the mind from Consciousness and you will see that the resplendence of the Supreme Consciousness illuminates your whole inner being. He is there like butter in curd; churn it and He will appear from within. Churn your mind through sādhanā and God will appear like butter from curd. He is like a subterranean river in you. Remove the sands of mind and you will find the clear, cool waters within.\textsuperscript{656}

The above passage suggests that it is possible to realise and know brahma through a process of spiritual practice (sādhanā) – a process that enables one to see that the luminosity of supreme consciousness is not ultimately separate from the mind but exists within and emerges from it, just as oil exists in and emerges from the oilseed. It also suggests that pure cognisance can be distinguished from the activities of the mind much like an underground flow of ‘clear, cool waters’ when the ‘sands of mind’ have been removed. The act of distinguishing cognisance from the subtlest activity of the mind, the mahat, is vivekakhāti; it is an insight that is crucial to the practice of the second lesson (to be explored in subsection 6.1.5).

(2) \textit{Jñāna as Aparokṣabhāsa:}

Sarkar stresses that in trying to understand and know the supreme consciousness lying innate and hidden in the guhā, a clear and deep understanding of the mind is necessary. This understanding entails analytical insight into the structure and function of the mind, on the basis of which recognition of the nature of consciousness becomes possible:

Each and every individual has an ‘I’. That ‘I’ is connected with external physicalities, with external objects. Now when ‘I’ is connected with external objects, that ‘I’ is the subtlest portion of mind. ‘I exist’. While saying, ‘exist’, indirectly we say, ‘I exist in this world, exist in such and such a place.’ The object is mute here; the object is not expressed but the object is understood. This ‘I’ of ‘I exist’ is the subtlest portion of mind. Now you know that in the mind of each and every living being is this feeling of ‘I exist’. ‘I am, I exist’. This ‘I’ is the subtlest mind. But don’t you know that there is the feeling of ‘I exist’ in you? You know it. You know this fact, that there is the feeling of ‘I exist’ in you. Don’t you know it? Then ‘I know the fact that I exist. I know the fact that there is a feeling of “I exist” in me.’ Now here, the ‘I’ of ‘I exist’, the subject of the sentence ‘I exist’, is the subtlest mind. And the ‘I’ of ‘I know’, the subject of the sentence ‘I know that I exist’, is the Ātman, is the Spirit, is the Soul. It is not the mind … Now this ‘I exist’ is the subtlest mind and it is called guhā in Sanskrit. And what is the essence of spirituality? The ‘I’ of ‘I know’. ‘I know that I exist’. That ‘I’ of ‘I know’ is the essence of spirituality. You know so many things, but you have to know your Self. When you know your Self, that stage, that stance, is the Supreme Stance; your sādhanā, your spiritual practice is for that realization, to know your own ‘I’.\textsuperscript{657}

\textsuperscript{656} AV Part 33, p. 171.
\textsuperscript{657} AV Part 33, pp. 135-136.
Sarkar mentions that only by having ‘perfect conception of each kośa’ and by ‘observing every current of the mind’ can a sādhaka gradually ‘blend the mind with its original subject’, thus attaining brahma- hood. This insight into the kośas is to be gained through the exercise of ‘spiritual effulgence’, a term that probably means an awareness that is able to observe clearly and accurately (see discussion in subsection 4.2.3 on the nature of focussed intuitional knowledge).

(3) Jñāna as Trikāladarśinī Sarvajñā (or Aparokṣānubhūti):

Sarkar sees the fruition of jñāna as the attainment of omniscience (sarvajñā), a result of mastery of savikalpa samādhi, and as the realisation of perfect non-dual knowledge of brahma (aparokṣa bodha), a result of mastery of nirvikalpa samādhi. To him, omniscience does not mean knowing everything past, present and future simultaneously in every moment, but rather the ability to know anything at any one time, without limitation of location or distance, by simply exercising the power of one-pointed concentration:

In the sphere of jñāna, when people make their minds singularly pointed – when they reach the pinnacle of intellect, then they can at will place and establish the mind on any particular point or vindu. What happens then? This outer world – the external physicality, the material existence comes under the purview of their memory. That is, whenever they wish they can recollect or evoke anything in their mind. So in that state of affairs, the fun is that the whole world then becomes their special point or vindu for concentration and recollection by becoming one and the same with the singular minded individual. By simply closing his or her eyes, he or she will be able to perceive what is written in what particular page of a book and in what library. … He or she only perceived the whole world in his or her mind and has kept the recollection of the universe alive in his or her memory, and he or she started recollecting things such as ‘this is that’ or ‘that is that’. … That is, when one attains God, one becomes omniscient. Brahmaid sarvmaid ātmavid brahmavid. So how can one acquire true knowledge? If you want to know all – know one. Then everything will be known to you.659

(4) Jñāna as Aparokṣabodha:

Sarkar teaches a method that enables the practitioner to know and realise the ‘I’ of ‘I know’, the infinite flow of cognisance (akhānda cidaikarasa) within. He describes it as constant ideation on the supreme witnessing consciousness, but not in the sense of taking it as an object of mental concentration. Instead, he asserts that parama puruṣa is the ultimate subjectivity and can never be made an object of the mind. The only method of realisation is to be constantly vigilant and non-forgetful of the fact that parama puruṣa is observing all the mental and physical activities of the individual at every moment. When this ‘remembering’ becomes permanently established, the practitioner’s mind can more easily merge into the ‘Cognitive Faculty’ and attain ultimate spiritual knowledge. In other words, to know ultimate reality is to be that very reality:

658 SS Part 1, pp. 59-60.
Paramapuruṣa is the subject for the whole cosmos, and the cosmos is His object. He is the Supreme Subjectivity; you are His object. It is not possible to make Him your object, as you are His object. Then what are you to do? You have to take the ideation that He is always witnessing you. The wise do not take Paramapuruṣa as their object; they think that they are being witnessed by Him. Paramapuruṣa is not my object, but I am the object of Paramapuruṣa. When a man feels this feeling constantly, all the time, this stage is called Dhruvasmr̥ti [constant remembrance]. You know that you are the object of Paramapuruṣa, but you do not remember it all the time. When through sādhanā a man never forgets that Paramapuruṣa is always witnessing him - this is called Dhruvasmr̥ti. In this stage alone a man attains true knowledge.\(^{660}\)

How can the Cognitive Faculty, the Supreme Knower of the mind, become the object of knowledge in the practical field? The fact is that when the first stage of mind, or the existential ‘I’, thinks of the subject ‘I’ of ‘I know’, its existence becomes subtler than the subtlest, and then finally merges into the Cognitive Faculty. ... So we clearly understand that to know the Cognitive Faculty means to merge in It. It is like a salt doll trying to fathom the depth of the ocean, and in the process becoming one with the ocean itself.\(^{661}\)

The culminating merger of one’s mind into parama puruṣa as a result of the constant attempt to know it constitutes the final knowledge attainable by a sādhaka on the path of AM.

Sarkar uses another term to describe this absolute knowledge, namely abhedajñāna, ‘integral knowledge’.\(^{662}\) He explains that whenever svajñāya (‘intra-specific’), vijñāya (inter-specific), and svagata (‘intra-structural’) bheda (‘differences’) are eliminated, ‘the relative entity merges into the Absolute’ and experiences the sāmarasya (‘equipoise’) of abhedajñāna – equanimous integral knowledge.\(^{663}\) The removal of these three kinds of bheda occurs hand in hand with the decrease in separation between the unit and cosmic minds, as a result of intense attraction for parama puruṣa. Sarkar calls the dissolution of this spatial gap between the unit and cosmic minds daiśika vyavadhāna vilopa.\(^{664}\)

**General Features of Jīṇa Yoga**

In his definition of knowledge, Sarkar makes a distinction between knowledge of the ātman (as previously discussed) and knowledge of the objective world, for which the term vidyā is more commonly used. He recognises two forms of vidyā, namely parāvidyā (‘subjective knowledge’) and aparāvidyā (‘objective knowledge’). In his view, parāvidyā is that branch of knowledge that brings the spiritual aspirant close to the very edge of ātmajñāna. It can arguably be identified with provisional spiritual knowledge, as discussed earlier, constituting the various theoretical and technical aspects of sādhanā that leads the mind to oneness with macrocosmic mind but not the supreme consciousness. Sarkar divides the process of parāvidyā into four stages:

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\(^{660}\) AV Part 6, pp. 123-124.

\(^{661}\) NSS, pp. 171-172.

\(^{662}\) AV Part 33, p. 48.

\(^{663}\) AV Part 33, pp. 48-49.

\(^{664}\) AV Part 33, p. 49.
… first, the comprehensive study necessary for the removal of any deficiency of knowledge; second, the process of rational analysis to derive benefit from knowledge acquired and to control one’s own internal and external ideas; third, the consolidation of the spiritual ideology through pariprśna [spiritual inquiry]; and fourth, self-surrender [prānipāta] to the Cognitive Faculty.\footnote{NSS, pp. 172-173. Underline mine.}

He states that pariprśna (spiritual inquiry) is a very important part of the process of parāvidyā, which together with sevā (selfless service) and prānipāta (complete surrender), enables a sādhaka to realise ultimate oneness with parama puruṣa. Pariprśna consists in asking suitably qualified ācāryas or fellow practitioners relevant questions relating to spiritual practice, so as to dispel any doubts one might have or to resolve any problems that arise in the course of practice.\footnote{AMI Parts 5-8, p. 536.}

In addition to parāvidyā Sarkar makes it clear that the cultivation of aparāvidyā is essential for the spiritual aspirant to ‘successfully face the hard realities of this dusty earth, for prosperity in the material sphere’.\footnote{AMI Parts 5-8, pp. 174-175.} Disciplines such as physical science, psychology, geology, biological and medical science, and the humanities are all included in the category of aparāvidyā. To him, it is also essential that human beings develop the fields of literature, art, and various non-malevolent forms of entertainment so as to fully utilise ‘all the potentialities of the human heart’.\footnote{AMI Parts 5-8, p. 175.} Sarkar’s aim is to create well-rounded human beings through aparāvidyā, beings who will then move further toward evolutionary and spiritual perfection through parāvidyā.

Sarkar’s approach to knowledge reflects the mission statement of AM, which is ātmamokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca, or ‘Self-realisation and service to all creation’. The goal of Self-realisation is achieved by means of parāvidyā while that of service to the world is achieved by means of a happy integration of parāvidyā and aparāvidyā. For Sarkar, true and beneficial service to the world cannot occur without genuine spiritual practice that seeks to transform all selfishness and negativity within the mind:

… if someone works exclusively for the welfare of the world – jagaddhitāya ca – one should realise that to render selfless service, an absolutely pure mind is required, with the expansiveness of the vast ocean and the serenity of the blue sky. Otherwise, while promoting the welfare of the world, one may develop a selfish desire in one’s mind in a weak moment, as a result of which one may bring harm to oneself as well as to the universe.\footnote{AMI Parts 5-8, p. 174.}

At the same time, Sarkar warns against attempting to develop spiritually without any concern for collective well-being:
Those who think they can concern themselves with parāvidyā only, and finally, through its help, arrive at self-knowledge, are mistaken. Because while working exclusively for self-realisation – ātmamoksārtham – the worms of selfishness will burrow deep into the human mind and finally sap all the sweeter and finer human sensibilities, all the generous expansiveness of the human mind, and fling the person into a quagmire of remorse.\footnote{AMI Parts 5-8, p. 173-174.}

In the final analysis, Sarkar’s path of jñāna yoga is not to be practised in isolation from the paths of karma (selfless action) and bhakti (devotion), as evidenced from the preceding discussion on the nature, types, and soteriological efficacy of knowledge. For Sarkar, the ultimate state of knowledge is arrived at through knowing properly and profoundly, acting and serving selflessly, and most importantly, through loving purely with all the sweetness and devotional feeling of one’s heart.

\subsection{6.1.2 Karma Yoga}

Sarkar’s definition of karma yoga has been briefly alluded to in the discussion on jñāna. To him, karma yoga is the path of selfless action and consists in the practical application of both spiritual and mundane knowledge. When a spiritual aspirant knows the nature and goal of his or her existence, the next step of actually practising the path that leads to this goal comes into play. As mentioned previously, the path consists in both inner spiritual practice and outer social action, for which both parāvidyā and aparāvidyā are necessary. The application of parāvidyā and aparāvidyā in the spirit of non-attachment and selflessness constitutes karma yoga.

In Sarkar’s view, karma is to be performed ceaselessly, since the very fact of existence necessarily entails some form of action for its maintenance. The dilemma lies in the common Indian (and Sarkarian) understanding that every action (karma) engenders a reaction or fruit (karma phala) that may be either immediately reaped or stored as a potential for future fruition (samskāra). The accumulation of samskāra binds the individual to further existence and prevents liberation and salvation. Sarkar recommends three methods for preventing the accrual of samskāra through the performance of action, which constitute his path of karma yoga practice:

1. relinquishing desire for the fruits of action;
2. abandoning the concept of performing the act;
3. surrendering all actions to Brahma.\footnote{SS Part 1, p. 28.}

According to Sarkar, these three methods are different aspects of one and the same process of acting without self.

The first aspect, phalākāmksā tyāga, involves letting go of the desire for the fruits of action. It is essentially the practice of being so fully attentive to the task itself that there remains no scope for cogitation over the potential results of the action. This entails working wholeheartedly for the accomplishment of an act without worrying over the success of failure of its outcome. This is not,
however, sufficient to prevent the accumulation of samskāras, according to Sarkar, as it is still possible for one to perform an action without a view to its result, but with a need for self-satisfaction or with a sense of vanity. The second aspect, kartṛtvābhimāṇa tyāga, therefore aims to overcome this sense of self-satisfaction or vanity by consciously letting go of the notion of personal agency in all actions. Contemplating that one is merely an instrument of brahma and that the persons or objects served by one are also instruments of brahma does this:

By merely relinquishing the desire or pursuit of the fruits of action it is hard to get rid of the vanity of a doer, of the idea that ‘I do’, in so far as we cannot extricate ourselves from the objects of our actions or from the contemplation of accomplishment. To avoid these, one has to always contemplate that one is a machine, and Brahma alone is the machine operator who gets the work done through this machine. But even this is not sufficient to eradicate the vanity of a doer. The reason is that one may believe that, although a machine, yet he or she is superior to others having been selected by the machine operator for that particular action being performed at that point of time. To avoid such thoughts, the belief has to be developed that only Brahma is served or chosen by Brahma. That is, Brahma inspires us to donate and again receives the same through others. It is simply by the grace of Brahma that we act and have the favourable opportunity of performing this act.672

The third aspect, karma saṁnyāsa, is the final step in karma yoga wherein the mind and all actions are totally surrendered to brahma leaving no residual trace of ego. This is accomplished by a special process of contemplation in which the actor and the action are seen as expressions of brahma:

The only way is to surrender all actions to Brahma and to ideate that Brahma performs every action. Such actions will not be called our own. Brahma alone has performed the actions, and their consequences, whether good or bad, will be borne by Brahma alone. In that case we have no separate identity … Those who have surrendered all actions unto Brahma have no reason to fear to act. It also keeps the mind completely engrossed in Brahma. Saṁnyāsa means surrendering the mind to the Supreme Object or Brahma.673

In relation to the attainment of AM’s sumnum bonum, Sarkar says of karma saṁnyāsa:

It is invariably true that the separate identity of the soul is completely dissolved by totally submitting the mind to Brahma. As a consequence of this, human beings qualify for the attainment of liberation (mukti) or salvation (mokṣa).674

Sarkar teaches another technique for the performance of action without the outward movement of the mind and its consequent bondage. He calls this technique madhuvidyā or ‘honey knowledge’, which is a way of maintaining inward contemplation on brahma in the midst of outward actions.

672 SS Part 1, pp. 30-31.
673 SS Part 1, p. 31.
674 SS Part 1, p. 32.
Madhuvidyā entails contemplating that whatever one associates with in the world is an expression of brahma. It is a practice of regarding all persons and objects with ‘cosmic feeling’ when performing any action. Sarkar says that this practice is capable of leading the aspirant to muktī or liberation; and it constitutes the second lesson of sahaja yoga (to which we will return in subsection 6.1.5). Madhuvidyā, entailing ideation of the objects of action as brahma, can be seen to complement the practice of karma saṁnyāsa, which involves seeing the actor and action as brahma. Sarkar praises the practice of madhuvidyā:

This madhuvidyā will pervade your exterior and interior being with the ecstasy of the bliss of Brahma. This bliss will permanently alleviate all your afflictions. Then avidyā [the force leading to crudeness] cannot come with its ferocious jaws wide open to devour you. The glory of One and only One Benign Entity will shine forth to you from one and all objects.\footnote{BG, p. 39.}

As mentioned previously in the discussion on jñāna yoga, Sarkar’s karma yoga involves the actual practice of various ethical, spiritual, and social disciplines, all of which are geared towards realisation of the ultimate soteriological goal. In its broadest sense, karma yoga would thus include observance of yama and niyama, the sixteen points, the fifteen śīlas, all other conduct rules, and practice of all meditative techniques taught by Sarkar. In particular, performance of actions or service (sevā)\footnote{BG, p. 39.} for the welfare of the world in the spirit of non-attachment, selfless surrender and devotion, which in some cases requires personal sacrifice (tapah), constitutes the quintessential practice of karma yoga. The spirit of non-attachment and devotional surrender is cultivated by means of the three aspects of phalākāmsā tyāga (abandoning desire for results of actions), kārtrtvābhimāna tyāga (renouncing vanity of performing an act), and karma saṁnyāsa (total surrender of actions to brahma), in connection with the practice of madhuvidyā (seeing all as brahma), as described in the foregoing discussion.

6.1.3 Bhakti Yoga

Underlying all the various practices and disciplines that Sarkar recommends, and arguably surpassing all other approaches to AM’s ultimate goal, is the path of devotion or bhakti yoga. Sarkar describes devotion as the ultimate soteriological technique that bestows the final realisation of mokṣa or salvation, and even equates complete devotion (kevala bhakti) with mokṣa itself. In his texts, he delineates and describes various types of devotion, extolling the virtues of, and encouraging his disciples to cultivate, the highest devotion of total self-surrender.

In his discourses, Sarkar never speaks of devotion directed to himself; on the contrary, he consistently directs disciples’ devotion to parama puruṣa, the ‘Cosmic Father’ of all. Paradoxically,
however, in keeping with the Tantric tradition, the guru is identified with the ultimate reality that disciples seek to attain. We see, in AM’s portrayal of Sarkar, the resolution of the dialectical tension between the personalities of Krṣṇa and Śiva in his person, and his acquisition of the status of mahāsambhūti, the ‘great manifestation’ of tāraka brahma – the personal aspect of parama puruṣa. In this sense, devotion to Sarkar as guru and mahāsambhūti becomes devotion to parama puruṣa, and vice versa.

Sarkar defines bhakti as ‘longing for the Supreme’: ‘sapārānuraktrīvare’ (having pārānurakti for īśvara). Sarkar explains pārānurakti as the attraction one feels for the ‘Supreme Brahma or Infinite Cosmic Consciousness’, which has the capacity to release a person ‘from the grip of the indriyas [sense and motor organs] and through sublime meditations establish him or her in the finer sublimated senses, in the infinite blessedness beyond the bounds of the universe’. In his view, the force of attraction between all entities in the universe (expressed physically in gravitational force and psychologically in desire) supports the contention that bhakti – attraction for the supreme – is naturally present in all beings. He sees bhakti as merely an extension of physical and psychic attraction into the realm of the infinite, directed inwardly to the spirit rather than outwardly to objects of material or mental gratification. He identifies devotion with love, which has the quality of making the mind equanimous and poised:

That which makes the mind soft and strong and strenuous, so it may keep itself in a balanced state even in the condition of pain, that which perpetually creates a pleasant feeling within is called love. Devotion is identical with love. The moment devotion is aroused, the love of God comes.

When bhakti is perfected, it transforms into an all-pervasive and unconditional love that is brahma personified:

When the devotional depth comes, love, too will be brimming with high sentiments, full and over-flowing. In that stage alone will come your final realisation of the Supreme Consciousness. Where ‘I’ is, ‘He’ is not … where ‘He’ is, ‘I’ is not. Remember, devotion is the prerequisite of sādhānā. Maturity of devotion is love, and maturity of love is He.

Sarkar makes it clear that developing pārabhakti or supreme devotion (devotion solely directed to God) requires at the outset the faculty of śuddhā buddhi (‘benevolent intellect’). This

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676 The four types of service discussed under nṛ yajña in Sarkar’s Sixteen Points are relevant here. They are śudrocita sevā (physical service), vaiśyocita sevā (financial service), ksattriyocita sevā (protective service), and viprocita sevā (intellectual-spiritual service).
677 SS Part 1, p. 66.
679 BG, p. 186.
680 BG, p. 149.
681 YP, p. 96.
means that the disciple needs to be motivated by benevolence in all thoughts and actions. A pure mind with intellect guided by kindness is pre-requisite for the cultivation of parâbhakti.

Sarkar lists and defines many types of devotion, each of which a person may adopt according to his or her own nature and conditioning, or samskāras. The first and lowest type is crude devotion or tāmasikā bhakti. Crude devotion is characterised by craving for finite pleasures rather than desire for supreme bliss; those who may be outwardly religious but are inwardly affected by negative tendencies, such as violence, pride, and jealousy, belong to this category. In some instances, it may manifest as prayer to God with a request to harm one’s enemies due to the driving forces of hatred and ignorance. It is not considered true bhakti since it seeks refuge in crude objects and actions rather than in the divine. The second type is mutative devotion or rājasikā bhakti, characterising those who engage in spiritual practices for the sake of attaining finite goals. In this form of bhakti, devotion to God is expressed through worship, praise, and offerings in the hope of gaining ends such as fame or fortune, without causing harm to others. Again, it appears that the underlying motives are mundane ends, not the supreme goal. The third type is sentient devotion or sāttvikā bhakti, characterising spiritual practice that is driven by several possible motivations: one is the devotee’s wish to exhaust his or her personal samskāras and to attain emancipation from the cycle of life and death; another is engagement in spiritual practice out of a sense of duty to family or cultural tradition, or out of fear of negative public perception upon failure to do so. In other words, sentient devotion is essentially self-centred: its energy is directed not towards the ultimate reality of brahma but towards preoccupations of the self, however noble.

Apart from the three forms of devotion listed above, Sarkar mentions another variant of devotion known as jñānamīśra or pradhānibhūta bhakti. In this form of devotion, the sādhaka (spiritual aspirant) develops remembrance of brahma even after the attainment of his or her mundane goal through spirituality. Together with tāmasikā, rājasikā, and sāttvikā bhakti, jñānamīśra (or pradhānibhūta) bhakti is placed under the category of ‘inferior devotion’ or gaunī bhakti. This is because even though jñānamīśra bhakti contains some genuine spiritual attraction, it remains tainted by a dormant desire for wealth or knowledge, and is considered the highest form of inferior devotion.

Beyond these forms of bhakti are the variants of superior devotion or mukhya bhakti. The first is nirguṇa bhakti or non-qualified devotion, characterised by a wholehearted attraction for and orientation to brahma for its own sake and without any extraneous motives. When this nirguṇa bhakti becomes permanently established, it transforms into what Sarkar terms kevala bhakti or total devotion – the culmination of the path of bhakti and synonymous with mokṣa or salvation. In this stage, the devotee, the act of devotion, and the object of devotion no longer exist separately, but are merged into one inseparable whole:

If there is undivided knowledge with the object, then there exists one and only one entity, and that is why such devotion is called kevala bhakti. Kevala bhakti is not
attained by baths, exercises or efforts. Those who have not been blessed with Divine Grace even in the least cannot have any realization about it.\(^{682}\)

Sarkar identifies two phases in nirguna bhakti, namely raga-nuga bhakti and raga-mikä bhakti. In raga-nuga bhakti, the penultimate form of devotion, the devotee wants nothing except the pleasure of loving the supreme entity, brahma. Ego is highly attenuated at this stage and only pure devotion and the enjoyment of bliss exist in this form of devotion. However, because of the trace of bliss and pleasure the devotee derives from the devotional act, it is not considered the highest devotion. A subtle duality still exists between the devotee and the object of devotion. Sarkar equates this penultimate devotion with gopi-bhava or vrajabhava, a state of devotional contemplation advocated by dualist schools of Indian philosophy.

The most superior form of devotion is what Sarkar calls raga-mikä bhakti, which is total love for the supreme entity without any expectation or derivation of bliss for oneself. Instead, raga-mikä bhakti is characterised by complete surrender of the devotee to brahma with the only aim of offering him pleasure and bliss:

And by dint of ... raga-mikä devotion, the Yogi comes in closest contact with the Supreme Self and becomes one with Him. When his love is to give pleasure to the Lord and not to enjoy pleasure for himself, his mind gets subjectivated. That is, his mind gets metamorphosed into the mind of the Lord, and that's why this raga-mikä bhakti is the only devotion. By this devotion, the Yogi gets established in this stance of Supreme Beatitude.\(^{683}\)

In this highest devotion, the devotee is able to merge his or her mind completely with the ultimate pristine consciousness, leaving no trace of duality or even mind itself; it is the objectless state of nirvikalpa samädhi. In his AM, Sarkar advocates the practice of nirguna bhakti in its raga-nuga and raga-mikä forms, and discourages all inferior forms of devotion tainted by egoistic concerns.

Sarkar differentiates three grades of devotees in terms of their knowledge of spiritual philosophy and practice, and their degree of dedication – inferior, intermediate, and superior:

Those bearing neither knowledge nor earnestness are inferior devotees. Those who have reverence but have no knowledge of the śästras [scriptures, philosophy], are the intermediate type of devotees. Those versed in the śästras, competent in sādhanä practices, and of firm mind are the devotees of the highest degree. Kevala bhakti is attainable only by the highest grade of devotees.\(^{684}\)

It is apparent from the above passage that Sarkar ultimately privileges devotion that is supported by spiritual knowledge over mere reverence and faith. He maintains, however, that devotion can be

\(^{682}\)BG, p. 145.  
\(^{683}\)BG, p. 83.  
\(^{684}\)BG, p. 148.
attained by anyone, and that one need not be an intellectual to be on the spiritual path. This may be the case for inferior and intermediate grades of devotion, but not applicable to the highest grade.

Regarding the practice of devotion, Sarkar stresses the concept of bhāva or ‘spiritual ideation’. The term ‘ideation’, as used by Sarkar, is difficult to interpret, as it connotes both thinking about an object’s meaning, and a gut-level feeling deeper than the conceptual mind. While it is not devoid of cognitive processing, ideation is better described as a ‘felt experience’ involving the whole being, and can be compared to a state of contemplative presence. In other words, bhāva is ‘the feeling of the mind when the citta is dominated by sattvaguna and the mind is radiant with love for the Lord’. 685 Sarkar comments:

*Bhāva* is that whereby the mindstuff [citta] becomes purged and dominated by the sentient principle, brilliant with the rays of the sun of love. As a result of the bhāva, man directs his natural attractive forces towards the adored. But here the adored is not outside him; the adored is the life of his life, the mind of his mind and the life-master of his entire existence. When this feeling of devotion for the adored awakens the introversion of his tendencies, then he becomes absorbed with this bhāva. He attains the state of self-realisation. 686

Sarkar operationalises the practice of bhāva in the techniques of ‘auto-suggestion’ and ‘outer-suggestion’, aimed at eliciting and maintaining what he calls psycho-spiritual parallelism. These techniques are embedded in the first and second lessons of sahaja yoga, which direct the attention of the practitioner towards the essential and true nature of mind and of the universe respectively. Through the ideation encapsulated in the lessons, the practitioner becomes aware of the unity of self and the universe with the infinite consciousness that is brahma.

Another essential concept in the practice of bhakti is the spiritual quality of madhura (‘honey-like sweetness’), and its associated notion of rasa – which means both ‘flow’ and more technically, ‘aesthetic mood’. 687 When a sādhaka is able to align his or her entitative flow or aesthetic mood (rasa) – the totality of all his or her thoughts, feelings, and volitions in a singular qualitative experience – with the flow of cosmic consciousness through constant bhāva, he or she realises in varying degrees the state of bliss (ānanda). This bliss is essentially characterised by a quality of sweetness, madhura, which is compared metaphorically to the sweetness of honey. In samādhī, this madhura is most intensely felt, but even in ordinary states of mind, a fainter madhura can be experienced whenever relaxed awareness and sincere surrender are engendered by practice of AM meditation. 688 Through the practice of bhakti, an AM sādhaka learns how to let go of rigid

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685 *SPSSA*, p. 233.
686 *SPSSA*, p. 145.
688 Madhura is basically the same as the experience of rasa, which Sarkar defines as ‘to be saturated with ever-blissful awareness – to enliven human existence with sweet freshness. … [which] becomes possible only when
expectations and to allow reality to organically unfold. He or she learns to embrace all experiences, be they pleasant or unpleasant, as sweet expressions of the unconstructed ground of consciousness.

A more advanced practice – the sixth lesson of sahaja yoga – is the key technique in the perfection of bhakti, wherein the devotee channels all his or her propensities into a single stream of devotion towards ultimate reality in the personal form of the guru. This technique relies on mature, unconditional devotion and the divine grace of brahma, aimed at nothing less than realisation of kevala bhakti, which is synonymous with mokṣa. The practice of kirtana, devotional singing and dancing of AM’s universal mantra, also involves the process of ideation on brahma, which facilitates ego-surrender and devotion. We now turn to the nature, practice, and aims of kirtana.

6.1.4 Kirtana

The practice of devotional chanting, with or without rhythmic dancing, is known as kirtana in the Hindu tradition. It is widely practised within the bhakti-oriented movements and is regarded in some circles as the technique par excellence for realising God. In the case of AM, Sarkar sees kirtana (involving both song-like chanting and dancing) as the primary means of awakening devotion and one-pointedness in the mind, and inducing flexibility and comfort in the body, prior to formal silent meditation. Sarkar’s teachings on this practice will now be explored.

The mahāmantra, or universal chant, of AM is Bābā Nām Kevalam. According to one source, Sarkar gave this mantra in 1970. The words ‘Bābā Nām Kevalam’ are rendered variously by AM as ‘Love is all there is’, ‘Everything is the expression of Supreme Consciousness’, and ‘Only the Name of the Beloved’. Of these three interpretations, the third is linguistically the most accurate, though the other two versions are said to capture the essential spirit of the mantra that AM attempts to convey. According to AM, the mantra is written and spoken in Sanskrit, the ancient language of the yogis of India. However, it is perhaps historically more correct to see the mantra’s wording as a corruption or colloquialisation of Sanskrit, since ‘bābā’ is not strictly an original Sanskrit word, and ‘nām’ lacks the final vowel of Sanskrit ‘nāma’. ‘Bābā’ is a term of endearment commonly used amongst Indian people to address a well-respected male elder in the family or community; it is usually associated with a grandfather figure. In the case of AM, the term ‘bābā’ has come to refer, on one level, to Sarkar himself as the beloved guru and father, and on another level, to parama puruṣa, the all-loving cosmic entity that is the source, sustenance, and destination of life and the universe. In the second of the three interpretations cited above, supreme consciousness is regarded as the beloved cosmic father of humanity and of all creatures.

In kirtana, the mantra is chanted to different tunes, rhythms and melodies, some of which were composed by Sarkar himself though most are creations of his followers from various parts of the world. It is ideation on the meaning of the mantra that is crucial for Sarkar, not the tunes, though he

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one maintains a constant link with the Supreme Entity …’ in NSS, p. 155. Through the practice of AM’s second lesson, this ‘constant link’ is maintained and madhura, or rasa, is experienced.

recommends pleasant and inspiring tunes for aesthetic and meditative reasons. The dance that accompanies the chanting of the mantra is known as lalita mārmika, and according to Sarkar, was invented by Pārvatī, the wife of the alleged father of Tantra in India, Sadāśiva. Sarkar is said to have appropriated this dance for the specific purpose of kīrtana, advocating the combined practice of singing and dancing as a powerful means of purifying the mind, and transforming and uplifting the heart. The dance consists of alternate, rhythmic stepping of one foot from side to side, together with slight bending of the other knee and either raising both arms in the air or placing the palms together at the heart in a gesture of prayer. Sarkar’s view is that the utilisation of as many sensory (in this case, the ears) and motor organs (arms, legs, and vocal cords) in the service of ideation and devotion can be a potent aid to deep meditation. He says of the dance:

The lalita mārmika dance can maintain adjustment with kīrtana without causing any sort of fatigue in the human body. That is why it has been prescribed for kīrtana. Mārmika means ‘that which touches the core of the heart (mūrma)’ - that is why it is called lalita mārmika. Pārvatī was the propounder of this dance.

In practice, however, kīrtana can be performed solely by singing and chanting the mantra while seated, without the dance accompaniment. Clapping the hands while singing is common and aids in maintaining the musical rhythm.

As mentioned previously, the practice of kīrtana is designed specifically to prepare and concentrate the mind for meditation and to transform the emotions by channelling them into a single stream of devotion flowing towards parama puruṣa. Sarkar explains the rationale behind the integrated engagement of vocal cords, ears, hands, and feet in kīrtana:

There are two ways to withdraw the indriyas (sensory and motor organs) in order to direct the mind towards the Supreme Consciousness. One is to direct the mind inwardly, and the other is to keep all the indriyas engaged in the same type of work. So while inventing kīrtana, this science was taken into account. In kīrtana what does the tongue do? What it does best – it speaks. The vocal cords move in uttering words. The ears listen to the uttered words and the hands and feet move also. Thus all the indriyas are engaged; they are not allowed to do this or that.

In addition to the employment of as many organs as possible in the practice of kīrtana, Sarkar recommends the use of a drum to accompany and set the rhythm for the singing and dancing:

Moreover, there is also a system for musical accompaniment in kīrtana, because sometimes while doing kīrtana, our ears may be distracted … So, normally a mṛdaṅga (drum) is prescribed, for playing of mṛdaṅga serves the purpose of attracting the mind.

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691 LC. p. 151.
and helping it associate with the vibrations of the kīrtana. Thus immediately the mind returns to the ideation of the kīrtana.  

The combined effect of mental concentration and devotional sentiment elicited by kīrtana serves to purify the devotee’s mind and heart, thus preparing the ground for the deeper and more complex meditative procedures of sahaja, kāpālika, or viśeṣa yoga. Sarkar describes the state of those who have correctly performed prolonged kīrtana as ‘so purified … that they feel as if they have just taken a holy bath in a sacred river’.

Sarkar advocates kīrtana not only for its psycho-spiritual benefits, but also for other practical purposes: for overcoming physical and psychological problems and even natural calamities. He sees the sincere collective practice of kīrtana as generating a powerful and concentrated force that can potentially solve worldly problems and avert natural disasters:

When a large number of people do kīrtāṇa, then not only is their physical force concentrated, but also their collective psychic power, getting inspiration from Parama Puruṣa, starts to flow in a single channel … and this concentrated physical and psychic force removes the accumulated sorrows and miseries of the material world. Thus just as kīrtana is a valuable aid to sādhanā, it is equally useful for the removal of worldly afflictions. These worldly afflictions are partly created by Prakṛti (the Cosmic Operative Principle), and partly by human beings. Whoever has created these miseries, all the obstacles and dangers are removed by collective kīrtana – flood, drought, famine, pestilence, earthquake, and all such natural calamities can be averted if people do kīrtana with sincerity.

In terms of personal psychological conflicts and problems, Sarkar recommends group kīrtana as a therapeutic aid that can remove both current and future afflictions:

Besides this, kīrtana removes various psychic troubles also – the troubles which have already arrived, and the troubles which have not yet come but of which there are forebodings. All these are removed through kīrtana. If kīrtana is done beforehand, then those future troubles can be forestalled while they are still in the premonition stage. Why are they removed? It is not because of the collective psychic energy that they are removed, but because of the fact that so many minds are moving with tremendous force towards Parama Puruṣa, getting inspiration from Him.

From the above passages it is clear that Sarkar gives kīrtana high position in his scheme of spiritual practice, extolling both its mundane and its supramundane benefits. It appears from his comments that the material and psychological effects ascribed to kīrtana, in terms of both averting natural disasters and solving psychological problems, are meant to be taken literally. However, it is

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692 LC, p. 152.
693 LC, p. 154.
694 LC, p. 155.
695 LC, p. 156.
possible to read Sarkar’s praises for kīrtana as pedagogical devices to awaken interest in and
dedication to kīrtana practice in the minds of his followers, quite apart from whether the beneficial
effects are necessarily or empirically true. Be that as it may, this second line of reasoning need not
necessarily negate the first, since Sarkar’s unequivocal words suggest that he really believed in the
supernatural effects of kīrtana, and that his statements are simultaneously a proclamation of his beliefs
and a message of edification for his followers.

It is possible to analyse the practice of kīrtana into several component aspects, each of which
affects the mind in a specific way and acts to develop a particular kośa. These aspects are (1)
rhythmic dancing and posturing of hands; (2) melodious singing or chanting of the mahāmantra; (3)
listening to the mahāmantra being sung or chanted; (4) coordination of the breath in order to sing or
chant effectively; and (5) focussed attention on the meaning of the mantra and lovingly releasing
oneself into the unconfined ‘space’ of universal consciousness. The first aspect, rhythmic dancing and
posturing of hands, controls and channels the activities of the body (annamaya kośa) in a positive
direction. The second and third aspects, melodious singing or chanting of and listening to the
mahāmantra, engages the sensory mind (kāmamaya kośa) in a spiritually elevating manner and turns it
away from crude or unwholesome pre-occupations. The fourth aspect, breath coordination during
mantra singing, mimics prāṇāyāma and controls the discursive mind (manomaya kośa). The fifth
aspect, devotional mantra ideation, withdraws (pratyāhāra) awareness from subtler mental
impediments, focusses attention (dharana), and leads the mind towards parama puruṣa in a smooth,
malleable flow of awareness (dhyāna). Thus, the fifth aspect of kīrtana serves to simultaneously
perfect the atimāna, vijñānamaya, and hiraṇmaya kośas. As a whole, the practice of kīrtana has the
effect of purifying and developing all the kośas of the mind simultaneously, a factor that might
account for its central place in the entire soteriological praxis of AM.

6.1.5 Sahaja Yoga: The Six Lessons of Meditation

Perhaps the most essential aspect of Sarkar’s entire soteriological praxis is his basic system of Tantric
meditation encapsulated in the six lessons of sahaja yoga, literally ‘union through the natural state’. This
system of meditation is also known by another name, rājādhirāja yoga or ‘king of kings path to
union’. According to Sarkar, rājādhirāja yoga was first taught by an Indian saint named Aṣṭāvakra to
his disciple Alarka in Bengal over two thousand years ago. The system of meditation supposedly
taught by Aṣṭāvakra is a process of controlling all the cakras and propensities in the human body.
Sarkar appears to have followed in Aṣṭāvakra’s footsteps by declaring that the ‘different types of
lessons in Ānanda Mārga sādhanā are designed to strengthen the different cakras and control the
propensities’. For example, he claims that guru dhyāna (meditation on the guru) performed at the
guru cakra strengthens and increases control over the sahasrāra cakra, which in turn increases control
over the body and mind. Whether Sarkar’s six lessons directly replicate the methods of Aṣṭāvakra is

697 YP, p. 160.
not known. In this section, general details of the theory and practice of Sarkar’s six meditative lessons will be described, as far as they can be ascertained from printed sources. In accordance with the Tantric tradition (to which AM claims to belong), such meditative techniques are transmitted individually from guru to disciple in a relationship of great trust and respect, and are kept confidential in the interest of personal and public safety. Hence, the precise technical and pedagogical details of the sahaja yoga techniques are not described here, primarily out of respect for the Tantric tradition, and secondarily, because such exposition falls outside the boundaries of the methodology I employ in this study.

Before exploring the six lessons of meditation, it is appropriate to give a brief account of Sarkar’s definitions of yoga and meditation. In his texts, Sarkar gives three definitions of yoga: (1) *yogaścittavṛttiniruddhā*, ‘yoga is the cessation of ectoplasmic occupations or mental modifications’; (2) *sarvacintā parityāgo niścinto yoga ucyate*, ‘yoga is the state in which the faculty of the mind completely stops functioning and the Supreme Witness remains in His characteristic witness-ship’; (3) *samyogo yoga ityukto jīvātmā paramātmanah*, ‘yoga is the state in which unit consciousness merges in Cosmic Consciousness, and becomes one with the Original Entity’. Of these three definitions, Sarkar prefers the third, as the first two suggest a measure of suppression of thoughts and propensities natural to the mind. He advocates a channelling and transmutation of propensities towards the subtlest wakeful consciousness rather than mere suppression. Nevertheless, he suggests that the innermost meaning of the three definitions of yoga is the same if interpreted correctly.

Sarkar defines meditation as ‘concentrated thinking’ wherein an attempt is made to coincide the ‘controlling point of the “I” feeling’ with ‘some other subjectivated form’. For Sarkar, concentration is signified by constant attentional flow toward the supreme goal of parama purusa, the establishment of which is a state of psycho-spiritual parallelism known as bhāva or, as Sarkar translates it, ‘idea’. He goes on to explain that ‘ideation’ occurs when ‘idea maintains adjustment with the glands and sub-glands’, and that the three forms of ideation – namely knowledge, action, and devotion – are all required to effect psycho-spiritual parallelism or the state of ‘idea’. It is clear that Sarkar uses the terms ‘idea’ and ‘ideation’ in a special and idiosyncratic sense, respectively referring not to ‘thought’ and ‘thinking’, as in common parlance, but rather to a specific ‘state of being’ and ‘body-mind practice’ (integrated application of physical and mental faculties). In other words, the body-mind practice (ideation) of knowledge (jñāna), action (karma) and devotion (bhakti), in association with practical understanding of glands and cakras, aids in eliciting the state of being (idea) characterised by a stable and constant flow of attention toward its subtle object of contemplation, supreme consciousness. Strictly speaking, the endless flow of consciousness (akhānda cidaikarasa)

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698 Main sources are Chitganānanda, Ānanda Mārga Meditation: Rājādhirāja Yoga (The Most Sublime and Kingly Tantra Yoga) (unpublished undated manuscript); Ānanda Mārga Publications, Yoga: The Way of Tantra (Manila: Ānanda Mārga Publications, 1991); and CC Part 3, pp. 69-73.
699 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 387.
700 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 181.
701 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 182.
can never be made the object of ideation since it is said to be the ultimate subjectivity of the universe. In this case, ideating on supreme consciousness as an ‘object’ means utilising the subtlest concept that can be conceived as a mental device to evoke a supramundane experience – oneness with cosmic mahat (savikalpa samādhi) or oneness with cosmic puruṣa (nirvikalpa samādhi). In the case of oneness with cosmic mahat, mind is present but in an infinitely expanded form, where dualities between self and other, physical and mental, good and bad, have completely disappeared. In the case of oneness with cosmic puruṣa, mind is no longer present, having dissolved into the ocean of objectless consciousness; the subtle duality between self and consciousness has totally disappeared. In both cases, the clarity and resplendence of pure cognisance shines through with utmost intensity and continuity. Sarkar says:

Subjectivity is of two types – mental and spiritual. In mental subjectivity the mind merges into its own enhanced subjectivity [cosmic mahat], and in spiritual subjectivity the mind merges into spirituality [cosmic puruṣa].

The attainment of oneness with cosmic mahat or with cosmic puruṣa requires certain conditions such as mental concentration and knowledge of locations and functions of brain cells and cakras. In the case of oneness with cosmic puruṣa, the additional factor of total self-surrender or devotion is essential:

In the process of meditation the following things are involved – brain cells, apexed or pinnacled psychology, concentrated thinking, Guru cakra and ultimately devotion. All these are utilised in dhyāna yoga, which ultimately ensconces the sādhaka in complete omniscience.

There is another aspect of the meditative process that is important for the practice of Sarkar’s six lessons, especially the first lesson. This involves the concept of spatial and volumetric expansion of the mental field, whereby continual deliberate expansion of the mind’s periphery and volume can result in the mind breaking through into its cosmic counterpart and merging with it. Sarkar describes this process in terms of psychic progress, involving the concepts of endoplasm and ectoplasm (compare Sarkar’s fourth model of mind):

Psychic progress takes place in the realm of ectoplasm and endoplasm … Endoplasm is the outer surface of ectoplasm. The collective form of ectoplasm increases the sense of individuality – ‘I’ feeling. With the growth of unit ectoplasm its volume and scope increases, and the collective form of ectoplasm will increase. With the increase of the collective form of ectoplasm, the endoplasm will gradually expand and burst. Thus, the unit ‘I’ merges in the Cosmic ‘I’.

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702 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 183. Bracketed annotation mine.
703 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 182.
Sarkar gives an example to illustrate his concept of mind-space expansion. Here he links the ‘size’ of the mind-space with the ‘size’ of the mental image or concept (or ‘subjectivated pabula’) held by the mind in the process of meditation, claiming that the greater the size of the concept, the greater the expansion of mind-space:

The area of the mind depends solely on its subjectivated pabula. The area of the subjectivated pabula increases or decreases the jurisdiction of the mind. The subjectivated pabula have their definite periphery. Suppose you see the face of any person then close your eyes. Now, suppose you compare how much of your mental field is occupied with this image. Say one-fourth. Then try to increase its size. Again try to increase its size up to your capacity. This is the jurisdiction of your mind. This is subjectivated pabula. When you are seeing some external object with your eyes, that is objectivated pabula. Your mind has more space than the objectivated pabula. Hence the jurisdiction of the mind depends on the subjectivated pabula, not the objectivated pabula. External objects are objectivated pabula.\(^{705}\)

It is possible to glean from the above passage that Sarkar differentiates between first-order sensory perception of external objects and second-order mental representation of those perceived objects. He terms the physical objects of first-order perception ‘objectivated pabula’, and the mental images of second-order representation ‘subjectivated pabula’. Sarkar’s assertion that the mind-space is larger than the objectivated pabula corresponds to the spatial metaphor of the \textit{aham} being larger than the \textit{citta}, and the \textit{mahat} larger than the \textit{aham}. This also echoes the idea that the deeper \textit{kośas} of the mind are larger in scope than the immediately preceding ones. This assertion underscores the concept that the largest mind-space of all is the cosmic \textit{mahat}, expansion to which is the aim of the first meditative lesson. It also underscores the idea that focussed and constant contemplation on the largest and subtlest ‘subjectivated pabula’ of cosmic consciousness (the subtlest conceivable concept) can elicit an expansion of the individual mind-space to cosmic proportions.

When the mind-space of the meditator has expanded into cosmic proportions, it becomes sufficiently pure and clear to reflect the radiant luminosity of \textit{parama puruṣa}, which is the timeless and immeasurable flow of blissful cognisance distinct but not ontologically separate from the mind itself. Thus, when the unit mind merges into cosmic mind, it also becomes, in a sense, one with cosmic consciousness owing to its full reflection of the light of cognisance. This is the state of \textit{savikalpa samādhi} when temporary, and \textit{mukti} when permanent. Sarkar says:

But we cannot catch the full reflection of \textit{Brahma} on the unit-\textit{mahattattva} (I-feeling). For this, Cosmic Consciousness is not at fault, the fault lies with the plate of our unit-\textit{mahattattva}. If the reflection of just [the] foot of an elephant, instead of its full figure, is caught in small mirror, it will look like a pillar in that mirror. … So \textit{sādhakas} have to increase the dimension of the plates of their mahattattva, and they will also have to make it scrupulously clean, so that they may reflect the entire universe in themselves. Partial reflection makes the world appear to be disjointed and heterogeneous. But

\(^{704}\) \textit{AMI} Parts 5-8, p. 89.
\(^{705}\) \textit{AMI} Parts 5-8, pp. 183-184.
when you are able to see this heterogeneous world fully on your mental plate, the world will not appear to you as the world anymore, but only as a product of your imagination. Then, possessed with such a vast mind, you will further realise that you are not ‘you’ anymore – your ‘you-hood’ is being absorbed in the stainless, super-white effulgence of that Empyrean Splendour.\footnote{SS Part 3, pp. 29-30.}

The first lesson, ṭṣvara pranidhāna, is designed to lead one to the state of savikalpa samādhi by means of such mental expansion. Even when the mind has become cosmic, it still has another step to take before reaching the final state of nirvikalpa samādhi. For this to happen, the vast mirror mind has to be totally dissolved into cosmic consciousness:

If Brahma is no longer the witnessing entity of His Cosmic Mind and if the unit also is not the subjective counterpart of his small mind, the two become one due to their objectlessness. Such a state is called Nirvikalpa Samādhi … So it is clear that due to its being a reflection of Consciousness, the individuality [unit consciousness] of the unit, too, is omnipresent, omni-inherent and omniscient; but this individuality with its limitless cognitive potentials is unable to comprehend the state of Super-perfection or Omnience due to its being the limited intellectual manifestation of the Māyā-ic mirror [i.e. Cosmic Mind]. With the disappearance of the influence of this Māyā-ic mirror, its reflected existence also disappears and it is then that it merges itself in the Original Entity – it regains its own characteristic self, its own homogeneous status.\footnote{SS Part 3, p. 31.}

The sixth lesson, guru dhyāna, is practised after the first lesson and is specifically designed to lead the unit mind into the vast, mirror-like cosmic mind, and finally into the all-luminous silence of parama puruṣa.

While the six lessons are taught to the disciple in the order numerically listed, the practice of these lessons in formal meditation sessions is not necessarily sequential.\footnote{The six lessons are taught by Sarkar, the guru, either in person or through his ācāryas, to suitably qualified and sincere disciples in a systematic and graduated manner (starting from the first lesson and ending with the sixth) over an extended period, depending on the rate of progress of the disciple.} For example, the second lesson is an art of dynamic meditation to be applied in the course of one’s daily activities; it is not practised as part of a formal meditation session. The other lessons, however, generally follow one another in order of numerical sequence, with the first lesson being practised first and the sixth lesson practised last. The six lessons of sahaja yoga are:

1. ṭṣvara pranidhāna or ‘seeking the shelter of the cosmic controller’
2. madhuvidyā or ‘honey knowledge’
3. tattva dhāraṇā or ‘concentration on the fundamental factors’
4. prāṇāyāma or ‘control of vital energy’
5. cakra śodhana or ‘purification of the plexuses’
6. guru dhyāna or ‘meditative flow towards guru’
Sarkar claims that the six lessons encapsulate the intrinsic ‘divine flow’ (svarama) of brahma and possess the power to impart bliss and spiritual progress to all who practise them:

In Ānanda Mārga, this divine flow of Brahma is embedded in the different lessons of spiritual meditation. Thus, those who practise this meditation, whether in the present or the future, whether within time or beyond time, will cry, sing and dance with exquisite spiritual joy, and advance steadily towards the blissful Macrocosmic stance.709

First Lesson: Īśvara Pranidhāna
The first lesson of Sarkar’s sahaja yoga, is termed īśvara pranidhāna, and constitutes the quintessential technique for the realisation of savikalpa samādhi. Sarkar has defined this state of savikalpa samādhi or saṅgūṇasthiti as the merging of the unit mahat into the cosmic mahat, which is synonymous with merging into saṅgūṇa brahma. (The cosmic mahat is the most expansive and inclusive layer of saṅgūṇa brahma.) As described in Chapter 3, saṅgūṇa brahma comprises the tri-level cosmic mind of mahat, ahām and citta and its associated witnessing consciousness, paramātman. As the witnessing paramātman is intimately associated with the cosmic mind, a merger with cosmic mahat necessarily includes the concomitant presence of the witnessing consciousness. The significance of this observation will emerge more clearly as we explore the technicalities of the first lesson.

The first lesson contains five distinct but closely connected stages: āsana, bhūta śuddhi, āsana śuddhi, citta śuddhi, and dhyāna. The first stage is āsana, ‘posture’, involving correct positioning of the body for optimal meditative outcome. The postures recommended are padmāsana (lotus posture), ardha padmāsana (half-lotus posture), siddhāsana (perfect posture), or bhoojanāsana (easy cross-legged posture) according to the ease of and capacity for meditative sitting of the individual. The hands are clasped in front of the body and placed lightly on the lap, while the eyes are kept closed. The rationale for the various aspects of the posture is: (1) closed eyes control visual distraction; (2) pressing tongue against palate controls sense of taste; (3) interlocking fingers control sense of touch; (4) sitting in fresh and clean surroundings optimises the effect of smell; (5) a quiet environment and time of day assists in reducing distractions of sound; (6) motor expressions are controlled by the firm relaxed posture; (7) erect, balanced spine enhances wakefulness and concentration; and (8) upright sitting affords deeper and more rhythmic breathing.

The second stage of the first lesson is bhūta śuddhi, ‘purification of the created world’. This stage involves withdrawal of attention from the world and its problems, as the mind is systematically guided away from its ’pre-occupation with the external world, freeing it from its day-to-day

709 AMI Part 5-8, p. 569
complexes, fears, desires, tensions ...\textsuperscript{710} This technique helps to bring the mind into a relatively relaxed and calm state so that it is ready to move on to the next phase.

The third stage is āsana śuddhi, ‘purification of posture’, which involves withdrawal of the mind from ‘its conditioned identification with the body’.\textsuperscript{711} Here, attention is gradually and systematically withdrawn from the body, inducing a pervasive sense of balance and equipoise.

The fourth stage, citta śuddhi, ‘purification of the mind’, consists in directing the mind to a specific point (iṣṭa cakra), allocated by the guru through the ācārya and concentrating solely on it. The mind’s identity is then purely that of a point of consciousness suspended in infinite empty space, and subsequently in infinite pure consciousness.

The final stage is dhyāna, ‘flow of mind’, where the mind is merged or unified with infinite consciousness through the use of a specially-selected mantra known as the iṣṭa mantra. Ideation on and silent repetition of the mantra enables the practitioner to conceptualise the flowing merger of his or her consciousness into cosmic consciousness. At this stage, mantra ideation is accompanied by a reflexive awareness that is clear, probing, and simultaneously enhanced and expanded by the ideation itself. The importance of this witnessing counterpart needs to be highlighted as it constitutes the very subjectivity that is to be transmuted into cosmic proportions. This transmutation is accomplished by virtue of the fact that the object of awareness, namely parama puruṣa, is inherently ungraspable by the mind; the unfabricated, non-conceptual puruṣa unfolds and permeates one’s whole being as the mind is ‘churned’ through its persistent but unsuccessful attempts to grasp infinite awareness. With regard to this witnessing activity in the first lesson and the process of transmuting prakṛti-bound mind into unfettered pure cognisance, Sarkar says:

First the mind will have to be withdrawn from the limited ‘I’ feeling [citta śuddhi], and focussed at a point [iṣṭa cakra]. Then one will take the thought of the Macrocosm around that point with the help of the ideation of the mantra prescribed according to one’s own samskāra (mental potentiality). He is the subtlest Entity, therefore He can be realised only through feeling and not by other means. ... One’s ideation should be expressed mentally and the mind should be its witnessing entity.\textsuperscript{712}

‘Oneness in objectivity results in oneness in subjectivity.’ So when the objectivity of the microcosm gets converted into objectivity of the Macrocosm, the jīvātman – the subjective counterpart of the microcosm – is transformed into the subjective counterpart of the Macrocosm, that is, Puruṣottama.\textsuperscript{713}

In the second passage quoted above, to convert the ‘objectivity of the microcosm’ into the ‘objectivity of the Macrocosm’ is to try and grasp infinite consciousness as one’s mental object. It is to expand one’s ordinary, limited sense of self into the limitless sense of ‘cosmic self’ through mantra

\textsuperscript{711} \textit{Yoga: The Way of Tantra}, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{712} \textit{GHC}, pp. 70-71.
\textsuperscript{713} \textit{LAI}, p. 16.
ideation. This attempt will enable the ‘subjective counterpart’ or reflexive awareness of the unit mind to be liberated into puruṣottama, the infinite flow of unconfined, self-less cognisance. When this pure cognisance (puruṣottama) co-emerges with and shines through the subtle expansive sense of self (cosmic mahat), the state of savikalpa samādhi is reached.

At this stage, a few words on the concepts of īṣṭa cakra and īṣṭa mantra are needed. The īṣṭa cakra is that point which, when concentrated upon, is able to lead the practitioner to his or her spiritual goal. This point is carefully selected for each individual according to a prescribed system given by Sarkar, and is meant to coincide with the predominant cakra in each person, chosen on the basis of certain vibrations within that cakra. The īṣṭa cakra is considered to be the nuclear point of a person and to be his or her unique ‘gateway’ to cosmic consciousness. For the purpose of spiritual meditation, Sarkar says that only a higher cakra is to be selected as the īṣṭa cakra:

The navel cakra, or manipūra cakra, the svaādhiṣṭhāna cakra and the mūlādhāra cakra are directly linked with the mundane faculties. For this reason, in the sphere of spiritual practices, the manipūra cakra and the one below it are generally not recognised as cakras for repeating the īṣṭa mantra. The recognised cakras for japa [repetition of mantra] are the anāhata cakra, viśuddha cakra, and ājñā cakra and a few other cakras and upacakras of the upper region.\(^{714}\)

The īṣṭa mantra is defined as ‘the mantra which leads to the ultimate goal’.\(^{715}\) It is a set of Sanskrit acoustic roots put together in a meaningful and soteriologically effective way for the purpose of meditation. We have earlier seen that for a mantra to be effective, it has to possess three qualities – it has to be pulsative (in natural rhythm with the breath), incantative (having specific sound vibrations), and ideative (having an expansive meaning). The mantra also needs to be empowered by an enlightened spiritual master who is able to vibrate those mantric sounds with his or her psychospiritual force. In addition, the vibrational quality of the mantra has to suit the vibrational quality or ‘entitative rhythm’ of the individual.\(^{716}\) The entitative rhythm is the sum total of the entire individual’s bio-rhythms (heartbeat, metabolic rate, breathing rate, blood circulation rate, brain waves, nerve impulses etc.) and constitutes the person’s specific ‘melody’. Through the use of a specially selected mantra that resonates with the entitative rhythm of the individual practitioner, his or her ‘melody’ is raised to subtler and slower frequencies until it becomes one with the infinite cosmic vibration.

It is instructive to analyse the first lesson and compare its various stages with the steps of the eight-limbed yoga, the operational framework of Sarkar’s AM. The first stage of the first lesson (āsana) can obviously be correlated with the āsana limb of the eight-limbed yoga. It can also be seen as an initial part of pratyāhāra (withdrawal of the senses and the mind) in as much as the posture assumed in meditative sitting assists in guiding the attention inwards and maintaining it. The second to fourth stages (bhūta śuddhi, āsana śuddhi, and citta śuddhi), involving a gradual and systematic

\(^{714}\) YP, pp. 189-190.

\(^{715}\) CC Part 2, p. 1.
process of detaching attention from the external world, the physical body, and the activities of the mind, can justifiably be correlated with the *pratyāhāra* limb of the eight-limbed yoga. In addition, the fourth stage, *citta śuddhi*, involves a process of concentrating the mind at a singular point (the *iṣṭa cakra*), identifying it as an infinitesimal point of consciousness in an infinite sea of consciousness. At this stage, all mental activities should have been calmed and suspended. The phenomenological features of this stage render it very similar to the sixth of the eight limbs, *dhāraṇā* or concentration, wherein the mind is made one-pointed and free of extraneous thoughts. Finally, the fifth stage in the first lesson, *dhyāna*, is comparable to the seventh limb known by the same term, *dhyāna*. Here the mind’s periphery is expanded and its self-awareness correspondingly enlarged through a dynamic and constant process of ideation on the cosmic entity. The mind becomes a smooth flow of ideation that directs and merges its cognisant mindscape into the vast cognisant mindscape of the cosmic mind. (See the following table for a summary of the above discussion.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Limb of Eight-limbed Yoga</th>
<th>Kośa</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td><em>Āsana</em></td>
<td>Annamaya</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td><em>Bhūta śuddhi</em></td>
<td><em>Atimānasa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td><em>Āsana śuddhi</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td><em>Citta śuddhi</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td><em>Dhyāna</em></td>
<td>Hiraṃmaya</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned before, the first lesson is also known as *īśvara pranidhāna*, which coincidentally is the fifth principle of *niyama*, the second limb of the eight-limbed yoga. This seems to be an anomaly in terms of the structuring and sequencing of the path of practice, when we consider that the stages of *īśvara pranidhāna* reflect and operationalise the third, fifth, sixth, and seventh limbs respectively of the eight-limbed yoga. One possible resolution is to see *īśvara pranidhāna*, articulated under the fifth principle of *niyama*, as a general statement of the spiritual aspirant’s ultimate goal and shelter rather than as a technique of spiritual practice. In this case, *īśvara pranidhāna* – the first lesson – would be the concrete operationalisation of that viewpoint (that is, *īśvara* as one’s goal and shelter) as well as a practical demonstration of the other limbs, as mentioned.

Another interesting correlation is that between the stages of the first lesson and the layers (*kośas*) of mind presented by Sarkar. As mentioned previously (section 5.4), the various limbs of the eight-limbed yoga serve to perfect different *kośas* of the mind. *Pratyāhāra* perfects the *atimānasa kośa*, *dhāraṇā* the *vijñānamaya kośa*, and *dhyāna* the *hiraṃmaya kośa*. As the second, third, and fourth stages (*bhūta śuddhi*, *āsana śuddhi*, and *citta śuddhi*) of the first lesson involve *pratyāhāra*,

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716 *Yoga: The Way of Tantra*, pp. 41-43.
they can be seen to work on the atimānasa kośa. The fourth stage, citta śuddhi, also involves a process of dhāranā and can therefore be said to work on the vijnānamaya kośa as well. The fifth stage, dhyaṇa, involves the flow of the mind towards the supreme consciousness and can be said to develop the hiranmaya kośa. In summary, it appears that the first lesson of sahaja yoga operationalises practically some of the factors of the eight-limbed yoga and serves the purpose of perfecting the unit causal mind (comprising the atimānasa kośa, vijnānamaya kośa, and hiranmaya kośa) so that merger into the cosmic mind can occur.

In addition, Sarkar prescribes a preliminary lesson that is usually given to persons who are not ready to learn the first, such as young children or adults who have never attempted meditation before. The phases and sequence of the preliminary practice are exactly identical to those of the first lesson except that neither the iṣṭa mantra nor iṣṭa cakra is prescribed. Instead, the new student is given what Sarkar calls the nāma mantra, ‘Name mantra’, referring to a specific name of parama puruṣa used as a mantra. As in the first lesson, Sarkar advocates ideation on the meaning of the mantra in conjunction with repetition of the mantric sounds. Of this preliminary process of meditation, Sarkar says:

They should be taught to sit in padmāsana [lotus posture], but instead of interlocking the fingers, they may rest one palm upon the other, and keep the spine erect. They will then be instructed to feel or imagine that everything around them, and what ever they visualise, is Brahma.

**Second Lesson: Madhvīdyā**

The second lesson of sahaja yoga is known as madhvīdyā, ‘honey knowledge’. While the first lesson aims at realisation of the true nature of the self, the second lesson enables a realisation of what the universe truly is. The second lesson is based on and further extends the first lesson’s subjective realisation of the cosmic mind into the activities of daily living. It consists of three parts: (1) ardha īśvara praṇidhāna, ‘half meditation’; (2) guru mantra, ‘weighty mantra’; and (3) guru pūjā, ‘offerings to the spiritual master’, otherwise called varṇārghya-dāna or ‘offering of colours’.

The awareness of cosmic mind attained during formal meditation is maintained even while engaged in one’s daily tasks and relationships by silent repetition of and ideation on the iṣṭa mantra. Through associating the iṣṭa mantra with the breathing process in the midst of activities, the practitioner ‘... trains himself to hear his mantra as being the sound of the breath, so that each breath is making him aware of that cosmic state’. This is the practice known as ardha īśvara praṇidhāna or ‘half meditation’, which forms the first part of the second lesson.

The next part of the second lesson is known as guru mantra, the word ‘guru’ here meaning ‘weighty’ or ‘important’. This mantra is taught to the disciple for use prior to the performance of any

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717 CC Part 1, p. 5.
718 Ibid.
719 Yoga: The Way of Tantra, p. 57.
action, such as eating, drinking, walking, or speaking. Ideation on the guru mantra involves seeing every entity, animate or inanimate, in the entire universe as an expression of the same cosmic consciousness. This practice, in conjunction with the practice of half meditation described above, has a twofold effect: first, it frees the meditator from the notion of self in the performance of actions; second, it prevents the arising of attachment or aversion in the mind of the meditator in the course of relating to any object or person in the world. In other words, the combined practice of guru mantra and ardha īśvara pranidhāna helps to bring a sense of presence, awareness, equanimity, and spaciousness to any action, situation or relationship. Establishment in this practice results in a meditative state known as dharmamegha samādhi (‘cloud of truth absorption’), where the inner and outer merge and all objects and thoughts are seen as consciousness:

Fear complex also vanishes and thereby when this [second lesson] is established one goes into dharmamegha samādhi. Dharmamegha samādhi is attained when the mind is saturated by Dharma or Infinity. The external objects and internal feelings become saturated with Dharma. They also become one indivisible Cosmic Consciousness. So all objects are He; all ideas are also He. All, right from soul to so-called matter, is He.720

As discussed in section 5.1, dharmamegha samādhi is identical to dhrūva smṛti (‘permanent remembrance’) or samyak smṛti (‘proper remembrance’), and necessitates constant application of vivekakhyāti, the insight knowledge of differentiating the self-less ātman (consciousness or cognitive faculty) from the self-conscious mahat (existential ‘I’ feeling). In other words, successful practice of guru mantra and ardha īśvara pranidhāna in the second lesson requires that the sādhaka be able to see clearly the difference between ātman and mahat in every moment. Regarding the practice leading to samyak smṛti (= dharmamegha samādhi), which is essentially the second lesson, Sarkar says:

… Internally, īṣṭa mantra and guru mantra. But you forget it. Because your smṛti is very dilute. So the best object of smṛti is Parama Puruṣa. Never forget Him. Always take His name, as per the advice of your ācārya. This is samyak smṛti, that is, proper memory.721

The combined effect of guru mantra and ardha īśvara pranidhāna practice is also to prevent accumulation of samskāras in the mind of the meditator so that liberation and salvation can be attained as quickly as possible. The second lesson is thus a technique of meditation-in-action, assisting the practitioner to live in a life-affirming yet liberated manner by seeing all things, people, and events as brahma.

The third part of the second lesson is guru pūjā or ‘offerings to guru, the spiritual master’. It is also known as varṇārghyaadāna or ‘offering of colours’. This offering is practised immediately after

720 Ānanda Mārga Meditation, p. 5.
721 AV Part 30, p. 65.
formal meditation (that is, all lessons except the second) and involves a conscious surrendering of all attachments, good or bad, to brahma in the role and form of the guru. These attachments, in the form of thoughts and emotions, are regarded as mental ‘colours’ that obstruct the natural unblemished clarity of the mind, and are fully surrendered during guru pūjā. In a deeper sense, these mental colours or occupations are none other than explosions of consciousness in the form of light and colour (jyotibrāhma), essentially one with the ultimate reality that the devotee surrenders to. Guru pūjā, comprising inner ideation and mindful gestures, enacts this total surrender and reminds the devotee of the non-duality of mental colours and pure consciousness. It is thus a method of purifying the mind and preventing the accumulation of new saṃskāras. As with the first lesson, patient and conscious effort over a period of time is necessary for competence and stability in the second lesson, comprising ārdha īśvara pranidhāna, guru mantra, and guru pūjā.

In comparing the purpose and method of the second lesson with the eight-limbed yoga, it is possible to correlate the second lesson with brahmācārya, the fourth and quintessential principle of yama. Both brahmācārya and madhuvidyā (second lesson) are based on the ideation that everything without exception is a manifestation of the supreme consciousness. In particular, the various parts of madhuvidyā appear to be phenomenologically similar to several factors of the eight-limbed yoga. Both ārdha īśvara pranidhāna and guru mantra involve a process of withdrawing the mind’s attention away from self and external objects per se, and focussing instead on their essential reality as brahma, pristine cognisance. The mind is continually led towards subtlest pure consciousness such that life becomes a blissful flow of open, pliant and penetrating awareness with little or no ego-object duality. The features of (a) consistent attentional withdrawal and (b) attentional channelling towards subtlety, bear a resemblance to pratyāhāra and dhyāna respectively of the eight-limbed yoga. In addition, the surrendering of attachments in guru pūjā can arguably be correlated to pratyāhāra again since both involve conscious letting go of external and internal preoccupations. The correlation between guru pūjā and pratyāhāra is in fact made in the SPSSA, the canonical commentary to AS, which lends support to the foregoing argument. Further support for the claim that the second lesson can be correlated with pratyāhāra comes from the following statement by Chidganānanda, another senior disciple of Sarkar:

… the second lesson helps a person to withdraw the ‘I’ ness from, and to remain unaffected by, physical waves … when the idea of Cosmos or Infinity is taken as the object, attachment and hatred flee away from the mind because all attachment and hatred linger only when the idea is not of the Whole or Infinity.

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722 See SPSSA, p. 151. This correlation between pratyāhāra and guru pūjā is not made in the second edition (1998) of the same title, for reasons unknown.

723 Ānanda Mārga Meditation, p. 5.
It can be deduced from correlations between parts of the second lesson and limbs of the eightfold yoga above, that the second lesson develops the atimānasā (through pratyāhāra) and hiraṇmayā kośas (through dhyāna) of the mind, as shown in the table below:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
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<th>Kośa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2.1. Ardha īśvara pranidhāna | 5. Pratyāhāra  
7. Dhyāna | 3. Atimānasā  
5. Hiraṇmayā |
| 2.2. Guru mantra | 7. Dhyāna | 5. Hiraṇmayā |
| 2.3. Varnārghyadāna or Guru Pūjā | 5. Pratyāhāra | 3. Atimānasā |

**Third Lesson: Tattva Dhāranā**

The third lesson of sahaja yoga is tattva dhaāranā or ‘concentration on the fundamental factors’. This lesson involves focussing the mind on specific cakras in the body aided by visualisation of their form and colour and silent recitation of their acoustic root sounds. Certain techniques are also used to regulate the activities of the īḍā and piṅgalā nāḍīs so that an unblocking of the suṣumṇā (through which kundalinī ascends) is facilitated. In Sarkar’s view, the physical body is composed of five fundamental factors – ethereal, aerial, luminous, liquid, and solid. These exist throughout the body but are controlled by specific centres along the body’s central axis. These centres are the cakras or plexuses discussed in Chapter 4, and each cakra is thought to control one of the fundamental factors.

The third lesson thus aims to control the five fundamental factors by concentrating on the cakras in a dynamic way. The overall effects are: (1) maintenance of physical health and vitality through control and balancing of the five factors; (2) withdrawal of ‘I’ feeling from the cakras so that the first and sixth lessons becomes easier to perform; and (3) transcendence of attachment to material objects and sensory experiences (pleasant or unpleasant) due to the ‘tremendous mental force’ generated through the third lesson. The reason behind point (3) is that all material objects are composed of the five factors, and subjective control over these factors internally translates into control over the same externally.

When the mechanics of the third lesson are compared with the eight-limbed yoga structure, it becomes clear that the third lesson fits in with the sixth limb, dhāranā, since both entail a process of mental concentration using specific focal points in the body. Regular practice of the third lesson thus develops the vijñānamaya kośa of the mind through the power of dhāranā. These correlations are summed up in the following table:

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725 *Ānanda Mārga Meditation*, p. 6.
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<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Limb of Eight-limbed Yoga</th>
<th>Kośa</th>
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The third lesson is generally practised after the first in formal meditation sessions, though it can also be done just prior to the first. Whichever is the case, the effects of the third lesson are thought to carry over from one formal meditation session into the next, so that the precise sequence of practice is not crucial. In other words, practising the third lesson after the first in one session facilitates the sixth lesson in the same session and later enhances the first lesson in the subsequent session. The same logic applies to the fourth and fifth lessons in relation to the first. The third, fourth and fifth lessons come after the first because: (1) they involve fairly developed powers of concentration and visualisation on the part of the meditator in order to be performed effectively, and (2) they are ancillary practices that primarily enhance the quality of the sixth lesson, though they also enhance the āhāra phase of the first.

Fourth Lesson: Prāṇāyāma

The fourth lesson of sahaja yoga is prāṇāyāma, ‘control of vital energy’. The technique involves deep regulated breathing, proper use of the īśta mantra and cakras, and proper ideation.\(^{726}\) As discussed in Chapter 4, prāṇa is a collective term for the five internal and five external vāyus or ‘winds’ in the body, which are vital to the proper functioning of both body and mind. Sarkar sees the activity of prāṇa as inextricably linked to the receptivity and power of the mind. For him, the controlling centre of all the vāyus in the body, known as prāṇendriya, lies in the midpoint of the anāhata cakra.\(^{727}\) The pulsative waves of the prāṇendriya flow in rhythm with the inhalation and exhalation of the breath, in an expanding and contracting manner (saṃkoca-vikāśi). These prāṇendriya waves simultaneously cause the waves in all the nerves to flow in synchrony with themselves, making it more difficult for incoming sense inferences to be received by the citra (crude mind). However, in the intermittent pauses between inhalation and exhalation, the prāṇendriya stops pulsating and creates such calmness in the psycho-physical organism that clear perception and conception become possible. In prāṇāyāma, the meditator induces deep and slow breathing with long pauses, so that psycho-physical calmness is facilitated and the power of the mind is enhanced. When done profitably, prāṇāyāma can even elicit deep spiritual experiences:

This is the psycho-philosophy behind the practice of prāṇāyāma, wherein the sādhaka tries to let this prāṇendriya remain in the state of pause, thereby merging the paused mind into the ocean of consciousness just to have the experience of the supramental stratum.\(^{728}\)

\(^{726}\) Yoga: The Way of Tantra, p. 58.

\(^{727}\) IAI, pp. 26-29.

\(^{728}\) IAI, p. 28.
Thus, the fourth lesson utilises the breathing process to enhance the mind’s concentration and calmness so as to facilitate realisation of the ātman. In this respect, the fourth lesson (just as the third) serves as an aid to the first and sixth lessons.

In addition, the fourth lesson provides four other benefits. First, it enhances physical energy, glamour and strength, as it brings under control all the vāyus that maintain life. Second, it can awaken previously dormant nerves in the body and make them function properly. By purifying the nerves and their innervated glands, it can provide immense physical and psychic force. Third, it ‘develops intelligence and opens the more expanded layers of the mind’. Fourth, it increases appetite by hastening digestion and metabolism.

The fourth lesson can be equated with prāṇāyāma, the fourth limb of the eight-limbed yoga, for obvious reasons. It is said to develop the manomaya kośa by virtue of the fact that it effectively calms and focuses the thinking, reactive mind. (See table below for correlations.) As the fourth lesson is regarded as highly potent and potentially risky, it is deemed best to learn the technique from a trained ācārya.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Limb of Eight-limbed Yoga</th>
<th>Kośa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

***Fifth Lesson: Cakra Śodhana***

The fifth lesson is cakra śodhana or ‘plexus purification’. The technique involves using the īṣṭa mantra in a special way in conjunction with cosmic ideation, so as to vibrate the cakras and bring purification and bliss to the bodymind. Impurity in the cakras is identified as due to dominance of the static (tamoji) and mutative forces (rajoguṇa) resulting in either inertia or turbulence in the cakras and their propensities. In this state, self-awareness is either inert (mind dominated by dullness) or restless (mind dominated by restless activity). Cakra śodhana enables the sentient force (sattvaguṇa) to establish dominance over the static and mutative forces, creating a clear, malleable self-awareness that is peaceful and harmonious.

The fifth lesson, when properly practised, will bring a sense of freshness, lightness, rapture, bliss, and ease to the bodymind, enabling the meditator to feel greatly rested and energised after the practice. As cakras are the loci of various vṛttis or propensities, the rhythmic vibrations throughout the cakras induced by the fifth lesson help to control these propensities more effectively. These same vibrations are also said to develop the innumerable protozoic and metazoic minds towards greater subtlety. The fifth lesson works on the physical, psychic, and spiritual dimensions simultaneously, as

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729 Ānanda Mārga Meditation, pp. 8-9.
730 Ānanda Mārga Meditation, p. 9.
731 Ānanda Mārga Meditation, p. 12.
732 Ānanda Mārga Meditation, p. 10.
it involves all the cakras directly, and all the subsidiary plexuses and glands indirectly. While the third lesson imparts ‘retention and conception’, the fifth lesson imparts more ‘joy and thrill’.\(^{733}\)

_Cakra šodhana_, as Sarkar admits, does not fall under any category in the eight-limbed yoga framework, though it can be related to the sixth factor, _dhāraṇā_, in the sense that pin-point concentration on the cakras is necessary. As the fifth lesson involves a dynamic and smooth-flowing style of meditation, it can also be regarded as having the property of _dhyāna_. Perhaps an accurate placement of the fifth lesson would be in the transitional space between _dhāraṇā_ and _dhyāna_. Since the fifth lesson includes aspects of both _dhāraṇā_ and _dhyāna_, it effectively develops the _vijñānamaya_ and _hiraṇmaya kośas_ of the mind (refer to table below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Limb of Eight-limbed Yoga</th>
<th>Kośa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. <em>Dhyāna</em></td>
<td>5. <em>Hiraṇmaya</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Sixth Lesson: Guru Dhyāna_

The sixth and final lesson is _guru dhyāna_ or ‘meditation on the guru’. This lesson involves meditation on the form and figure of the _guru_, with devotion and surrender, and is especially effective when the personal relationship between disciple and _guru_ has grown deep and profoundly loving. For this lesson, the _guru_ has to be an exceptional personality who not only is fully enlightened but also can impart _brahma_-realisation to any number of people by his or her mere wish.\(^{734}\) The sixth lesson operationalises the concept of _tāraka brahma_ – the liberative aspect of cosmic consciousness linking the manifest (_saguṇa_) and unmanifest (_nirguṇa_) _brahma_ – by regarding the _guru_ as the manifestation (_mahāsambhūti_) of that entity. Thus, surrendering to the _guru_ means surrendering to the liberative _tāraka brahma_, who alone can lead the disciple from manifest to unmanifest reality. Regarding meditation on the _guru_, Sarkar says:

The _Guru cakra_ is the highest cakra. The _Guru cakra_ is used as the place of _dhyāna_ …\(^{735}\) In this _Guru cakra_, the aspirant meditates on the _Guru_ – on that ennobling Entity – channelising his or her mundane bondages into the non-mundane realm, and elevating his or her non-mundane psychic bondages to the realm of the supramental entity, the source of supra-cognitive power. Hence, _dhyāna yoga_ is the best _yoga_ for _sādhanā_.\(^{736}\)

The sixth lesson is specially designed for realisation of _nirvikalpa samādhi_, and its potency and efficacy are thought to derive solely from the grace (_krpā_) or vibrational force of the _guru_. This

\(^{733}\) _Ānanda Mārga Meditation_, p. 12.

\(^{734}\) _Ānanda Mārga Meditation_, p. 13.

\(^{735}\) _YP_, p. 190.

\(^{736}\) _YP_, p. 192.
grace or vibrational force is said to be crystallised in the visual image of the guru, an outpouring of which is said to occur, descending on the disciple who receptively directs attention to it. This vibrational force is said to function much like the power of consciousness embedded in the īśṭa mantra (mantra caityanya), awakening and saturating the disciple’s whole being with timeless presence (sat), clear cognisance (cit), bliss (ānanda), and sweetness (madhura). On the disciple’s part, an attitude of openness, self-surrender, and love is essential for success in this lesson, where meditation becomes effortless and strong natural attraction for the highest consciousness is the sole driving force. In other words, the practice of bhakti yoga can be said to reach its culmination in the sixth lesson of guru dhyāna. For obvious reasons, the sixth lesson would be identical to the seventh limb of dhyāna in the eightfold structure, and is regarded by Sarkar as the meditation technique par excellence. It is the quintessential technique for perfecting the hiraṇmaya kośa and for bringing the devotee into indivisible union with the beloved parama puruṣa.

From the foregoing discussion, it can be surmised that the main meditative techniques are the first and sixth lessons, while all the other lessons, particularly the third, fourth, and fifth, serve to support those two. The second lesson is a meditative technique in itself, though one that is dynamic and engaged, requiring no formal posture or specific time and place. Proficiency in the second lesson would, no doubt, enhance the first and the sixth lessons and vice versa. Thus, all the six lessons are designed to be inter-complementary and inter-enhancing. They are also designed to have a developmental and transformative effect on all the kośas of the mind by harnessing the various processes of the eight-limbed yoga (aṣṭāṅga yoga). Correlations between the six lessons and the limbs of the aṣṭāṅga yoga can be summarised as in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lessons of Sahaja Yoga</th>
<th>Limbs of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Īśvara pranidhāna</td>
<td>2: īśvara pranidhāna (fifth point of niyama)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 āsana</td>
<td>3: āsana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 bhūta śuddhi</td>
<td>4: pratyāhāra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 āsana śuddhi</td>
<td>5: pratyāhāra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 citta śuddhi</td>
<td>5 &amp; 6: pratyāhāra &amp; dhāraṇā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 dhyāna</td>
<td>7: dhyāna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Madhuvidyā</td>
<td>1: brahmaśāra (fifth point of yama)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 ardha īśvara pranidhāna</td>
<td>5 &amp; 7: pratyāhāra &amp; dhyāna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 guru mantra</td>
<td>5 &amp; 7: pratyāhāra &amp; dhyāna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 varnāṛgyadāna</td>
<td>5: pratyāhāra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tattva dhāraṇā</td>
<td>6: dhāraṇā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Prāṇyāma</td>
<td>4, 6 &amp; 7: prāṇyāma, dhāraṇā, &amp; dhyāna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Cakra śodhana</td>
<td>6 &amp; 7: dhāraṇā &amp; dhyāna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Guru dhyāna</td>
<td>7: dhyāna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the effects of the asṭāṅga yoga limbs on the kośas (analysed in Chapter 5), I conceive of the separate effects of the six lessons (which operationalise the eight limbs) on the kośas of the mind as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lessons of Sahaja Yoga</th>
<th>Kośas Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Īśvara pranidhāna</td>
<td>Anamaya, atimānasa, vijñānamaya &amp; hiraṇmaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Madhuvidyā</td>
<td>Kāmamaya, atimānasa, &amp; hiraṇmaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tattva dhāranā</td>
<td>Vijñānamaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Prāṇāyāma</td>
<td>Manomaya, vijñānamaya &amp; hiraṇmaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Cakra śodhana</td>
<td>Vijñānamaya &amp; hiraṇmaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Guru dhyāna</td>
<td>Hiraṇmaya</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.1.6  Kāpālika and Viśeṣa Yoga: Advanced Practices

Sarkar gave advanced meditative practices to those of his senior disciples who qualified for them. These practices include kāpālika yoga, literally ‘skull-bearer yoga’, and viśeṣa yoga, ‘special yoga’, on both of which very little printed information is available. According to tertiary sources, kāpālika yoga was accessible only to junior ācāryas (termed brahma-cārīs or for females brahma-cārīnīs) who were qualified to receive the avadhūta (or avadhūtikā) initiation personally from Sarkar. Receiving this initiation would make the brahma-cārī or brahma-cārīnī a senior ācārya. The transmission of kāpālika yoga thus coincides with higher initiation into senior discipleship of an avadhūta or avadhūtikā, which is presently still possible through avadhūta or avadhūtikā trainers.737 Such trainers are purodhās, the highest disciplic order within AM.

In AM, both lay (grhī) and monastic (samnyāsi) disciples are entitled to become avadhūtas or avadhūtikās, just as lay disciples are entitled to become family ācāryas alongside the order of monastic ācāryas. In both the lay and the monastic orders, being an ācārya is a prerequisite to becoming an avadhūta or avadhūtikā. Similarly, viśeṣa yoga is taught only to senior ācāryas (that is avadhūtas or avadhūtikās, both lay and monastic) who have the necessary qualifications to learn it. Exactly what these qualifications are is not publicly known and no document specifying such details is available, to the best of my knowledge. Completing all the lessons of viśeṣa yoga enables a senior ācārya to be initiated into the highest order of discipleship, purodhā-hood. A purodhā is considered the most senior and most intensively trained disciple of Sarkar, with a group of purodhās forming the highest spiritual body within the AM organisation. The lessons of viśeṣa yoga were imparted only to a few selected individuals either by Sarkar himself or, since his death, by incumbent purodhās.738

737  Who’s Afraid of the Tantric Guru, p. 162.
738  CC Part 1, p. 7.
According to oral sources, viṣeṣa yoga is still being practised by incumbent purodhās but is rarely taught to new and aspiring practitioners.\(^\text{739}\)

A brief and general description of kāpālika yoga now follows. Kāpālika yoga is essentially an advanced and intensive meditation practice that helps in controlling certain lower instincts such as fear, shame and hatred. This meditation is performed in a graveyard, cremation ground or any lonely place between the hours of midnight and three o'clock in the morning during the time of the new moon. Dharmavedānanda, a senior ācārya of Sarkar, says:

The eerie, death-shrouded atmosphere helps to manifest one’s latent fears and baser instincts while the lonely silence encourages deep concentration. By this practice, the aspirant rapidly gains control over the lower self. At this time, Baba [referring to Sarkar] also gives the initiation which follows the brahmacārī stage, called avadhūta (or avadhūtikā for Didis). In Ánanda Mārga, the brahmacārī wears an orange shirt, orange turban, and a white lungi [a large cloth wrapped around the lower body] or pants, while the avadhūta wear an orange turban, orange shirt and orange lungi. The uniform is a compromise with the pressing need of modern society for such workers; historically an avadhūta was a naked yogi covered only by ashes, unattached to pleasure and pain, and rarely, if ever, seen in society.\(^\text{740}\)

In Sarkar’s redefinition of Tantra, the word ‘kāpālika’ takes on a new and sanitised meaning, referring to the fearless and well-controlled spiritual warrior who remains in society to provide selfless spiritual and social service. Historically, in India kāpālikas are wild Tantric practitioners who engage in antinomian practices such as wine drinking, cannibalism, and sexual rituals in places such as cemeteries.\(^\text{741}\) In Sarkar’s Tantra, the selection of a cemetery as the venue for kāpālika meditation is arguably the only commonality it has with the orgiastic kāpālika sect of traditional Tantra. Admittedly, as the details of AM kāpālika practice are kept secret, it is impossible, in this study, to verify the exact nature of such practice.

Viṣeṣa yoga is arguably the most advanced form of meditation practice taught by Sarkar. While details about the practice are unavailable to me, there are scarce references to this practice interspersed throughout Sarkar’s texts. These references will now be discussed. The first detail about viṣeṣa yoga is that it involves some kind of prāṇāyāma, a fact cursorily mentioned in one text.\(^\text{742}\) This particular reference states that only a purodhā is qualified to teach viṣeṣa prāṇāyāma along with two other techniques, sahaja prāṇāyāma and āntar prāṇāyāma. No other details are given for these techniques. Another clue to the nature of viṣeṣa yoga comes from Sarkar’s discourse on the meaning of the Sanskrit word ‘vāraṇasī’. In this discourse, Sarkar defines vāraṇasī as ‘to forbid birth’, and he philosophically identifies it with a particular point between the ājñā and sahasrāra cakras, on attaining which the individual is no longer reborn:

\(^{739}\) Conversations with senior AM ācāryas suggest that the elite circle of purodhās have monopoly over the methods of viṣeṣa yoga and are highly selective about who they impart these methods to.

\(^{740}\) Who’s Afraid of the Tantric Guru, p. 162.

\(^{741}\) See e.g. Feuerstein, Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy, p. 102.
In both English and Bengali the meaning of the word ‘vā’ is ‘to check’ or ‘to stop’. Vār + anat = vāraṇa which means ‘to forbid’. It is a negative command. Similarly, ni-vār + anat = nivāraṇa. Now, ‘anas’ means ‘birth’. Vā + anas = vārānas. In Sanskrita, vārānas becomes vārāṇasī in the feminine gender. Philosophically, vārāṇasī refers to a particular point or ‘vindu’. In the spiritual sphere, when one reaches that vindu one no longer takes rebirth – the cycle of birth and death stops and the aspirant no longer has to return to this world … It should be understood that this vārāṇasī does not refer to a particular city of Uttar Pradesh in India but to a point situated between the ājñā and sahasrāra cakras, that is, between the pituitary and pineal glands. Spiritual aspirants, through the practice of sādhanā and with the help of the Divine Spirit, become established in that point, attaining great mental power and omniscience. Such people do not have to take another birth in this world.  

Sarkar goes on to say that the practice of viśeṣa yoga enables a person to understand the secrets of the vindu, through which the mind attains a state beyond birth and death:

That point, that vārāṇasī, which, as I have said, is situated between ājñā and sahasrāra cakras, is bright and luminous … One may learn the secrets of this point through the practice of viśeṣa yoga. During this meditation the mind ascends to such a height that there is no further need to acquire a new body. Those who have not yet learnt viśeṣa yoga will learn it in the future and will come to realise its significance, and will like it.  

From the foregoing discussion, it can be surmised that the practice of viśeṣa yoga, whatever else it may entail, involves a special meditative point called the vindu and some technique of breath control or prāṇāyāma.

Sarkar not only describes the vindu, on a microcosmic level, as a point between the ājñā and sahasrāra cakras, but also identifies it, on a macrocosmic level, with the vertex (kāmbiṣa) of the triangle (trikona) of inter-changing forces. (The trikona is a concept first expounded in Sarkar’s cosmogonic theory of brahmacakra.) In AMI, he gives another term, bija vindu (seed of creation), for the vertex of the triangle of forces which has become imbalanced (gaṇaṣkobha), so that the resultant sentient force (sattvaguna) bursts forth and qualifies pristine puruṣa into cosmic mahat. From the discussion in Chapter 4, Sarkar seems to homologise the ājñā cakra with the cosmic mahat and the sahasrāra cakra with puruṣottama, in so far as the passage of the kuṇḍalinī through the ājñā cakra equates with emergence into cosmic mahat (or saguṇa brahma), and its arrival at the sahasrāra cakra equates with emergence into cosmic puruṣa (or nirguṇa brahma). In other words, the ājñā cakra and the sahasrāra cakra are the microcosmic ‘seats’ of saguṇa and nirguṇa brahma respectively. Following the same logic of homologism, the microcosmic vindu situated between the ājñā and sahasrāra cakras is very appropriately homologised with the seed point (bijā vindu) at which nirguṇa brahma is about to be transmuted into saguṇa brahma.

742 CC Part 3, p. 69.
744 AV Part 7, p. 2.
In his brahmacakra cosmogony, Sarkar gives a special name for puruṣa at the bīja vindu, calling it šambhūlinga or simply šambhū (see subsection 3.3.2). He compares the transmutation of šambhū into the linear flow of bhairava with the process of externalising a thought. (Bhairava is the phase of puruṣa when the latter is being influenced by the sentient force to become cosmic mahat.)

In AMI, Sarkar says that šambhū changes from being a placid awareness into highly volatile bursts of form and energy in the process of its transformation – first into bhairava, and later into bhava. Similarly, a suppressed thought or desire causes confusion and entanglement in the mind, at the time when this thought or desire begins to take form:

When people’s suppressed desires begin to take concrete form in the external world, they become confused: they wonder what should be done and what should not be done. When people watch the externalisation of an internal thought, which had been confined for a long time in the innermost recesses of the mind, … they obviously become confused. The same thing occurs when the tranquil šambhū becomes metamorphosed into bhairava: it can no longer remain within hard and fast rules and regulations … it assumes a particular form, although a distorted one … when šambhū undergoes change in the flow of energy, it reaches its second stage. … In order to commence the process of creation, šambhū needs to imbibe tremendous momentum.

The above discussion leads to the suggestion that the vindu, being the point at which šambhū first metamorphoses into bhairava, is inextricably involved in the process of thought and emotional manifestation. In other words, meditation in višeṣa yoga arguably involves (a) the point-origin (vindu) of thought or emotion located between the ājñā and sahasrāra cakras, and perhaps (b) the observation of how such thoughts or desires actually burst into form and expression.

Chandranath Kumar (1998), reputed to be the oldest living disciple of Sarkar and a respected family ācārya of AM, makes brief mention of one prerequisite for the learning and practice of višeṣa yoga. He recounts his own experience with Sarkar:

I can tell you what Bābā told me. He took a promise from me in July 1955 to sit for one and one half hours per session. I started sādhanā in 1953, but Bābā started teaching me višeṣa yoga in 1955. Before initiating me into višeṣa, he first asked me if I was prepared to sit for a minimum of one and one half hours per sitting. It is a minimum, not a maximum.

It appears from the above account that višeṣa yoga is a highly demanding practice in terms of time and commitment, and one that is given only to those who are prepared to make the necessary sacrifice.

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743 AMI Part 9, p. 617.
746 See subsection 3.3.2 of this thesis for a discussion on the phases of cosmogony and the various names given to puruṣa and prakṛti in those phases.
The next section will discuss a related aspect of Sarkar’s spiritual praxis – Neo-Humanism. Strictly speaking, Neo-Humanism falls under the rubric of his social philosophy; however, as it is an important concept and, to a large extent, a practical method that lies at the basis of his spiritual and social ideology, a brief discussion of this philosophy is appropriate at this point.

6.2 Neo-Humanism as Praxis

Sarkar designates a philosophical and practical approach to life and the universe, which he calls Neo-Humanism. Neo-Humanism, for Sarkar, is the quintessential spirit underlying the entire soteriological path and the élan-vital that sustains the entire edifice of his social ideology, PROUT (Progressive Utilisation Theory). Sarkar defines Neo-Humanism as ‘newly explained Humanism’ that ‘includes within its scope not only human beings and animate creatures, such as plants and animals, but also all inanimate entities as well, for the scope of Neo-Humanism extends down to the smallest particles of sub-atomic matter’.\(^{749}\) He also makes it clear that Neo-Humanism is not just a philosophical concept but also a practical approach to spirituality:

> Everything in this universe moves, and this movement is from imperfection towards perfection. So perfect spirituality is our goal, and Neo-Humanism is our approach … And what is the cult? The cult is the movement of Neo-Humanism. That is, the cult is the movement of all human expressions, all human manifestations – and not only human expressions, or human manifestations, but all expressions, all manifestations of all living beings, including flora and fauna.\(^{750}\)

Sarkar makes a very close link between the practice of Neo-Humanism and the cultivation of devotional sentiment, or bhakti yoga. In one sense, the perfection of devotion is essential for realising the highest state of cosmic consciousness, which in turn enables the person to view all things and all life forms in the cosmos as vibrational parts of himself or herself:

> And when spiritual aspirants enter the final phase and become one with Parama Purusa, certainly there remains no duality in them. They will realise the fact that everything is in Him, everything cometh from Him, remaineth in Him, and goeth back to Him. There is no question of any duality. Everything becomes theirs, and they become everyone’s.\(^{751}\)

This integral view of non-duality and perfection of devotion is a state of being identical with Neo-Humanism:

All molecules, atoms, electrons, protons, positrons and neutrons are the veritable expressions of the same Supreme Consciousness. Those who remember this reality,

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\(^{750}\) *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49. The word ‘cult’ is used in Sarkar’s writings in the sense of ‘practice’ or ‘process’.
who keep this realisation ever alive in their hearts, are said to have attained perfection in life. They are the real devotees, the real bhaktas. When this devotional cult does not remain confined to a mere practice but instead is elevated to a devotional sentiment, a devotional mission, to the realm of devotional ideation - when the underlying spirit of humanism is extended to everything, animate and inanimate, in this universe – I have designated this as Neo-Humanism.\textsuperscript{752}

In another sense, Sarkar sees Neo-Humanism as the essential attitude a spiritual practitioner needs to establish in his or her mind prior to the attainment of mokṣa, without which the final goal can never be realised. He makes it clear that one who has realised cosmic consciousness will exhibit concrete actions of benevolence in the world. Conversely, a lack of benevolent actions would indicate that the supreme realisation has not been attained, because of a lack of Neo-Humanistic sentiment:

Now … those who are established in Cosmic Cognisance, Cosmic Cognitive Principle, certainly do something for the universe both in action and in thought. Those who do not do so are either far away from that Supreme Stance or have missed that Supreme Stance at the last moment, just before attaining salvation. But those who actually attain the goal of salvation, of final emancipation, must establish themselves in Neo-Humanism just on the eve of their final merger with Parama Puruṣa – maybe, for a few moments only; otherwise it is impossible for them to establish themselves in perfect spirituality and attain Parama Puruṣa. Neo-Humanism is the last word for attaining Him.\textsuperscript{753}

Sarkar advocates the practice of Neo-Humanism from the very start of the spiritual path, as far superior to its adoption at the last moments before salvation. Practising Neo-Humanism from the start will inspire and allow more time for the practitioner to render greater service to the world:

Those who did not accept Neo-Humanism from the beginning – who accepted it just before the final stage – also follow a defective path. Perhaps they did not lose anything personally but there was certainly a collective loss for the whole humanity, for the world was deprived of their service.\textsuperscript{754}

In addition to its role as the motivating force for and affective expression of spiritual perfection, Neo-Humanism is, for Sarkar, a philosophical structure that can support the growth of devotional sentiment or bhakti. As stated before, devotion is the quintessential quality necessary for ultimate emancipation and is likened by Sarkar to a precious, tender asset to be carefully nurtured and guarded against the forces of materialism:

The devotional sentiment is the highest and most valuable treasure of humanity. … This element of devotion, the most precious treasure of humanity, must be preserved


\textsuperscript{753} \textit{The Liberation of Intellect}, p. 54.

\textsuperscript{754} \textit{Ibid.}
most carefully. Because it is such a tender inner asset, to preserve it from the onsloughts of materialism, one must build a protective fence around it, just as people put up a guardrail around a small tender plant. Now the question is, what is this protective fence? It is a proper philosophy which will establish the correct harmony between the spiritual and material worlds, and be a perennial source of inspiration for the onward movement of society.755

In other words, studying, reflecting on, understanding and applying the philosophical principles and ideals of Neo-Humanism – a spiritual practice in itself – can be a powerful means of nourishing the existence and growth of devotion.

The process by which Neo-Humanism aids the growth and development of devotion, culminating in spiritual perfection, is the progressive liberation of the intellect (buddhi) from self-limiting dogmas. Sarkar defines dogma as ‘a preconceived idea which forbids human beings to out step the limits of that idea or object’.756 Dogmas, be they religious, cultural, economic, political or scientific, are ideas with rigid boundary lines that prevent expansion of the intellect and mind, ideas which, according to Sarkar, are iminical to the project of brahma-realisation. The philosophical ideals of Neo-Humanism are designed to transform the mindset of the practitioner by shifting his or her ego-identity away from self, family, culture, ethnicity, country, geographical locus, species, and even life itself, towards unification with the cosmos in its entirety, animate and inanimate. The universalistic concepts of Neo-Humanism act as mental objects that so enlarge the periphery of the mind, that intellect (buddhi) is ‘liberated’ into intuition (bodhi), and intuition into devotion (bhakti) at the culminating phase of spiritual praxis. In Sarkar’s terminology, the Neo-Humanistic sentiment replaces all forms of ‘geo-sentiment’ (sentimental identification with one’s locality at the expense of other localities), ‘socio-sentiment’ (sentimental identification with one’s society at the expense of other societies), and even ‘humanistic sentiment’ (sentimental identification with the human species at the expense of other species).757 In the perfection of Neo-Humanism, intellect expands and liberates into devotion, devotion into cosmic cognisance – where all forms of limiting identification cease with the total dissolution of duality between self and cosmos, between self and universal puruṣa.

In summary, Neo-Humanism can be regarded as (1) a philosophical structure that is used for contemplation in order to liberate the intellect and cultivate devotion; (2) the fundamental motivation for spiritual practice and social service; and (3) a state of realisation in which one loses all identification with limiting categories and instead feels oneness with all life and all things – equivalent to savikalpa samādhi.

6.3 Dynamics and Mechanisms of Spiritual Evolution

According to Sarkar, the process of spiritual development occurs on all three levels of human existence - physical (body), psychic (mind), and spiritual (consciousness). This developmental

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755 The Liberation of Intellect, pp. 3-4.
756 The Liberation of Intellect, p. 37.
process expresses itself as dialectical struggle between the forces of *vidyā* (wisdom) and *avidyā* (ignorance), necessitating constant and consistent application of *viveka* (discriminative insight) and culminating in the final reconciliation of all opposites in the non-dual realisation of *parama puruṣa* – a *coincidentia oppositorum* of *vidyā* and *avidyā*.\(^{758}\)

We will explore the physical aspects of spiritual evolution by focussing on Sarkar’s account of biopsychological changes that accompany spiritual practice. The glands and plexuses involved in spiritual growth, and the effects of food and āsanas on it will be discussed. We will next clarify the various mental processes and stages of psychological transformation that take place as a practitioner progresses on the spiritual path. In particular, the stages of *samāḍhi* in connection with the raising of the *kuṇḍalinī* and the various grades of experience indicative of spiritual advancement will be analysed, with attention given to their phenomenological features. While the initial and intermediate stages of *samāḍhi* relate to the mind, the attainment of ultimate *samāḍhi* transcends the mind and enters the realm of consciousness or spirituality. Finally, the role of the guru’s grace (*krpā*) and its connection to minute emanations of pure consciousness – microvita – in the spiritual progress of the practitioner will be discussed. The mechanism by which microvita affect the consciousness of the practitioner will be highlighted.

### 6.3.1 Dialectics of Change

According to Sarkar, the spiritual path is a dialectical struggle between *vidyāmāyā* (force of knowledge or introversion) and *avidyāmāyā* (force of ignorance or extroversion), a struggle that is simultaneously the *rāsalilā* or ‘playful flow’\(^{759}\) of *parama puruṣa*. Avidyāmāyā manifests itself in the human mind in five ways, namely: (1) *avidyā* (‘erroneous belief’); (2) *asmitā* (‘ego-sense’); (3) *rāga* (‘blind attachment’); (4) *dveṣa* (‘aversion’); and (5) *abhiniveśa* (‘psychic obsession’).\(^{760}\) Vidyāmāyā affects the human mind by firstly, awakening its desire for leading a spiritual life (effect of *samvit sakti*), and secondly, inspiring the person to take practical actions to move towards *parama puruṣa* (effect of *hlādinā sakti*) (see subsection 3.2.1 for discussion of *sakti*). When walking the spiritual path, the practitioner continues to experience the unwholesome influence of the five expressions of *avidyāmāyā*, and needs to exert constant effort, guided by *vidyāmāyā*, to overcome and transcend them.

One key to resolving and transcending this spiritual dialectic is through the exercise of *viveka* (‘conscience’ or discernment). *Viveka* is a propensity that lies ‘embedded’ in the *vijñānamaya kośa* of the mind. *Viveka* is fully expressed through the perfection of the *vijñānamaya kośa*, as is the propensity of *vairāgya* (‘non-attachment’). This *viveka* has five aspects, namely: (1) *nityānitya viveka*.

\(^{757}\) *The Liberation of Intellect*, pp. 9-14.


\(^{759}\) *AMI* Parts 5-8, p. 567.

\(^{760}\) *AMI* Parts 5-8, pp. 563-570.
‘discernment between permanent and impermanent’; (2) dvaitādvaita viveka (‘discernment between dualism and non-dualism’); (3) ātmānāma viveka (‘discernment between pure cognisance and non-cognisance’); (4) pañcakoṣa viveka (‘discernment of the five layers of mind’); and (5) mahāvākyā viveka (‘discernment of the great word’), seen by Sarkar as the resultant of the first four types of viveka.  

Following the Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras (YS), Sarkar defines the five unwholesome expressions of avidyāmāyā by quoting from the YS, and even interprets them in much the same way except for abhiniveśa. These interpretive definitions are given as follows:

(1) Avidyā is essentially the mistaken perception or belief in people that (a) the transient is permanent, (b) the impure is pure, and (c) the ‘finite objects of Prakṛti are their own.’

(2) Asmitā is to ‘confuse dṛkṣākṣi (witnessing entity) with darsanaśakti (faculty of sight)’ and to personally assume ‘full authorship of an action’. It is essentially to forget that puruṣa, the ‘Cognitive Faculty’, ‘is the witnessing force behind the faculty of seeing, behind the existential I-feeling [mahat or buddhi].’

(3) Rāga is ‘blind attachment’ or the ‘tendency to run after certain objects in the pursuit of pleasure.’

(4) Dveṣa is the opposite of rāga and is the attempt to ‘divert the mind from those objects or ideas [that are] … painful or tormenting … to escape from the anticipated pain.’ It is essentially recoiling from suffering or aversion.

(5) Abhiniveśa is ‘psychic obsession’ powered by the ‘acquired samskāras of human beings.’ It is essentially keeping oneself alienated from the ‘Cosmic flow’ (brahmarasa or parārasa) due to over-identification with one’s individual flow (svārasa) of vanity, conceit or other ego-centred propensities. This interpretation of abhiniveśa is different from that of the YS, which states: ‘As in the ignorant so in the learned; the firmly established inborn fear of annihilation is the affliction called abhiniveśa.’ In Sarkar’s interpretation, fear is not specifically mentioned.

Sādhana or spiritual practice is basically an effort to overcome these expressions of avidyā and to move ever closer towards oneness with parama puruṣa, the timeless and unlimited continuum of blissful cognisance. However, overcoming these five avidyā propensities does not mean destroying them but skillfully harnessing and channelling them towards parama puruṣa. The resolution of the vidyā-avidyā dialectic lies not in suppressing or obliterating negative propensities, but in transmuting

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761 AMI Parts 5-8, pp. 526-537.
762 AMI Parts 5-8, pp. 563-564: anitya aśuci duḥkha anātmasa nitya śuci sukha ātmakhyāthī avidyā (YS II.5).
763 AMI Parts 5-8, pp. 564-565: dṛkdarśanaśaktīya eva āsmītā (YS II.6).
764 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 565: sukhānaśayī rāgah (YS II.7).
765 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 566: duḥkhaśayī dveṣā (YS II.8).
766 AMI Parts 5-8, pp. 566-567: svarasavāhī vidūṣa ‘pi samārūḍhah abhiniveśaḥ (YS II.9).
them into positive forces capable of bringing good to oneself and society. To that end, the exercise of viveka (‘conscience’) is crucial.

Sarkar defines viveka as ‘a special type of vicāra (deliberation) … where there is a conscious endeavour to decide in favour of śreya (benevolence) when confronted with the two opposing ideas of śreya and preya (malevolence).’ Of the five kinds of viveka that he describes as essential to authenticity and progress on the spiritual path, the first is nityānitya viveka, or discernment of what is permanent from what is not. This discernment results in the spiritual aspirant accepting and taking refuge in that which is beyond change and time, namely the cosmic entity, brahma. He stresses that nityānitya viveka enables one to develop one’s critical and intellectual faculties, which empowers the individual to reject and fight against dogmatic assertions and practices, particularly religious ones. He cites the Indian caste system and the anti-scientific stance of traditional religions as examples of conventional and temporary ideas that need to be distinguished from dharma, the universal and eternal truth that vitalises all life.769

Dvaitādvaita viveka, the second type of discernment, allows a person to ‘analyse whether the Eternal Entity is one or more than one and come to a conclusion accordingly.’770 Through exercising this form of discernment, the sādhakā is said to be able to conclude, at least intellectually, that there is a singular ultimate truth underlying the manifold expressions of the universe.

Ātmānātma viveka, the third type of discernment, enables a person to ‘analyse whether the Permanent, Non-dualistic Entity is consciousness (ātmabhāva) or non-consciousness (anātmabhāva).’771 By exercising this faculty of ātmānātma viveka, the sādhaka is able to discern the three factors of ‘knower, knowledge and knowable’ and ‘come to the realisation that all three are changeable and perceptible and hence non-consciousness by nature.’772 In other words, he or she penetrates with insight that the so-called ‘knower’, the act of knowing, and the object that is known are impermanent and hence ultimately unreal, though conventionally they are perceptible and are thus real to that extent. Sarkar goes on to say that the sādhaka then discerns the ultimately real as ‘nothing but Consciousness’.773

Pañcakośa viveka, the fourth type of discernment, is the ability to discern the physical body (annamaya kośa) and the five kośa of the mind as separate layers, each with its own characteristics and functions. More importantly, Sarkar sees pañcakośa viveka as the insight into consciousness, as distinct (but not necessarily separate) from all the kośas; it enables correct ‘ideation on one’s own consciousness beyond these kośas’.774

Sarkar sees the fifth and final form of discernment, mahāvākyā viveka, as the result of the first four. It is the ability to realise that brahma is the eternal truth, singular and non-dual, of the nature of

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768 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 526.
769 AMI Parts 5-8, pp. 526-531.
770 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 532.
771 Ibid.
772 Ibid.
773 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 533.
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pure consciousness, and the witnessing ground of all the kośas. Sarkar regards mahāvākyā viveka as leading a sādhaka to come to the conclusion that brahma cannot be attained by action (karma) and knowledge (jñāna) alone but requires the ‘abundance’ and ‘enrichment’[775] of devotion (bhakti). In other words, only through total and selfless surrender of all that is anitya, anātman, dvaita, and of the five kośas, can a sādhaka finally attain the consummation of viveka – parama puruṣa.

From the above discussion, it can be seen that the five types of viveka assist the sādhaka in clearly and correctly ascertaining the ultimate goal and object of meditation. In addition, mahāvākyā viveka, the fifth type of discernment, also enables him or her to transcend the contradictions and struggles of spiritual practice through the culminating act of devotion. After identifying, through the first four types of viveka, the supreme object of meditation as that endless and infinite process of consciousness (akhāndacidaikarāsa brahma), the sādhaka is finally able to ‘channelise all positive and negative propensities of mind toward Him.’[776] Rather than attempting to destroy the forces of avidyāmāyi in the mind, one utilises the energies of the ‘mental enemies’ (rīpus) to benefit oneself and society:

Spiritual aspirants will not destroy the six rīpus (not even kāma or physical longing) but will utilise them for their benefit. When utilised as aids for spiritual progress they will do no further harm. So-called jñānis may fight the propensity of krodha (anger), but devotees will utilise it to fight staticity. They will shatter the meanness and pettiness of the mind through psychic strength and fearless temper. So-called jñānis claim that the propensity of greed (lobha) is harmful, but devotees disagree – they nurture greed to attain Him. Jñānis abhor vanity or pride (mada), but devotees say that the only object of pride in their lives is Paramapuruṣa. Jñānis detest the propensity of blind attachment (moha), but devotees say, ‘I am already in love with Him. I have a blind attachment for attaining my Lord.’ The propensity of jealousy (mātsarya) as a rīpu is very bad, but a spiritual aspirant will never take it as harmful. In this way, spiritual aspirants keep their vision fixed on Brahma.[777]

When taken in the context of the entire spiritual praxis of AM, Sarkar’s comments in the passage quoted above are not to be taken as condoning harmful states of mind and actions. In the spirit of Tantra, Sarkar is exhorting his disciples firstly, to struggle against negative forces, and attain mastery and control over them (śaktā stage), and secondly to surrender fully one’s mind, consisting of both positive and negative propensities, to brahma (vaisṇava stage). This surrender is made possible by constantly keeping the view and ideation of brahma alive in the sādhaka’s heart and mind, even as negative tendencies assert themselves. In this way, the power of consciousness directs and harnesses the force of these tendencies, transmuting them into forces for beneficial and noble purposes. This transmutation is fundamentally the sublimation of physical energy (bhavānī śakti) into psychic energy (bhairavī śakti), psychic energy into spiritual energy (kausikī śakti), and finally spiritual energy into

[775] AMI Parts 5-8, p. 537.
[776] AMI Parts 5-8, p. 568.
[777] Ibid.
the essence of pristine consciousness, puruṣottama. Hence, the dialectic of vidyā and avidyā reaches its resolution through the combined practice of the five types of viveka, in a spirit of prānipātena,\textsuperscript{778} complete surrender to the supreme.

6.3.2 Biopsychological Changes

Sarkar envisages the process of spiritual growth as intimately connected to changes in the glands, hormones, and nervous system. According to him, correct spiritual practice will help elicit such changes:

By spiritual cult, spiritual sādhanā, you may bring about certain changes in your nervous system, nerve cells and nerve fibres, control the secretions of the hormones from different glands and sub-glands, and become elevated. By this process of elevation a person becomes superhuman and goes beyond the periphery of the common human psychology.\textsuperscript{779}

Sarkar does not give detailed and biologically precise information about changes in the nervous system brought about by spiritual practice; he does, however, use physiological terminology considerably in a general and sweeping manner to outline what he understands to be the physical correlates of spiritual development. The following discussion will mainly focus on the bodily, hormonal, and glandular changes.

One of the most obvious changes involves the glamour of the physical body. According to Sarkar, a sentient or pure vegetarian diet and regular spiritual practices will, over time, produce a sentient body: all the cells of the body become healthy and radiant with vitality. He goes so far as to say that these cells collectively emanate an effulgence that creates an aura around the body of the spiritual aspirant. A diet containing a large proportion of green leafy vegetables will also supply large quantities of chlorophyll. As previously discussed, chlorophyll acts as a catalyst for the production of lymph, which in turn serves as raw material for hormone production. Hormones in requisite quantities are, in Sarkar’s view, essential to the growth of the body and the development of nobler qualities of mind. As a spiritual aspirant continues to partake of green vegetables in the course of spiritual practice, adequate, and in some cases, high supplies of certain hormones are made available and the growth of human qualities becomes possible. An adequate supply of testicular hormones in a male develops the spirit of rationality, while over-secretion in a youth creates a strong longing for parama puruṣa. Hence, an optimal supply of testicular hormones is a biopsychological change that occurs as spiritual practice progresses. In the case of the solar plexus (anāhata cakra), an over-secretion of hormones in this plexus will transform human love into universal love, as well as developing a beard and a large chest in a male. Again, an over-supply of hormones from the solar plexus is a biopsychological change associated with spiritual progress.

\textsuperscript{778} AMI Part 5-8, pp. 536-537.
\textsuperscript{779} YP. p. 201.
Through the practice of āsanas, the thyroid and parathyroid glands are thought to secrete their hormones in a balanced way, causing deepening of the voice and growth of a moustache in the male. If there is proper hormonal secretion, the quality of self-reliance will develop in both males and females, and negative traits of irrationality, vanity, and a quarrelsome nature will thereby be prevented.

In the case of the pituitary and pineal glands, continued and correct spiritual practice causes secretion of relevant hormones in the upper glands, which maintains a balance in all the other glands. Sarkar believes that, sometimes in meditation, the glands and sub-glands above the ājnā cakra (associated with the pituitary gland) secrete sudhārasa or ‘bliss-causing hormones’ that get consumed by the ājnā cakra. When this happens, the ‘irises of the eyes move upwards and a state of trance ensues’. 780 Sarkar describes this state:

A pleasant drowsiness of tāndra [somnolence] mixed with nīdrā [sleepiness] overcomes the eyes, and the person is immersed in a type of slumber of a subtle loka [realm]. This kind of yōga nīdrā, bhāva nīdrā, adhyātma nīdra is known as hypnosis in English. Bear in mind that is has no connection with hypnotism or mesmerism. Hypnotism or mesmerism is outer-suggestion, while hypnosis is autosuggestion. 781

In the same way, when ‘bliss-causing hormones’ from the upper regions flow downwards to the viśuddha cakra (associated with the thyroid and parathyroid glands) in times of successful meditation, certain biopsychological effects can be observed:

A great many of the hormones secreted by the upper glands are metabolised in it and absorbed here, and very little of these hormones descend down. If one’s sādhanā is perfect then the sound of the voice becomes sonorous and pleasant for some time, to some extent a state of intoxication ensues, the sinusoid nerve throbs a little, the body turns motionless and stonelike, and the skin becomes thin and light to some degree. 782

The remainder of ‘bliss-causing hormones’ flow downwards to the anāhata cakra and become almost entirely absorbed there. Sarkar equates the bodily bliss experienced in meditation with the effect of these hormones on the anāhata cakra:

The entrancing action of the bliss-causing hormone of the upper region, which is designated sudhārasa in Sanskrit, when it reaches here leads to the greatest sensation in this spot, and the mind gets lost in the higher realm. The developed sādhaka remains submerged in this beatific condition of intoxication. 783

780 YP, p.187.
781 Ibid.
782 YP, p. 188.
783 Ibid.
Exactly how these biopsychological effects are related to the various stages of samādhi and the rise of the kundalinī is not clearly stated by Sarkar. The above passages seem to describe, in terms of biopsychology, some of the experiences a meditator is likely to have in the process of serious and committed meditative practice.

Sarkar regards the pituitary and pineal glands as of the utmost importance in the ultimate spiritual attainment. He comments that when a meditator ‘strikes the pineal gland, salvation is achieved’, presumably referring to the ascent of the kundalinī to the topmost cakra. No information about the biopsychological changes of this ultimate experience has been explicitly given. In the case of the pituitary gland, Sarkar mentions that the left side of this gland is particularly important for spiritual progress, linked as it is with the propensity of parāvidyā (knowledge leading to the Supreme). He says that when the left side of the pituitary gland is developed but not the right side, a meditator may be reborn in a human body in the next life to continue sādhanā. If, however, both sides of the pituitary gland are developed, the meditator will attain brahma-knowledge, if not omniscience (trikāladārśī sarvajñatva) — superknowledge of all things existing in the past, present and future.784

6.3.3 Mind Transformation: Process and Stages

In the aspirant’s quest for spiritual fulfilment, the process of kośa purification and perfection plays an essential role. The three guṇas — tamoguṇa, rajoguṇa, sattvaguṇa — exert varying degrees of influence over each kośa. Such influence is governed by the principle that the subtler and deeper the kośa, the greater the predominance of the sentient principle (sattvaguṇa) and the less the influence of the static principle (tamoguṇa). In Sarkar’s view, spiritual progress is contingent upon gradual purification of the kośas so that they can fully reflect, and thus become one with, the pristine radiance of parama puruṣa. I will discuss the process of kośa purification and perfection briefly in this section.

In his accounts of spiritual praxis, Sarkar discusses several pathways of spiritual evolution, each comprising a series of stages of realisation that marks the practitioner’s progress. In particular, the six stages of self-realisation (classified as samādhi) and the four stages of prayāhāra yoga will be described here, with attention to the phenomenological features of each stage. The range of mystical sounds that can be heard by the practitioner in the course of spiritual elevation will be described and correlated with the six stages.

Sarkar also provides a map of spiritual progress in terms of the quality, depth, and extent of knowing that a practitioner comes to possess as he or she develops on the AM path. In this section, I will discuss these stages of knowing and examine how they relate to the schema of the four prayāhāra stages and to Sarkar’s theory of knowledge (see subsection 4.2.3).

Apart from the highly regarded attainments of savikalpa and nirvikalpa samādhi, Sarkar also mentions several other types of samādhi, representing profound states of realisation that a meditator may attain in the course of practice. These samādhi states will be briefly discussed. He gives another

784 YP, p. 121.
schema for categorising various states of spiritual ecstasy in a hierarchical order, and groups them under the headings of daśā, bhavā, bhavā samādhi, and mahābhavā.\textsuperscript{785} I will attempt to correlate all the above schemas on the basis of their phenomenological features.

**Process of Mind Transformation**

The process of spiritual development depends on progressive purification and perfection of the layers of mind, the five kośas. In Sarkar’s theory of mind, the kośas are differentiated from one another according to prakṛti’s degree of domination over each of them. All the three guṇas of prakṛti operate in all kośas; but as regards their influence on each kośa, one guṇa is said to be dominant, one to be intermediate, and one to be the least. The influence of the guṇas on the five kośas can be tabulated as follows:\textsuperscript{786}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kośa</th>
<th>Bondage of Guṇas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kāmamaya</td>
<td>static</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manomaya</td>
<td>mutative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atimānasa</td>
<td>mutative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vijñānamaya</td>
<td>sentient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiraṇmaya</td>
<td>sentient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each kośa contains impurities that need to be cleansed in order that pure consciousness can be clearly reflected in them. These impurities are due to the influence of the static and mutative principles, which generate the many propensities of the mind under the influence of avidyā māyā. Avidyā māyā is the extroversial force of supreme consciousness that pushes unit entities further away from the nucleus of spiritual fulfilment. Under the influence of avidyā māyā, the mutative and static forces gain strength over the sentient force and start dominating the cycle of creation in sequence (discussed in Chapter 3). One variant of avidyā māyā, known as vikṣepa śakti or ‘force of distortion or repulsion’, is chiefly responsible for generating the many propensities and ideas that disturb the mind’s natural peace via the static and mutative principles. Of the bondage imposed on the kośas by the guṇas, Sarkar says:

> Just as in a dirt-free … mirror you can see an original object very well, and when it becomes dirty the knowledge of the object becomes hazier, exactly so is the case with self-visualisation of ātman in the mental mirror … The greater the influence of Prakṛti


\textsuperscript{786} Taken from *SPSSA*, p. 158.
or avidyā, the greater the impurities. This is the reason why the lower cells or kośas are less capable of expressing His greatness than the higher ones.787

Purifying and perfecting the kośas would mean encouraging the power of vidyā māyā (the introversial force of supreme consciousness) in the mind, so that the sentient force gains dominance over the other two and the brilliance of the ātman can shine. Thus, a fundamental requirement of spiritual development is increasing sattvification of the kośas by means of proper sādhanā.

According to Sarkar, the sādhanā of kośa purification and perfection relies upon (1) a clear understanding of and insight into the kośas, (2) step-wise introversion of mental tendencies, and (3) merging of each kośa into the next one until final mergence into the ātman:

The mind is the object of ātman. To attain ātman, blend the mind with its original subject. Unify the object with the subject … There is only one way to self-realisation and it is to fuse the mind with the knower of the mind, that is, to eliminate the crude manifestation of the ātman. How is this possible? This is possible only through the introversion of the tendencies, and the tendencies are introverted only through knowledge and sādhanā. It is not possible to introvert them until each and every kośa is realised. When the mind realises that the physical body is the vehicle of the mind, then you will know that there is progress in sādhanā; that is, it is necessary to have perfect conception of each kośa. For this, it shall have to be conceived where one kośa ends and another begins … Only those philosophies which carry us to the highest levels of the soul by observing every current of the mind are the real philosophies; the rest are only academic logic.788

In other words, spiritual progress is indicated by a deepening insight into the various kośas, and increasing ability to merge each kośa into the next. With this insight and ability comes an increasing control over the cakras and vyrtis, as the mind becomes more and more elevated and subtle. Since each kośa controls a corresponding cakra, beginning with the mūlādharā cakra and ending with the viśuddha cakra, the merging of a cruder kośa into a subtler one would mean control over a lower cakra by a higher one. This correlates with the gradual ascent of the kūndalinī through the various cakras. Sarkar says:

The all-round, perfect sādhanā is the sustained effort to identify every kośa with the inner self completely. The more a sādhaka goes forward in his sādhanā, the more his cakras and vyrtis get gradually controlled by the higher and higher kośas. It will not do for a sādhaka to stop here. At the final stage of his sādhanā, even the bearing of the ajñā cakra, that is, the whole of his mind-entity, has to be taken to the higher loka; that is, taking it to the Brahma-loka, he has to merge it in … Consciousness. It is in the sahasrāra, the seventh cakra, the thousand-petalled lotus seat of Brahma in the summit of the skull, that he can get himself established in real happiness … That state is indeed the ultimate goal of the unit – his own characteristic state. That state is the

787 SPSSA, pp. 158-159.
788 SS Part 1, pp. 59-60.
characteristic state of Brahma also. There exists neither you nor He separately – the two become one …

From the foregoing discussion, it appears that the merging of lower kośas into higher kośas is identical in process to the rise of the kuṇḍalinī through all the cakras. This is corroborated by the assertion that ‘as the mind rises to higher and higher kośas during mental concentration, it hears the ‘divine sounds’ of the kuṇḍalinī rising to higher and higher cakras’. Sarkar gives a vivid description of the sounds that can be heard:

The sound which originates from the vibration of the kāmamaya kośa resembles the sound of ankle bells. When the manomaya kośa vibrates, the sound resembles flute music. The Vaiṣṇavas call it the flute sound of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The vibration of the Cosmic thought projection reverberates in the atimānasa kośa like a long bell sound. In vijñānamaya kośa, this sound resembles the buzzing of a bee or the roaring sound of the sea. In hiraṇmaya kośa, one hears a feeble om sound … One hears that particular Cosmic sound where his mind is stuck. In the absence of mental concentration, one does not generally hear any of these sounds of the omkāra.

The process of spiritual development involving the stepwise sattvification of the kośas on the one hand, and the rise of the kuṇḍalinī on the other, occurs in stages and results in profound transformation of the mind. I will now explore in some detail these stages of transformation.

Schema 1: Six Stages of Realisation
Sarkar attributes the six stages of self-realisation to the supposedly historical personage, Kṛṣṇa. He views them as the means by which Kṛṣṇa imparted different grades of brahma-realisation to his devotees. The six stages are: (1) sālokya, (2) sāmīḍha, (3) sāyuṣya, (4) sārupya, (5) sāṛṣṭhi, and (6) kaivalya. In effect, Sarkar is affirming that these six stages of spiritual progress are as relevant now as they were in the days of Kṛṣṇa. Appropriating them into his own praxis, Sarkar reiterates their role as a guiding framework to chart the practitioner’s progress on the path. Consistent with Sarkar’s privileging of bhakti, this framework is rooted in and permeated by the spirit of devotion, and describes the degree of closeness and intimacy between the devotee and the object of devotion.

The first stage is sālokya, literally ‘same sphere’. Sālokya is the realisation that the devotee is existing in the same world- and time-space as the supreme consciousness, paraṁ puruṣa. In this stage, the devotee is said to have the feeling that ‘I exist, my Lord exists’, and to be able to experience the pervasive presence of the supreme consciousness. The presence of non-dual and infinite stability, clarity, and bliss has yet to fully unfold in the devotee’s mind; it flashes forth sufficiently for

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789 SS Part 4, pp. 88-90.
790 SPSSA, p. 163.
791 SS Part 4, p. 81.
792 SPSSA, p. 63.
him or her to feel its possibility and its existence. The experience of sālokya corresponds to the rise of the kuṇḍalinī through the svādhīśṭhāna cakra, and represents the initial yet vital stage in the progress of the spirit. On this experience, Sarkar comments:

In the first stage he [feels] that the Supreme Father [is] with him, in the same status. He is not in the sky. He is everywhere. He is with you. If you are here and He is in the sky, then you are alone here and He is also alone there. No, no, no, no. In the first stage, the feeling [is] that ‘Where I am, He is also with me’ … This first pleasure is called sālokya samādhi.

The main feature of this stage is that apart from the sense of one’s existence, there exists alongside it a greater reality that transcends the personal and the specific. This reality is interpreted theologically as the Supreme Father whose presence can be felt by the devotee. He or she also experiences a subtle pleasure concomitant with the feeling of divine presence, and becomes able to hear certain inner sounds. In sālokya, the devotee is able to hear the sound of crickets, which is a crude expression of the omkāra, the cosmic sound that emanates from the point of creation.

The second stage of realisation is sāmīpya, ‘proximity’. In this stage, the devotee feels an increasing sense of closeness and intimacy with the supreme entity. The kuṇḍalinī rises further and crosses the manipūra cakra, giving the devotee the pleasure of proximity with parama puruṣa. Sarkar describes it thus:

And in the second stage, it is, ‘I have come very close, very near that Supreme Father, I am in close proximity to that Supreme Progenitor. By my sādhana the gap between my father and myself is being reduced.

In the second stage, they feel they are close to Parama Puruṣa, close enough to talk to him in friendly terms, even regarding extremely personal matters, and thus be relieved and comforted by Him. Sometimes people feel so close to Him that they may or may not disclose their personal difficulties but they go to Him just for relief, just for consolation, and they feel sufficiently strengthened to withstand the difficulties and troubles, the storms and stresses of personal life.

In sāmīpya, as the kuṇḍalinī pierces the manipūra cakra, the devotee is able to hear the ‘jhum jhum’ sound, akin to the sound of ankle bells. Again, this is but an expression of the eternal cosmic sound, which becomes audible to the devotee as he or she progresses on the meditative path. The main feature of this second stage is a sense of nearness between one’s existence and the existence of that

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794 BG, p. 161.
795 BG, p. 162.
796 SPSSA, p. 64.
797 Ibid.
798 Ibid.
799 NKS, p. 15.
800 SPSSA, p. 64.
greater reality, here interpreted as the divine source of one’s being. This sense of closeness is accompanied by a subtle pleasure characteristic of the second stage.

The third stage is sāyuṣya, ‘in close contact, just side by side, just touching’.

Here, the devotee experiences such close contact with the supreme entity that an actual tactile experience is possible. There is almost no physical separation between the devotee and the object of devotion:

Next comes the stage of sāyuṣya. It implies close contact, almost touching the body, the closest contact that can ever be imagined... and here in sāyuṣya, you feel the tactual experience.

In the third stage, the devotee is again able to hear an inner sound, but one that is subtler than the previous ones – a sweet flute sound. This occurs when the kuṇḍalinī, rising even further, pierces the anāhata cakra. The main feature of the third stage of sāyuṣya is an affective state of imminent contact with a greater reality, which is expressed in a tactual mode of experience. The experience of tactile sensations in concomitance with hearing an inner flute sound in what is presumably a meditative state suggests synesthesia, where the different and separate sense modalities cross boundaries and blend together into one organic experience.

With more spiritual practice, the devotee is able to realise the fourth stage of sārūpya, ‘same form’. Sārūpya occurs when the kuṇḍalinī ascends and crosses the viśuddha cakra, giving rise to a ‘subtler samādhi’ during which the devotee is able to hear the sound of a ringing bell. This experience is marked by a sense of oneness with the supreme entity, though not quite a complete merger:

In sārūpya, the feeling is ‘I am one with Him.’ Not close contact, but oneness. ‘I am one with the Supreme Progenitor, with the Supreme Cognition.’

The next stage of sādhanā is sārūpya. It implies that, not only am I close to Him, but whenever I think of Him, I see Him in all directions. Now how do people attain this state of realisation? One may attain this state by becoming His closest and most intimate companion – for instance, as His father, mother, wife, son or any near or dear relation.

The main feature of the fourth stage is coincidence between personal and transpersonal realities, wherein the sense of duality is attenuated but still present. The auditory experience in this stage has changed into one of a ringing bell, a supposedly subtler manifestation of the cosmic sound.

With greater progress in spiritual practice, the kuṇḍalinī rises even further and pierces the ājñā cakra, the controlling point of the pituitary gland. This signifies attainment of the fifth stage of

801 BG, p. 162.
802 BG, p. 16.
803 BG, p. 162.
804 SPSSA, p. 64.
805 BG, p. 164.
śārṣṭi, ‘same experience’. In this stage, the devotee feels that ‘I am He’, and merges his or her individual identity with the identity of the supreme entity. Sarkar describes this stage:

Śārṣṭi implies that the spiritual aspirant realises Parama Puruṣa in all possible ways and in all conceivable manners. Not only do the devotees see him, but they also remain united with Him, one with Him. That is the sādhaka has the feeling that I exist, He also exists and there is a link between us. The subject is there, the object is there, and the verb is also there to establish the connection.

Sarkar argues that śārṣṭi is still tainted by a highly subtle sense of duality between the devotee and the object of devotion, and cannot be the ultimate attainment. It is synonymous with savikalpa samādhi, wherein the mind of the individual merges into the cosmic mind of parama puruṣa. Here, the presence of the mind – the sense of ‘I am He’ – creates the subtle separation between itself and the unconfined naked cognisance underlying the mind and the universe. The devotee at this penultimate stage hears a ‘continuous, sonorous sound, like a conch shell, which becomes the sound of ocean or thunder, and finally merges in the Om sound’. The main feature of the fifth stage of śārṣṭi is a maximal proximity between personal and transpersonal realities such that separation between the two becomes almost impossible. A highly attenuated sense of duality exists but is so refined that no practical differentiation between the unit and the cosmic is possible. The devotee experiences himself or herself as the cosmic ground from which all that exists in the universe originates, the ground in which the universe is sustained, and the ground into which the universe finally dissolves.

The final stage of kaivalya is reached when the kundalini arrives at the sahasrāra cakra, the controlling point of the pineal gland and the seat of parama puruṣa. Sarkar sees this final stage as identical to nirvikalpa samādhi, wherein the duality between self and consciousness finally dissolves, and only one entity exists:

Kevala means ‘only’, and the noun of kevala is kaivalya. That is, only one entity exists. That entity may be ‘I’, that entity may be ‘He’, but the differentiation between ‘I’ and ‘He’ disappears. So ‘I exist’ or ‘He exists’ – these two ideas disappear. Exists. This is the stage of non-attributional consciousness. It is the supreme stage of Yogic sādhana. It is the Supreme Stance of a yogi.

There are no inner sounds at this stage, as the mind is totally dissolved, and no experience (as commonly understood) is possible. The main feature of this stage is an ineffable infinite consciousness or cognisance free of all identity and differentiation. Kaivalya is, in effect, the highest
attainable state in Sarkar’s soteriology, a permanent realisation that is none other than moksa, the sumnum bonum of AM.

In his explanation of these six stages of realisation, Sarkar does not attempt to clarify whether they describe transitory mystical states (or ‘peak experiences’) that a practitioner achieves while meditating, or whether they signify stable states of being (or ‘plateau experiences’) that constitute the day-to-day lived experience of the practitioner concerned. This ambiguity can be partly resolved by seeing these stages as having both ‘peak’ and ‘plateau’ qualities. When first experienced in the course of formal meditation, these states are not yet habituated by the practitioner and remain novel and highly intense experiences. When these experiences have been consolidated into the life of the practitioner over time, they become more stable and familiar ontological states that the practitioner abides in, and through which he or she experiences the world. This interpretation can be supported by one of Sarkar’s assertions:

When a spiritual aspirant gets adequately acquainted with His Blissful Entity, we say that he is established in the Supreme Consciousness. At that stage, both inside and outside attain unity. Mind then remains aloof from the attraction of trifles, and real acquaintance is made with the Supreme Being. While the body remains in the mortal world, the soul is merged in the Supreme Soul.81

This passage suggests that Sarkar acknowledges and supports the ideal of ‘embodied liberation’ or jīvanmukti – the stable ontological state of a fully enlightened being. More importantly, it lends credence to the notion that the stages of realisation (apart from the sixth stage) can be viewed as stable states of being as well as transient mystical experiences.

The foregoing discussion shows that the ascent of the kundalinī from the base cakra to the topmost cakra is intimately linked to the degree of mystical union with the divine, and the depth of spiritual realisation of it. Indeed, the rise of the kundalinī and the stages of spiritual progress may well be describing two aspects of the same experience. They arguably describe the same phenomenon from two different vantage points, one quasi-physiological and the other psychological. Regarding the movement of the kundalinī, Sarkar warns that there are several points of high resistance where its ascent may be impeded. The first obstacle is located in the region of the manīpūra cakra, in a gland known as rudra granthi, ‘knot of Rudra’, which is itself technically associated with the agni cakra. A firm adherence to yama and niyama coupled with purity of body and mind is essential for the kundalinī to move beyond this point so that sāmīya samādhi (second stage of realisation) can be experienced. The next obstacle lies in the anāhata cakra, also known as viṣṇu granthi, ‘knot of Viṣṇu’. Crossing this barrier of the viṣṇu granthi will allow the devotee to experience the third stage of realisation – sāvyāya samādhi. The third barrier is at the ājñā cakra or the brahma granthi, ‘knot of Brahma’, the crossing of which results in the fifth stage of realisation – sārṣṭhi or savikalpa samādhi. Penetrating the brahma granthi requires an intense desire to realise supreme consciousness on the part
of the devotee, and spontaneous grace bestowed upon the devotee by the guru. This is because, in the gap between the ājñā cakra and the sahasrāra cakra, the spiritual aspirant loses all willpower and mental control over the kuṇḍalinī. This region is known as nirālamba purī; it is where the kuṇḍalinī becomes nirālamba, ‘supportless’. The attraction of the devotee for the supreme entity coupled with the vibrational force of the guru’s grace is thus essential for the ultimate merger into non-attributional consciousness – the state of nirvikalpa samādhi.\(^{812}\) Sarkar gives this assurance:

It is the supreme stance of a yogī. Now, by sādhana, one is to arouse and raise that sleeping divinity. But for this, one requires Divine help; and I know one is sure to get Divine help. And I know still further, that in future, for infinite time and infinite space, one will be getting this Divine favour. And you are all sādhakas, you will certainly attain that supreme stance and enjoy that Divine blessedness. You are sure to enjoy it, my sons and my daughters.\(^{813}\)

Schema 2: Four Stages of Pratyāhāra Yoga

In addition to the six stages of realisation discussed above, Sarkar gives another schema of spiritual progress based upon a redefinition of the notion of pratyāhāra, ‘withdrawal’ (the fifth limb of the eight-limbed yoga). He states that there are four stages of human progress in the physical, psychic and spiritual spheres, which describe the struggles a spiritual aspirant needs to undergo, and the realisations he or she attains, on the way to the final goal. The four stages of pratyāhāra yoga, as defined by Sarkar, are (1) yatamāna, (2) vyātireka, (3) ekendriya, and (4) vaśīkāra.

Close examination of Sarkar’s description of these four stages suggests that he is expanding on the meaning of pratyāhāra (withdrawal) by (1) adding the spirit of struggle and the overcoming of obstacles to the traditional concept of pratyāhāra as withdrawal; and (2) equating pratyāhāra with the entire path of psycho-spiritual development, comprising elements of dhāranā (sixth limb) and dhyāna (seventh limb). This is evident in his analysis of ekendriya, the third stage of pratyāhāra, to which we will turn later.

(1) Yatamāna

The first of the four stages is yatamāna, ‘endeavouring’, which implies that the spiritual aspirant’s efforts in overcoming obstacles are still continuing. This is the stage when the aspirant utilises all his or her physical, mental and spiritual force in the performance of actions that are dedicated to the welfare of the universe, including himself or herself. In this effort, the aspirant encounters, fights with, and overcomes the many physical, mental or spiritual bondages of life in the quest for attainment of permanent liberation or paramārtha. Sarkar defines yatamāna as those actions based on the spirit of universal welfare:

\(^{811}\) TPRS, p. 12.
\(^{812}\) SPSSA, pp. 262–263.
\(^{813}\) SPSSA, p. 263.
There is only one case when Parama Purusa sanctions mental thought. What is that? It is when the human mind is dedicated to the welfare of the entire humanity without any discrimination, when the sole intention is to promote universal well-being. When the human mind, motivated by such sentiments, engages itself in action through the body – only that action can be treated as real yatamāna. Other endeavours should not be defined as such.\textsuperscript{814}

He also says that yatamāna is the ‘conscious effort to transcend the negative influence of the propensities’.\textsuperscript{815} Seen either way, this stage suggests that the aspirant is actively struggling with various obstacles in the service of a higher and nobler goal, which in this case is that of universal welfare and permanent liberation.

(2) **Vyātireka**

The second stage of pratyāhāra is vyātireka, which, according to Sarkar, concerns ‘human psychology’\textsuperscript{816} and describes the stage when ‘some propensities may be controlled at one time, but uncontrolled at another time’.\textsuperscript{817} In this stage, the mind is able to focus on an object for a long time but is still unable to remain effortlessly and permanently one with it. The aspirant attempts to direct the mind away from external objects (physical sphere) and internal thoughts (psychic sphere) and lead it towards the supreme consciousness (spiritual sphere). In relation to vyātireka, Sarkar gives an illuminating account on the function and process of the mind:

The human mind attaches itself to three types of objects: physical, psychic, and spiritual. In the mundane sphere the mind jumps continuously from one object to another. For example, on seeing some rasogollas (delicious Indian sweets) you immediately feel a desire to eat them. But maybe you think, ‘No I shouldn’t eat any. I shouldn’t be so greedy. That would be very unbecoming of me.’ … So you tell yourself, ‘No, I won't eat any rasogollas.’ But the moment you withdraw your mind from the rasogollas you happen to smell the aroma of freshly made tea and think how nice it would be to have a cup. Your mind drops the object of rasagolla, but now embraces another object: tea. You tell the tea boy, ‘Two cups of tea please’, even though you may feel a little ashamed that you have succumbed to the influence of yet another object of desire. While sipping your tea you decide to never again allow your mind to be swayed by the desire for any other object - never, never again. But, alas! The very next second, you think, ‘Oooh, what a beautiful shirt that boy’s wearing. I should get myself one like that.’ So now the mind is running after a shirt. It cannot stay attached to any one object for long but jumps uncontrollably from object to object. Then you think, ‘Oh dear, I’m going to be late in getting home today, I bet mum’s complaining already, “How long will I keep the food warm for him. What a nuisance. I won’t wait any longer”. What shall I say when I come home? Let’s see … yes, I’ll say, “Sorry I’m late today mum. I won’t be late again in future.”’ So now you are thinking about the conversation you’ll be having with your mother. And the mind continues to jump from one object to another. Most of the objects in this example are physical – the rasagolla, the tea, the boy’s shirt – but your planned conversation with

\textsuperscript{814} AMP Part 5, p. 361.
\textsuperscript{815} AMI Parts 5-8, p. 583.
\textsuperscript{816} AMP Part 5, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{817} AMI Parts 5-8, p. 583.

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your mother in your mind is psychic, for after picturing the image of your mother in your mind, you use your mental ear to hear her words.\textsuperscript{818}

The above example illustrates Sarkar’s point that the mind always requires an object for its existence, and this object can be physical (derived from the external world), psychic (derived from inner memory), or spiritual (paradoxical concentration on consciousness as the ‘subject’). He says:

It is the characteristic of the mind to remain attached to one object at a time. It cannot remain attached to one object for a long period of time, nor can it remain objectless. As the mind has to select an object to maintain its existence, it would be wise to select the biggest, the best, the most lasting, and the most loving object. \textit{Parama Puruśa} is the only such object.\textsuperscript{819}

Sarkar uses two technical terms for the different objects of the mind. A physical object directly perceived from the external world he calls \textit{visaya} or ādhāra. A purely mental object (e.g. a specific memory, an imagined conversation, a concept or idea) he calls \textit{abhoga} or ‘pabulum’ of the mind. In the stage of vyātireka, when the mind is moving from one \textit{visaya} to another, from \textit{visaya} to \textit{abhoga} or vice versa, or from one \textit{abhoga} to another, Sarkar explains that the potential for mental balance is nevertheless present in the space between two mental objects:

When the mind jumps from one object to another – say, from \textit{rasogolla} to tea – what happens during the intervening period? What is the mental pabulum at that time? It is an important question. A very interesting thing happens. When your mind starts to move from \textit{rasogolla} to tea, it still remains attached to \textit{rasogolla} for a certain time. It has taken a decision to move, but nevertheless hesitates a while before moving towards tea, because it is not completely sure it wants to leave \textit{rasogolla} altogether. If the attraction for tea is stronger than the attraction for \textit{rasogolla} it will be able to jump to tea. But if the attraction for \textit{rasogolla} is extremely strong, according to one’s inherent \textit{samskāras}; it will take up more mental space than the attraction for tea, and the mind will be unwilling to take tea as its mental object. In between these two extremes there is another state – a state of mental balance (of course it may not be perfectly balanced). At that stage the latent human \textit{samskāras} of mind become more active; that is, that type of \textit{samskāras} which one has been expressing for many years become more assertive. At this stage one’s mind becomes expanded, one’s resolve becomes stronger, and one decides. ‘No, I shouldn’t drink tea because it’s a stimulant. \textit{Rasogolla} is much more beneficial for health so I should be more partial to it.’ When this discriminating faculty asserts itself the person will shun the tea. In this balanced state of mind, one’s acquired \textit{samskāras} become more active. Those who strive regularly to elevate the mind through the practice of \textit{sādhanā}, thus acquiring the state of balance, remain unaffected by \textit{samskāras}. They immerse themselves in a serene flow.\textsuperscript{820}

The above passage suggests that the acquired or latent tendencies of the mind become more active during the space between two mental objects; such latent tendencies determine which direction

\textsuperscript{818} AMP Part 6, pp. 372-373.
\textsuperscript{819} AMP Part 6, p. 375.
\textsuperscript{820} AMP Part 6, pp. 377-378.
thoughts flow in or which thought becomes predominant at any given moment. However, these
tendencies do not affect one who has cultivated equanimity and balance through meditation. Sarkar
implies that the space between mental objects is a state of relative balance wherein discriminative
wisdom and serenity can be found. From the foregoing discussion, the stage of vyātireka can be said
to be one in which the practitioner is able to persistently: (1) channel his or her attention towards
parama puruṣa, taking consciousness as the ultimate subjectivity rather than as an object of discursive
thought; and (2) remain in the space of balance and equipoise in the midst of mental movements.

(3) Ekendriya

The third of the four stages of psycho-spiritual progress is ekendriya, which signifies that the
propensities of the mind have been brought under control but not permanently. Though this is a
relatively advanced level of development, the mind in ekendriya is not fully or permanently freed from
the pāśas (fetters) and ripus (enemies). In this stage, the mind is relatively expanded and may be able
to assert some control over other unit minds as well as the cosmic mind. In other words, so-called
occult powers may be possible for an aspirant at this stage of spiritual progress. Sarkar compares the
process of mental expansion to a cloud enlarging to fill the entire sky:

Although the human mind can be compared to the strings of an instrument, it would be
more precise to compare it with a cloud which fills up the sky, bringing all objects
within its domain. How does the human mind expand? It can best be explained with
the analogy of the cloud. Imagine there is a tiny patch of cloud in a corner of the sky.
Gradually it expands its size until it covers the whole sky. This is ectoplasmic
expansion. As the mind expands in all directions, it brings all objects within its
periphery. It is essential for the mind to maintain a perfect adjustment between itself
and its objects … In the ekendriya stage, which is the third stage of pratyāhāra, one
expands one's ectoplasmic sphere just like a cloud filling the sky – whenever the cloud
passes over an object it brings it within its sphere of influence … The Cosmic Mind is
extremely vast; the unit mind is tiny. The unit mind only expands in the ectoplasmic
sphere, like the cloud filling the sky and in the process of expansion brings other unit
minds within its sphere of control. When it expands tremendously it can also assert
some influence on the Cosmic Mind.821

In the culminating phase of ekendriya, the aspirant focuses ‘all the expressions of the sensory
and motor nerves and all the energy and subtle power of the organs …’ and directs them singularly
towards the goal of macrocosm (or cosmic mind). The foregoing description of ekendriya suggests
that its practice involves (1) mental concentration to a point (dhāraṇā) and (2) channelling of the one-
pointed mind towards parama puruṣa (dhyaṇa). The result of this concentration and flow of the mind
is savikalpa samādhī, which comes under the eighth limb of asṭānga yoga. Let us recall my earlier
contention (see p. 253) that Sarkar, in his soteriological praxis, has extended the meaning of
pratyāhāra by including, within its definition, the processes of dhāraṇā and dhyāṇa. In the case of

ekendriya, we see Sarkar’s inclusion of focussing (dhāranā) and meditative flow (dhyāna) of attention towards parama puruṣa within ekendriya’s final phase, thus supporting that very contention.

(4) Vaśikāra

The fourth and final stage of schema 2 is vaśikāra. This is when the aspirant is totally immersed in a state of love and devotion towards the supreme consciousness so that all mundane longings and even the mind itself are suspended. In this stage, all propensities of the mind are fully controlled by the ātman and ‘Prakṛti has merged into the Supreme Cognitive Principle’. 822 This is, in effect, the state of nirvikalpa samādhi and can be realised only through selfless devotion. Sarkar admits that ‘vaśikāra siddhi is only attained by devotees’. 823 This inclusion of the highest attainment of nirvikalpa samādhi (= vaśikāra) under pratyāhāra is yet another example of Sarkar’s redefinition of the term pratyāhāra. In his definition, pratyāhāra starts with sensory and mental withdrawal, extends into concentration (dhāranā) and smooth channelling (dhyāna) of the mind, and culminates in meditative absorption (samādhi).

Schema 3: Stages of Knowing

In addition to the first two schemas of spiritual progress – schema 1 focussing on degree of existential closeness with parama puruṣa and schema 2 focussing on extent of mastery over the mind – Sarkar offers a third series of stages centred on degree of profundity of knowledge. Schema 1 arguably reflects a consideration of spiritual progress from the perspective of devotion (bhakti yoga) while schema 2 can be compared to progress from the angle of practical meditative endeavour (karma yoga, pratyāhāra yoga). In schema 3, he speaks of spiritual development from the perspective of knowledge (jñāna yoga), which is linked to the third stage of pratyāhāra yoga, ekendriya.

Sarkar compares the process of mental expansion and of bringing all objects within the mind’s influence to the process of subjectivisation or knowing (jñāna). He says that this process of knowing has three stages: ava-ātmasthīkāraṇa (‘superficial assimilation of projections’), upa-ātmasthīkāraṇa (‘assimilation of projections through close contact’), and samyak-ātmasthīkāraṇa (‘perfect assimilation of projections’). Ava-ātmasthīkāraṇa is the normal process of knowing an object through mere study of its external characteristics. It is a ‘superficial psychic assimilation of external objects through direct perception, inference, or authority’, which Sarkar regards as highly unreliable. 824 At the beginning of spiritual practice, a practitioner may only be able to acquire knowledge by means of ava-ātmasthīkāraṇa.

Upa-ātmasthīkāraṇa is the second stage in the process of knowing. It is a deeper form of knowledge involving the intuitive understanding of the psychology of external objects, animate or inanimate. This form of knowledge requires some expansion of the mind’s innate faculty of intuition,

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822 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 584.
823 Ibid.
824 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 388.
which occurs in the stage of ekendriya, the third stage of pratyāhāra yoga. Here, the practitioner has
developed his or her concentration to such a degree that direct intuitive knowledge of mental
dispositions becomes possible. Sarkar describes this process of knowing:

So in the stage of upa-ātmasthīkāraṇa one comes in contact with the inner heart, the
inner life, and the inner mind of all objects, leading to one’s knowledge becoming
deeper and more confirmed. The mind derives much contentment from its contact with
the inner mind of certain plants, animals and human beings, for through such contact
one can render better service to them … This contact with the inner mind of a tree,
animal or human being depends on the freshness or strength of your mind. If for some
reason your mental power is lost, the capacity to acquire knowledge through superficial
psychic assimilation and upa-ātmasthīkāraṇa will also be lost.  

Samyak-ātmasthīkāraṇa is the third stage of knowing, when spiritual aspirants ‘form a clear
understanding of the physical, psychic, and spiritual realms of life’. This is equated with omniscience,
a permanent knowledge of everything in the entire universe, knowledge that dawns when ‘human
beings withdraw the entire intuitive element and focus it on the spiritual point of ideation’. This is
arguably the culmination of ekendriya, the third of the four stages of pratyāhāra yoga. It is attained
through the process of dharmamegha (cf. Section 5.1) and can be identified with the attainment of
savikalpa samādhi:

When the sky filling cloud of the mind is directed towards Parama Puruṣa it is called
dharmamegha in scripture. Human beings come in close proximity with Parama
Puruṣa through the science of dharmamegha. That stage is called samyak-
ātmasthīkāraṇa … They thereby come to know of everything of this universe. Their
knowledge is lasting, final and absolute. The scripture says, rtambharā tatra prajñā
i.e. their knowledge is filled with veracity … To bring about the greatest fulfilment
of life, sādhakas will have to reach the pinnacle of the state of ekendriya. That is,
instead of directing their mind-stuff towards crude objects, they must channelise their
minds towards the Macrocosm, and embrace the Macrocosm fully as their goal.

This stage of samyak-ātmasthīkāraṇa is probably identical to the attainment of spirituou-intuitional
knowledge (aparokṣā anubhūti), a form of spontaneous intuitive knowledge (sphūrtta jītāna) that
dawns when savikalpa samādhi is attained (see sub-section 4.2.3 for discussion on the various types
of knowledge considered to be possible by Sarkar).

In AMP, Sarkar embeds the three stages of knowing within his discussion on the four stages of
pratyāhāra yoga, identifying ava-ātmasthīkāraṇa, upa-ātmasthīkāraṇa, and samyak-ātmasthīkāraṇa
collectively with the third stage of ekendriya. In other words, the practitioner grows in depth and
extent of knowledge as he or she develops in degree and power of one-pointed concentration. Finally,

825 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 389.
826 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 390.
827 Ibid.
in the pinnacled stage of *savikalpa samādhi*, the practitioner realises the omniscience (*sarvajñāna* or *samyak-ātmasthikāraṇa*) of the cosmic mind.

Schema 3 leaves out any discussion on the place of focussed intuitive knowledge (*aparokṣabhāsa*) and spiritual knowledge (*aparokṣa bodha*) in the developmental progression of knowing. Since spiritual knowledge has been equated with attainment of *nirvikalpa samādhi* (see subsection 4.2.3), it naturally follows that *aparokṣa bodha* is a stage that comes after *samyak-ātmasthikāraṇa* (‘perfect assimilation of projections’) in schema 3. The position of *aparokṣabhāsa* is less clear, though its intuitive and focussed nature suggests that it may be analogous to, if not identical with, the second stage of *upa-ātmasthikāraṇa* (‘assimilation of projections through close contact’).

**Schema 4: Other States of Samādhi**

Apart from *savikalpa* (*samprajñāta*) and *nirvikalpa* (*asamprajñāta*) *samādhi*, Sarkar mentions several subsidiary forms of *samādhi* that a spiritual aspirant may attain during the course of practice. These include *dharma namegha samādhi* (discussed in Section 5.1), *anindyānanda rasa samādhi* (discussed in Section 5.1), *kaṅkālamālinī samādhi*, *rāgānuga samādhi*, *rāgātmika samādhi*, *tanmātrika samādhi*, and *atimāṇasa yoga samādhi*. Sarkar mentions in passing that there are ‘thirty-two prominent states of bliss’ that can be experienced by highly developed practitioners, of which *anindyānanda rasa samādhi* is one. The descriptions of these meditative states do not suggest any specific sequence of attainment amongst them; however when they are taken one by one, it is evident that *samprajñāta samādhi* is synonymous with *savikalpa samādhi* and thus precedes *nirvikalpa samādhi* (see Section 5.1), while *rāgātmikā samādhi* is a higher stage following *rāgānuga samādhi*. The overriding attitude to these profound meditative states is that of surrender to the cosmic grace, since Sarkar stresses that realisation of *samādhi* is ultimately dependent on *paraṃ puruṣa* and not on the individual. Thus, while personal effort is strongly encouraged, concern about the nature and sequence of attainment of these *samādhi* states is discouraged in AM. Sarkar suggests that experience of the various states of *samādhi* is not absolutely necessary for attaining the ultimate realisation, just as passengers on a train may not be aware of the towns they are passing through on the way to their final destination:

Of course, to attain supreme spiritual salvation, it is not necessary for a *sādhaka* to experience any *samādhi* at all. For example, passengers travelling on a Calcutta-bound train may or may not be able to see the sights of Jamalpur or Bhagalpur towns if the doors and window-shutters are closed. Although the passengers are unaware of the towns they are passing through, they still reach their destination. In the spiritual world also, the *sādhaka*, while ideating on the Supreme, will certainly pass through different stages of realisation without necessarily being aware of it.

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828 *AMP* Part 4, p. 244.
829 *AMP* Part 5, pp. 313-329.
830 *AMP* Part 4, p. 244.
A discussion of those samādhi states that have not been previously discussed will now follow.

(1) Kaṅkālamālini Samādhi:

In his texts, Sarkar says very little about kaṅkālamālinī samādhi, except that it is a state of immense bliss as a result of oneness of the sādhaka with either paramā prakṛti (‘supreme operative principle’) or paramaśiva (‘supreme consciousness’ as nucleus of the universe):

... the samādhi in which sādhakas associate themselves with Paramā Prakṛti as kaṅkālamālinī and experience inseparable joy is described as kaṅkālamālinī samādhi. During this samādhi sādhakas experience indescribable bliss. They totally forget their human existence and feel oneness with Parama Prakṛti or Parama Śiva. One cannot utter anything except some inarticulate sounds through the sides of the mouth. Breathing becomes heavy, the entire nervous system feels immense pressure, and the activities of contraction and expansion in the nervous system become violent.831

According to Sarkar, kaṅkālamālinī is the name of Kāli, one of the wives of Sadāśiva, who was said to have worn a garland of human skulls around her neck and to be in a continuous state of meditative ecstasy. Sarkar names that particular meditative state kaṅkālamālinī samādhi.

It is unclear how kaṅkālamālinī samādhi relates to the other states of samādhi, especially in relation to the six stages of realisation, and in particular, to the sixth stage of sārṣṭhi or savikalpa samādhi. It appears from the description given in the above quote that kaṅkālamālinī samādhi involves a great amount of physical or neurological upheaval, suggesting that it might not be full attainment of oneness with cosmic mind owing to some degree of mental association with the body. In the subtler state of savikalpa samādhi, the sādhaka’s mind would have transcended any identification with the body and entered into the supra-physical and tranquil experience of cosmic mind. Thus, kaṅkālamālinī samādhi may arguably be correlated to sārupya samādhi, wherein the bodily sense is still present but subtly identified with the abstract ‘form’ of cosmic consciousness.

(2) Rāgānuga and Rāgātmika Samādhi:

Sarkar describes two other forms of samādhi possible for an AM practitioner, rāgānuga samādhi and rāgātmika samādhi. Rāgānuga samādhi is the state attained through intense cultivation of rāgānuga bhakti, a devotional attitude of great love for supreme consciousness in the hope of experiencing bliss for oneself. This is not the highest state, as duality still exists between the mind and supreme consciousness:

During the state of rāgānuga samādhi, sādhakas usually sit silently in meditation. They take deep breaths and during each breath make a violent ‘humkar’ sound. In rāgānuga samādhi the unit mind retains its existence and feels blissful owing to the close proximity of Parama Puruṣa.832

831 AMP Part 4, p. 245.  
832 AMP Part 5, p. 323.
Another rare account, this time of the rāgānuga samādhi experience, is given in AMP.\(^{833}\)

On May 10\(^{th}\), 1969, at Ranchi jagriti, a certain sādhaka had the unique experience of the rāgānuga samādhi. First the sādhaka concentrated his mind on the different cakras in the different parts of the body, and in the process of dhyāṇa on ājñā cakra (pituitary plexus), he went into samādhi. During samādhi the above-mentioned symptoms were present [deep breaths, violent ‘humkar’ sound].\(^{834}\)

Sarkar equates this state of rāgānuga samādhi with gopibhāva and vrajabhāva – terms used in the Vaiṣṇava philosophy to refer to deeply devotional attainments. Comparing the features of rāgānuga samādhi with the six stages of realisation, one can arguably equate rāgānuga samādhi with the second stage of realisation, sāmīpya samādhi, since in both states, the aspirant feels a close proximity to the supreme consciousness accompanied by bliss.

Rāgātmika samādhi is the state attained when the aspirant so intently cultivates the attitude of rāgātmika bhakti – the devotional mindset that seeks to realise supreme consciousness out of pure love and the desire to give it bliss – that samādhi results. Here, a channelling of all the mind’s propensities towards supreme consciousness is essential:

When sādhakas have a strong desire to be established in Parama Brahma and direct all their psychic thoughts and feelings towards Him, there arises a devotion called rāgātmikā bhakti. When the sādhakas enter into samādhi while ideating on their goal with that devotional sentiment, it is called rāgātmika samādhi.\(^{835}\)

An account of rāgātmikā samādhi is given in the AMP and reads as follows:

On May 10\(^{th}\), 1969, at Ranchi jagriti, a sādhaka attained rāgātmikā samādhi. He sat in dhyānāsana and with his mind concentrated on each cakra, he began to do dhyāṇa on the supreme object of ideation. He realised that each of his cakras is being controlled by his Iṣṭa. Not only that he also felt that his Iṣṭa is perceptibly present in his blood, nerves, indriyas, etc. He began to take deep breaths. After remaining in that state, he started to roll on the ground. In this samādhi there is less physical calmness than in rāgānuga.\(^{836}\)

On the basis of the above account alone, it is impossible to correlate rāgātmika samādhi to any particular stage of realisation owing to a lack of substantial similarities. However, it can be speculated that since rāgātmika samādhi involves at least a sense that the iṣṭa (= supreme consciousness) is present within the aspirant’s body, it bears resemblance to the stage of sāyujya samādhi, where the devotee experiences tactual contact with supreme consciousness. It can also be correlated to sārūpya

\(^{833}\) It is unclear whether this and the following accounts of various forms of samādhi were actual descriptions given by Sarkar or insertions by the editors based upon information given by the meditators concerned.

\(^{834}\) AMP Part 5, pp. 323–324.

\(^{835}\) AMP Part 5, p. 324.

\(^{836}\) AMP Part 5, p. 324.
samādhi, where the devotee feels that he or she is of the same form as supreme consciousness—an indication that the bodily sense is still present in this stage. Seen in this light, both rāgānuga samādhi and rāgātmika samādhi are preliminary attainments that come before the realisation of savikalpa samādhi, the attainment of full concentration leading to merger in cosmic mind. However, these suggested correlations remain speculative.

(3) Tanmātriṇa Samādhi:

Sarkar defines tanmātriṇa samādhi (‘absorption on inferential waves’) as the concentrative state attained as a result of one-pointed focus on any object of the ‘quinqueelemental world’ (a term he uses to refer to the world ultimately composed of the five fundamental factors, pañcamahābhūta). In keeping with his cosmogonic theory, Sarkar views all quinqueelemental objects as ultimately equivalent to vibrational loops of energy or inferential vibrations (tanmātra) packaged into condensed forms:

This quinqueelemental universe is composed of solid, liquid, luminous, aerial and ethereal factors with their respective inferences or tanmātras. This universe is a collection of innumerable inferential or tanmātriṇi vibrations.837

He says that tanmātriṇa samādhi is attained once the sādhaka is able to gain full concentration on and hence full control over a quinqueelemental object or particular tanmātra (i.e. sound, touch, form, taste or smell):

During sādhana, the mind has got to be one-pointed. That point is the silver line between the relative world and the absolute world. In the course of sādhana, when a sādhaka achieves full control over objects (an object is nothing but a collection of inferential vibrations), he or she is said to have attained tanmātriṇi samādhi.838

For example, a practitioner who focuses attention on tactile sensations (sparṣa tanmātra) may with persistence and continuity of attention, attain such total concentration that dissolution of all sensations in a state of tanmātriṇa samādhi ensues.839 Since tanmātriṇa samādhi is attained by full concentration on a tanmātra rather than on paraṇa puruṣa, it can be argued that tanmātriṇa samādhi comes before sālokya, the first of the six stages of puruṣa realisation.

Sarkar warns against concentration on mean thoughts or crude objects, as that will lead the practitioner into states of improper or negative tanmātriṇa samādhi. He names two such states, prakṛtilīṇa avasthā and videhalīṇa avasthā.840 Prakṛtilīṇa avasthā is a state of absorption into the

837 AMP Part 4, p. 246.
838 Ibid.
839 Ibid. Sarkar speaks of the world as a ‘positive projection’ of tanmātras; a converse process of withdrawing tanmātras into ‘invisibility’ through one-pointed meditation results in tanmātriṇa samādhi.
840 AMP Part 4, p. 248.
crude material matrix and results in the person being transformed into inanimate objects such as stone or paper after death. Such evolutionary regression can happen to people who are totally engrossed in the material world and who possess a singular, lifetime obsession for material objects such as money. Videhalina avastha is a state of absorption in sensual thoughts or conceptual proliferation, resulting in a person being born into disembodied states of existence such as gandharva, kinnara, or vidyadhara. (These disembodied states of existence will be discussed in subsection 6.3.4, as they are essentially forms of microvita.) Hence, in Sarkar’s view, these two states of absorption are definitely to be avoided by any sincere sadhaka whose aim is the ultimate realisation of parama purusa.

(4) Atimanas Yoga Samadhi:

Sarkar appears to be using the term atimanas yoga samadhi to refer to a range of meditative experiences, all of which are characterised by a sense of unity and tranquillity, differing only in profundity and degree. This samadhi can be experienced by concentrating on any cakra, from muladhara right up to the ajna. Sarkar does not clarify whether the shifting of concentration point from the muladhara cakra to the ajna cakra corresponds to the rise in the kundalinI from the former cakra to the latter. A discourse in the AV describes the experience of atimanas yoga samadhi in this way:

Then Babá asked him to concentrate on the various cakras, from the muladhara upwards, and each time to try to imagine and see oneness. As the cakras under concentration rose higher and higher, the sadhaka said that he was feeling oneness more. Moreover, his mind was feeling more and more tranquil, in contrast to the disturbance he had felt earlier when viewing the audience. Finally, when his concentration reached and surpassed the ajna cakra at the trikuI (between the eyebrows), the sadhaka got more and more deeply immersed in samadhi till at last he lost control of his body. ... The name of the samadhi he was enjoying was atimanas yoga samadhi.841

It is unclear how atimanas yoga samadhi correlates with the six stages of realisation, since the placement of concentration on increasingly higher cakras need not necessarily correspond to the rise of the kundalinI through those cakras. Be that as it may, the phenomenological characteristic of ‘oneness’ in the different degrees of this samadhi suggests that a gradual merger into cosmic mind is occurring. At the ajna cakra, when full atimanas yoga samadhi is attained, the degree of ‘oneness’ becomes so intense that it can arguably be identical to union with cosmic mind – a state in which the sense of duality and conflict with other entities in the world ceases. Thus, atimanas yoga samadhi can, with reservation, be correlated with all the six stages of realisation; it culminates in the realisation of sarsti, oneness with cosmic mind or saugna brahma.

841 AV Part 33, pp. 87-89.
Schema 5: States of Spiritual Ecstasy

Sarkar gives another schema detailing the ‘various states of spiritual ecstasy’ that wise devotees might experience as a result of their ‘constant contemplation of God’, namely daśā, bhāva, bhāva samādhi, and mahābhāva.842 He mentions that the names of these states are appropriated from Vaiṣṇava philosophy and can be linked to the elevation of the devotee’s mind through ‘cords’ of the static (tamas), mutative (rajas) and sentient (sattva) principles.843

According to Sarkar, the first phase of progression in samādhi can be termed daśā, describing the subtle inner pleasure that a sādhaka experiences as he or she is about to cross the ‘cordon of the static principle’.844 This experience of inner pleasure is accompanied by articulation of sounds such as ‘hah-ah-ah’ as a result of the difficulty in expressing those feelings of pleasure. The cordon or bondage of the static principle is most evident in the mūlādhāra and svādhiṣṭhāna cakras. These two lowest cakras are controlled by the kāmamaya kośa (dominated by the static principle) and the manomaya kośa (moderately influenced by the static principle) respectively. In other words, to say that one is close to crossing the cordon of the static principle is to say that the kuṇḍalinī is close to passing through the svādhiṣṭhāna cakra.

Sarkar continues by saying that once the sādhaka’s mind passes beyond the influence of the static principle, that is, beyond the control of the mūlādhāra and svādhiṣṭhāna cakras, he or she experiences another type of inner pleasure called bhāva.845 In bhāva, the sādhaka is said to feel the presence of both the universe and the supreme entity, and to feel strong physically, mentally and spiritually. He or she will express his or her bliss by vocalising ‘Bābā! Bābā!’. Here, the sādhaka crossing beyond the cordon of the static principle suggests that his or her kuṇḍalinī is rising beyond the svādhiṣṭhāna cakra, resulting in the spiritual ecstasy known as bhāva. Comparing with the six stages of realisation (Schema 1) enumerated earlier, bhāva appears identical to sālokya samādhi, the first stage of realisation.

Sarkar gives a brief description of the experience of daśā and bhāva:

At the time of daśā, the sādhaka feels bliss within and falls down, and during bhāva, the sādhaka feels proximity to God, feels great bliss, and falls down. ... The sādhaka attains states of daśā and bhāva according to their saṃskāras.846

In the next stage, when the spiritual aspirant ‘crosses the cordon of the mutative principle’, he or she experiences a spiritual ecstasy known as bhāva samādhi.847 Sarkar defines bhāva samādhi as that concentrated, blissful state of mind when there is only one propensity in the mind – intense desire for parama puruṣa. It is the samādhi attained through a fullness of devotional sentiment and is

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842 AV Part 33, p. 53.
845 Ibid.
846 AV Part 33, pp. 54-55.
characterised by a sense of closeness with the cosmic entity, free of any perception of the world. Sarkar mentions that bhāva samādhi can only be experienced through focussing the mind on parama puruṣa in any of the lower four cakras:

During samādhi the vibrations in different parts of a sādhaka’s body are not controlled by the unit mind but the Cosmic Mind. There is a feeling of indescribable bliss throughout the body, which causes the sādhaka to shiver continuously. Bhāva samādhi can be experienced in any of the four lower cakras. As soon as the mind rises above the anāhata cakra a higher samādhi is experienced. 848

A rare account of a sādhaka’s personal experience of bhāva samādhi is given in AMP:

On May 10th, 1969, at Ranchi jāgrti, a sādhaka experienced bhāva samādhi. Sitting in dhyānāsana he began to practise dhyāna on mūlādāra cakra. As soon as he connected his mind with the Cosmic Mind he felt the sweet waves of cosmic bliss. Then he took his mind to deeper realms, practising dhyāna in svadhiṣṭhāna and manipūra cakras. At this time he directed all his psychic energies to Parama Puruṣa. Only one thought was dominant in his mind – Parama Puruṣa exists and no other entity. Then while doing dhyāna on svadhiṣṭhāna and manipūra cakras, he had a feeling that Parama Puruṣa was his own. At this stage the sādhaka remained absorbed in limitless bliss. Waves of bliss constantly flowed through the glands, nerve cells and fibres causing him to remain totally oblivious of the external world. 849

The cordon of the mutative principle that is transcended in bhāva samādhi is most likely the manipūra cakra. This cakra is controlled by the atimānasā koṣa, where the mutative principle is predominant. Hence, crossing the cordon of the mutative principle arguably means the passage of the kundalinī through the manipūra cakra. Again, comparing with the six stages of realisation, bhāva samādhi appears to be identical to sāmīpya samādhi, the second stage of realisation.

When the mind of the sādhaka rises beyond the influence of the sentient principle, he or she experiences dissolution of the duality between self and the cosmic puruṣa. This state of non-dual ecstasy is termed mahābhāva. The jurisdiction of the sentient principle is the vijñānamaya koṣa, hiranyamaya koṣa, and the ājñā cakra (which is not controlled by any koṣa but which is the seat of the unit mind, linked to the cosmic mahat). The vijñānamaya koṣa and hiranyamaya koṣa control the anāhata and viṣuddha cakras respectively. Hence, passing beyond the influence of the sentient principle means the rising of the kundalinī through the anāhata and viṣuddha cakras and beyond the ājñā cakra. In this case, mahābhāva is synonymous with sārṣṭi (= savikalpa samādhi), the fifth of the six stages of realisation. This synonymy is consistent with Sarkar’s statement that ‘mahābhāva … is a kind of savikalpa samādhi.’ 850

848 AMP Part 5, p. 328.
849 Ibid.
850 AV Part 33, p. 54.
Sarkar seems to use the term mahābhāva in a broader sense than referring to sārṣṭhi alone. He mentions that ‘when the sādhaka feels the closest proximity of Parama Puruṣa, even within his embrace, that bhāva is called mahābhāva.’

Again, in another discourse, he says that ‘all higher samādhis are different expressions of this mahābhāva … but all those samādhis which are within the boundaries of the sentient principle are qualified samādhis, attributional samādhis.’ Since the sentient principle is said to be dominant in the anāhata cakra, the viśuddha cakra, and the ājñā cakra, the higher samādhis of mahābhāva must be synonymous with sāyujya samādhi and sārūpya samādhi as well as sārṣṭhi, respectively the third, fourth and fifth of the six stages of realisation.

Sarkar describes the experience of mahābhāva as follows:

At the time of mahābhāva, the sādhaka feels the tactual presence of Parama Puruṣa and falls down. At that time, every nerve cell, every nerve fibre and every pore of the human body feels the divine touch. … Again, according to one’s dasā and bhāva, one attains mahābhāva. That is why one who has attained mahābhāva becomes sometimes restless, sometimes calm, now laughs and now weeps.

**Summary**

In his texts, Sarkar does not point out synonymies of the various stages of meditative attainment and leaves them un-correlated. Reasons for this are unclear and would require a separate academic investigation. Nevertheless, based on the foregoing analysis and discussion, it is possible to correlate many of these stages of meditative attainments as in the table below:

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<th>Schema 3 (Jñāna Yoga)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-Sālokya</td>
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<td>Sālokya</td>
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<td>–</td>
<td>Bhāva</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sāmīpya</td>
<td>? Yatamāna &amp;</td>
<td>? Upa-ātmasthiṣṭāraṇa</td>
<td>Rāgānuga samādhi</td>
<td>Bhāva samādhi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sāyujya</td>
<td>? Vyātireka</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rāgāmika samādhi</td>
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<td>Sārūpya</td>
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<td>Kankālaṁalini samādhi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kaivalya</td>
<td>Vaṭikara</td>
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Two other stages of puruṣa-realisation, namely dharmamegha samādhi and anindyānanda rasa samādhi, that have been discussed in Section 5.1 can also be correlated to the table above. I have shown that, according to Sarkar, dharmamegha samādhi is a slightly less advanced state than

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852 *You Should Do Accordingly*, p. 1.
853 *AP* Part 33, pp. 54-55.
savikalpa samādhi and thus arguably occupies a position somewhere before sārṣṭhi but after sārupya in Schema 1. I place dharmamegha samādhi after sārupya for the reason that the experience of dharmamegha samādhi appears phenomenologically ‘subtler’ than that of sārupya. While sārupya is characterised by phenomenological oneness with the ‘form’ of parama puruṣa, suggesting some degree of visualisation, dharmamegha samādhi is characterised by a subtle bliss arising from constant mindfulness of and insight into the distinction between mahat and ātman/puruṣa, a state in which the mind expands indefinitely into the vastness of the cosmic mind like a cloud filling up the sky. This mindfulness, insight, and mental expansion occurs without construing parama puruṣa as a mental object, but with steady abidance in parama puruṣa as the supreme subjective knowing. Hence, the experience of dwelling in blissful, non-conceptual cognisance seems to be subtler than the experience of becoming identical in ‘form’ (a visual concept) to that same supreme cognisance.

In Section 5.1, I have discussed anindyānanda rasa samādhi as a state of realisation that may be intimately linked to the attainment of jīvan-muktī, embodied liberation. As such, it is possible to place anindyānanda rasa samādhi as an attainment in its own right, one that arguably comes after both sārṣṭhi (= savikalpa samādhi) and kaivalya (= nirvikalpa samādhi). Based on the above discussion, Schema 1 can be modified to include both dharmamegha samādhi and anindyānanda rasa samādhi as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modified Schema 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sālokya</td>
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<td>2. Sāmīpya</td>
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<td>4. Sārupya</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Dharmamegha samādhi</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Sārṣṭhi</td>
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<td>7. Kaivalya</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Anindyānanda rasa samādhi</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The stages of spiritual progress have been discussed in detail in this section. It is clear that for Sarkar, the various stages of meditation and the dynamics of spiritual growth can be articulated in different ways, and this is what he has done in his discourses. The question remains why Sarkar offers variant schemas of spiritual progress usually without correlating them; such correlation is a logical necessity if overall coherence and to some extent, validity, of his philosophy and praxis is to be achieved. Probing into this issue extends beyond the concerns of this study. For now, we will proceed to the final aspect of our discussion of spiritual change by investigating the role of grace (kṛpā) and microvita (minute emanations of cosmic consciousness) in this process.

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6.3.4 Microvita and Kṛpā

Sarkar’s theory of microvita, in many ways unique to his teachings,\(^{854}\) is an articulation of the nature and function of minute living entities that are directly emanated by cosmic consciousness into the universe. The general categories of microvita and their role in cosmogony and evolution have been discussed in Chapter 3. In this section, the specific types and roles of microvita involved in spiritual attainment will be explored. In particular, the link between microvita and divine grace (kṛpā) will be elucidated.

Sarkar mentions seven main types of positive microvita (he also calls them devayonīs), which have an effect on a person’s spiritual progress.\(^{855}\) These microvita are: (1) yakṣa, (2) gandharva, (3) kinnara, (4) vidyādharā, (5) prakṛtiśīna, (6) videhalīna, and (7) siddha.\(^{856}\) He describes them as subtle microvita that can be experienced either through the inferences of sound, touch, form, taste and smell, or directly within the mind. These subtle microvita are to be distinguished from the crude microvita that are instrumental in the emergence of life in the universe. The first group of these subtle microvita, known as yakṣas, is ‘instrumental in arousing the propensity to accumulate more and more wealth’.\(^{857}\) When people become engrossed in accumulating wealth, yakṣas ‘begin their frenetic dance’ in their minds,\(^{858}\) and are responsible for diverting the mind away from parama puruṣa towards wealth accumulation.\(^{859}\) However, the desire for wealth is based on the noble intention of performing good deeds in the world, and while ultimately unsatisfactory, is nevertheless not evil. Ultimately, this form of microvita has a retardative impact on a person’s spiritual growth, as the mind gradually forgets the supreme goal.

Another group of microvita, known as gandharvas, is responsible for arousing love for fine arts in the human mind. These microvita have the potential to lead human beings further into spirituality, as they primarily inspire the mind toward subtle ideas of art, music and aesthetics. Kinnara microvita are yet another group, chiefly responsible for creating a thirst for beauty and

\(^{854}\) While the term and concept of 'microvita' is new, the names of certain types of microvita (for example, gandharva) already exist in the common Indian stock of religious terminology. The terms 'devayoni' and 'pretayoni', which Sarkar uses for the two main classes of microvita, are reminiscent of the Buddhist deva (divine beings) and preta (hungry ghosts). Also, there appears to be some fuzziness, in Sarkar’s writings, as to the actual nature of microvita themselves – are they (a) human beings who are subsequently reborn into the various realms of microvita existence, (b) direct emanations of parama puruṣa, or (c) in a convoluted sense, both cosmic emanations and human beings, since according to brahmacakra theory, every entity is an emanation or projection of supreme consciousness?

\(^{855}\) Sarkar also mentions in passing seven major types of negative microvita or pretayonīs: (1) dūrmukha – conflict-inducing microvita; (2) kābandha – suicide-inducing microvita; (3) mādhyakāpāla – destabilising microvita; (4) māhākapāla – sinister, destructive microvita; (5) brahmapiśāca – suppressive/exploitative microvita; (6) ākāśipṛeta – ambitious, criminalistic microvita; and (7) pīśāca – avaricious, desirous microvita. These pretayonīs were, in their former existences, human beings possessing the negative traits that they now, as disembodied microvita, induce in others.

\(^{856}\) In addition to these major types, Sarkar also mentions (1) gandhayakṣinī – an intermediate type of microvita that is partly positive and partly negative; and (2) gandhardhākinī – a distinct type of positive microvita transmitted through smell that promotes non-attachment to worldly pleasures and a deep urge for spirituality (see MvN, pp. 105-108).

\(^{857}\) MvN, p. 13.

\(^{858}\) MvN, p. 14.

\(^{859}\) MvN, p. 111.
beautification. This form of microvita can have a double effect on the human mind. If they direct the mind towards crude matter in the service of self-decoration, spiritual regress occurs. If, instead, they ‘lead the mind towards purity and beautification, and then help merge the refined mind in the Supreme Entity’, then spiritual progress becomes possible. Sarkar considers microvita that lead the mind towards crudity as ‘enemy’ microvita and those that lead the mind towards subtlety as ‘friend’ microvita.

_Vidyādhara_ microvita are a group of microvita that ‘create a deep urge in the human mind to attain good qualities’. These microvita can encourage the mind either to develop positive character traits and perform noble deeds, or to seek material benefits such as name and fame. The former variant is relatively more positive than the latter. _Prakṛtilīna_ microvita are a category of microvita that attracts human beings to indulge in crude material pleasures of life. They gradually crudify the mind and bind it in dogmas that serve to legitimise human indulgence in the senses. _Videhalīna_ microvita are those that cause the human mind to become restless and to rush from one object to another. They distract the mind from supreme consciousness and make it ‘oblivious to the supreme purpose of life’, ultimately throwing it into ‘utter confusion’. People who are obsessed with the material world may, through the concentration attained as a result of such obsession, be reborn as disembodied _prakṛtilīna_ microvita after death, while those who are chronically distracted through material or psychological concerns may be reborn as _videhalīna_ microvita.

The seventh type of microvita is _siddha_ microvita, which is a collective name for the group of microvita that assist human beings on the path of spirituality. Sarkar affirms:

> These microvita enable the human mind to rise above the physical and psychic strata, and they guide it to the world of cognition. Those who already have an urge to develop the cognitive faculty are helped by these microvita to increase their urge more and more. Those who have a desire to embrace the life of a renunciate are inspired greatly by these microvita … Those who crave mystic realisations ultimately become enlightened beings. These _siddha_ microvita convey the clarion call of the vast ocean of Supreme Consciousness deep into the minds of ordinary human beings who gaze at their tiny plots of land, and lead them towards the Supreme Entity.

In essence, _siddha_ microvita are positive microvita responsible for spiritual elevation in human beings and are released by supreme consciousness for the upliftment of all entities in the universe:

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860 MvN, p. 15.
861 MvN, p. 15.
862 MvN, p. 16.
863 AMI Part 6, pp. 383-384. _Prakṛtilīna_ microvita include former practitioners who, in their previous human existence, worshipped _parama puruṣa_ with the strong, mistaken belief that the divine was to be found in idols/icons of gods/goddesses. _Videhalīna_ microvita include former practitioners who, in their previous human existence, were distracted by their frustrations with life and consequently beseeched God for liberation. Thus, as microvita, both of these types are considered ‘positive’ and harmless to humans, though they might have failed to realise the supreme goal due to their former attachments.
864 Ibid.
The Universal Entity, sitting in one place, has been using microvita to accelerate the spiritual growth of individuals in different celestial bodies in different ways. Only that Supreme Entity who is conversant with these techniques and can teach them to individual spiritual aspirants is the Supreme Guru. He keeps all within His contact, and with the help of microvita, elevates all spiritually.\textsuperscript{365}

Sarkar asserts that it is possible for a spiritual aspirant to obtain visions of luminous bodies or khamūrti (‘heavenly appearance’) by the grace of parama puruṣa. These luminous bodies are none other than siddha microvita, and they can grant the aspirant spiritual experiences upon request. It is also possible for highly realised spiritual practitioners who have yet to fully surrender all their attachments to be reborn as siddha microvita after death. Such siddha microvita will assist sincere spiritual practitioners who are still alive and are working hard in their spiritual practice. In this way, siddha microvita are very helpful on the path of spiritual practice.

The actions of microvita on a human being occur through the mediation of the cakras. In Sarkar’s view, negative microvita exist and move about throughout nature, while positive microvita have to be specially emitted. Negative microvita affect the human body and mind through the lower cakras, especially the first and second ones, and can cause pain and disease in the lower digestive tract and in the reproductive and excretory organs. Positive microvita emanated by supreme consciousness function predominantly in the higher cakras, especially the ājñā and sahasrāra cakras. Sarkar states that spiritual progress can be effected through application of positive microvita to the ājñā and sahasrāra cakras. He equates this helping role of the supreme consciousness with the efforts of the sadguru, the perfect spiritual master:

If a man is a die-hard sinner or inveterate criminal, and if positive microvita are applied to him, the Sadguru will have to labour hard. If a man is psychically or mentally weak, the Sadguru will also have to labour hard while applying positive microvita to his body. And in the case of those who are physically, psychically and spiritually weak, He will have to labour still harder. In this case, the nerve cells and nerve fibres in the body of the weak man will have to be thoroughly cleaned, hence the labour involved will be immense.\textsuperscript{366}

This emanation and application of positive microvita to the cakras of the spiritual aspirant by the guru can be equated with ‘bestowal of grace’ on the aspirant. The effect of this grace (kṛpā) is to elevate the aspirant’s mind towards ultimate merger with supreme consciousness. For that to happen, it is imperative that the aspirant be sincere and dedicated in spiritual practice. In Sarkar’s view, parama puruṣa in the form of the guru can bestow special grace on the worthy disciple, though his shower of grace is open and accessible to all. Sarkar also explains the rationale behind collective spiritual practice and the company of spiritual people in connection with the elevating effects of positive

\textsuperscript{365} MvN, p. 23.  
\textsuperscript{366} MvN, p. 40.
microvita. He states that spiritual company generates positive microvita, which in turn benefit the group as a whole:

If positive microvita are created through satsaṅga, this will influence the collectivity. It has been observed that when a sādhaka meditates alone, he or she may enjoy spiritual bliss, but if one is in the company of many sādhakas, one will enjoy more bliss.867

The foregoing discussion has explored some of Sarkar’s ideas on microvita and their relation to spiritual growth. In summary, Sarkar conceives of subtle microscopic emanations of pure consciousness termed microvita, which can be either positive (that is, conducive to health and spiritual progress) or negative (that is, leading to ill health and spiritual regress). Negative microvita are naturally present in the universe, possibly emitted during the cosmogonic process; positive microvita are deliberately emitted by parama puruṣa when practitioners perform spiritual practices such as meditation or kūrtaṇa, or when the sadguru mysteriously and freely bestows his or her grace on the disciples. Positive microvita are thus instrumental in the spiritual development of practitioners, and they effect such development through being assimilated into the higher cakras of practitioners’ bodies. This concludes our discussion of the entire Tantric praxis of AM as conceived by P. R. Sarkar.

6.4 Overview of Ānanda Mārga Praxis
I have covered in detail the soteriological praxis of Sarkar’s AM in Chapters 5 and 6. AM has, as its summum bonum, the spiritual attainments of mukti, mokṣa, and possibly also jīvan-mukti. Sarkar says that mukti is the permanent realisation of savikalpa samādhi (also known by other names such as samprajñāta samādhi and sārṣṭhi) while mokṣa is the permanent realisation of nirvikalpa samādhi. It is possible that Sarkar also speaks of a ‘third state’ of jīvan-mukti (embodied liberation), which combines the features of both savikalpa and nirvikalpa samādhi in a living ontological state of permanently freed consciousness. Sarkar alludes to this state with the descriptive phrase ‘the supreme spiritual fulfilment’. I argue that the temporary attainment of this state of embodied liberated consciousness can be equated with anindyeśa rasa samādhi, ‘absorption of unblemishedly blissful flow’. This samādhi is attained through a combination of the sincere dedicated efforts of the AM practitioner and the grace (kṛpā) of the sadguru.

In explicating Sarkar’s view of the summit states and the pathways leading to such states, I am assuming that Sarkar truly believes the mystical states he describes can be experienced by anyone who follows his soteriological prescription. This is in sharp contrast to Sharf’s argument that the rhetoric of meditative experience reveals the self-demarcating polemic of religious traditions against their competitors more than any real empirical fact. While it is certainly plausible and indeed true that religious traditions seek to define and justify themselves against competing traditions, to reduce all

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867 Ibid.
descriptions to mere religious polemic is to go too far in a reductionist project that itself begs adequate justification. In so far as numerous reports exist for contemporary AM practitioners having experienced a variety of samādhi states, both in the physical presence and with the facilitation of Sarkar, as well as in their private meditative practice in Sarkar’s absence, it remains prudent to be less hasty in dismissing such claims to meditative attainments as empty rhetoric. In a dialogical phenomenology such as the one I employ in this study, the truth claims of both the texts and the reader are given space to assert themselves in the interpretive consciousness that connects and embraces them both without reifying any one pole.

The fundamentals of AM’s Tantric practice are (1) an authentic and qualified guru, who is identified with tāraka brahma, the personal liberative aspect of cosmic consciousness (i.e. Sarkar himself); (2) the need for Tantric initiation (dīkṣā); and (3) the use of a personally prescribed mantra in meditation. These fundamentals are contextualised within the overall combined framework of Śākta, Śaiva, and Vaiśnava Tantra, and embedded in the practice steps of Patañjali’s aṣṭāṅga yoga. Sarkar’s AM claims to be authentically Tantric but eschews the literal interpretation of the five M’s of traditional Tantra: madya (‘wine’), māṃsa (‘meat’), matsya (fish), mudrā (‘ parched grain’), and maithuna (‘sexual intercourse’). AM favours the symbolic and subtle interpretation of these antinomian religious practices. In addition, Sarkar has given a comprehensive and inclusive system of spiritual practices that he calls the Sixteen Points. The Sixteen Points lay out for the AM practitioner the entire path of practice leading to the ultimate goals of mukti, mokṣa, and arguably jīvan-mukti.

In his AM, Sarkar advocates balanced practice of jñāna yoga, karma yoga, and bhakti yoga, three traditional Indian approaches to liberation that he has appropriated and given his own slant of interpretation. Sarkar sees jñāna yoga as systematic cultivation of intellect and intuition, a practice that includes mastery of both mundane (aparāvidyā) and spiritual knowledge (parāvidyā). He states that jñāna yoga culminates in the attainment of omniscience through perfect mastery of savikalpa samādhi, and in the ultimate realisation of spiritual (aparokṣabodha) or integral knowledge (abhedajñāna) through perfect mastery of nirvikalpa samādhi. Strictly speaking, spiritual knowledge cannot be attained through jñāna yoga alone; it requires an act of selfless, devotional surrender (bhakti) following attainment of savikalpa samādhi in order for the ultimate state to dawn upon the practitioner. In this sense, Sarkar, sees ultimate knowledge as equivalent to perfect devotion.

For Sarkar, karma yoga is the practice of selfless action and compassionate service to the universe. Karma yoga requires that the AM practitioner (1) lets go of the desire for the fruits of actions, (2) contemplates that both the subject and object of actions are mere instruments of brahma, (3) surrenders mind and actions to brahma by seeing both the subject and the action itself as expressions of brahma, and (4) sees all objects and persons in the universe as sweet expressions of brahma using the technique of madhuvidyā, ‘honey knowledge’ (the second lesson of AM meditation). Karma yoga, in its broadest sense, includes the practice of all the ethical (e.g. yama and niyama, fifteen śīlas), spiritual (e.g. six lessons), and social (e.g. four types of sevā, implementing PROUT) disciplines of AM, in a spirit of non-attachment and cosmic sentiment.
In Sarkar’s AM, bhakti yoga is regarded as the pre-eminent approach to spiritual practice. It consists in developing intense attraction for the creative and pulsative flow of supreme consciousness, brahma. This development of bhakti (devotion) is based on expanding and sublimating the natural attraction that all beings and indeed all things possess for one another. Devotion is in essence unconditional love, a love that makes the mind equanimous, smooth, and poised. Sarkar advocates the practice of the highest form of devotion that he calls nirguna bhakti, ‘non-attributional devotion’. Nirguna bhakti is expressed in two ways, namely rāgānugā bhakti and rāgātmikā bhakti. Rāgānugā bhakti is characterised by the attitude of wanting nothing except the pleasure and bliss of loving brahma, a devotional sentiment that is still tainted with a subtle sense of ego-enjoyment and duality. Rāgātmikā bhakti, the subtler of the two forms of devotion, is an attitude characterised by complete surrender to brahma for the sake of giving bliss and pleasure to ‘him’. This second form of devotion enables the devotee to merge into nirguna brahma, and when permanently established, is transformed into kevala bhakti (‘perfect devotion’) – a permanent state of devotional union synonymous with moksa. A fully-surrendered devotee regards all life events, all experiences pleasant or unpleasant, as the unfolding of the sweet will of pristine consciousness. Bhakti is cultivated by the technique and state of bhāva, ‘ideation’, which Sarkar defines as the purification of the mind through the sentient force of love. Sarkar operationalises bhāva as the practice of ideation on the non-duality of unit and cosmic entities, a practice embedded in the six lessons of AM meditation.

Kirtana is an essential preliminary and, in a sense, meditative, practice in AM praxis. It consists in the singing or chanting, accompanied or not by dancing, of the mahāmantra (‘universal mantra’) of AM: Bābā Nām Kevalam (‘The Beloved is All There Is’). Sarkar sees kirtana as a powerful means of cultivating and expressing devotion, resolving psychological problems, enhancing formal meditation, and averting natural disasters and worldly afflictions. From a comparative phenomenological analysis of the practice of kirtana with the eight-limbed yoga, I argue that kirtana contains elements of āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇā, and dhyāna. It thus has the potential to purify and develop all the kośas of the mind based on correlation of the limbs of aṣṭānga yoga with their corresponding effects on the kośas.

The central component of AM praxis is the six lessons of sahaja yoga, a system of meditation designed and prescribed by Sarkar for deserving disciples. For Sarkar, the ultimate aim of these lessons is to attain yoga, which he defines as the oneness of unit and cosmic consciousnesses. The first lesson, iśvara pranidhāna, consists of five stages: (1) āsana, (2) bhūta sūḍdi, (3) āsana sūḍdi, (4) citta sūḍdi, and (5) dhyāna. It involves ideation (bhāva) on an individually prescribed iṣṭa mantra accompanied by concentration on the iṣṭa cakra, which is also individually prescribed. The first lesson has the potential to lead the practitioner to merger with cosmic mahat (saguna brahma) in the state of savikalpa samādhi. The second lesson, madhuvidyā, consists of three parts: (1) ardha iśvara pranidhāna, (2) guru mantra, and (3) varṇāgyadāna. The first part, ardha iśvara pranidhāna, involves the continual ideation of the Iṣṭa mantra in the midst of everyday activities. The second part, guru mantra, involves ideation on the non-duality of all actions and phenomena with brahma and is
practised immediately prior to performing any volitional action. The third part, varnāghyadāna, involves the mental offering of all attachments in the mind to brahma in the role and form of the guru. The second lesson is dynamic meditation in action, and enables the practitioner to realise dhruvamsṛti, also known as dharmamegha samādhi.

The third lesson, tattva dhāranā, involves concentration on specific cakras in the body, accompanied by visualisation of their form and colour and silent recitation of their acoustic root sounds. It is a supplementary technique that enhances the first and sixth lessons by purifying the five fundamental factors of solid, liquid, luminous, aerial, and ethereal factors in the body. The fourth lesson, prāṇāyāma, involves deep regulated breathing accompanied by use of the iṣṭa mantra and cakra and by proper ideation. Like the third, the fourth lesson is a supplementary technique that facilitates the first and sixth lessons by regulating vital energy (prāṇa) flow in the body.

The fifth lesson, cakra śodhana, involves the purification of the cakras by using the iṣṭa mantra in a special way in conjunction with proper ideation. It is another ancillary technique that aids the first and sixth lessons by cleansing the cakras through control of the various propensities embedded in them. It gives energy and bliss, and creates a pliant and clear awareness that can be put to good use in the sixth lesson. The sixth and final lesson, guru dhāḥa, involves devotional meditation on the form of the guru, the embodiment of tāraka brahma. It requires the practitioner to pinnacle his or her mind to such a degree of penetrative focus that the mind dissolves into the unfathomable ocean of parama puruṣa. The sixth lesson is thus designed to lead the practitioner to the state of merger into nirguna brahma, nirvikalpa samādhi.

Apart from the six lessons of sahaja yoga, Sarkar taught the advanced techniques of kāpālika yoga and viśeṣa yoga to selected suitably qualified ācāryas of AM. Kāpālika yoga involves meditation at a cemetery between the hours of twelve midnight and three in the morning during the time of the new moon. It is aimed at conquering the propensities of fear and shyness, and imparts vitality and courage to the practitioner. Viśeṣa yoga involves some form of prāṇāyāma and use of the vindu, located between the ājñā and sahasrāra cakras, as a point for meditation. From oblique references, I suggest that viśeṣa yoga might also involve some kind of observation of the unfolding process of thought and emotion, as they manifest out of the pulsative silence of consciousness. Published accounts of the above two forms of meditation are extremely rare and very little information can be gleaned from available sources.

Sarkar encompasses his entire praxis with the spirit and philosophy of Neo-Humanism, the realisation and feeling that all being and all things in the universe are inter-related owing to their common origin in parama puruṣa. This realisation and feeling is expressed as a universal and non-discriminatory love for all animate and inanimate entities. It also serves as the primary motivation for spiritual practice and is intimately linked to the devotional sentiment (bhakti). The perfection of Neo-Humanism comes with the attainment of savikalpa samādhi. Neo-Humanism as a practice involves cultivating this universal sentiment and motivation in everyday life, and reflecting on Neo-Humanistic principles as part of spiritual practice.
All of the spiritual practices that I have discussed bring about changes in the body and mind of the AM practitioner in many ways. These changes take place as part of a dialectical process of struggle between the forces of vidyāmāyā and avidyāmāyā. This struggle occurs in the mind of the practitioner as well as in the social and global contexts. The practitioner, through the exercise of five kinds of viveka (nityānitya viveka, dvaitādvaita viveka, ātmānātman viveka, pañcakōśa viveka, and mahāvākya viveka), identifies clearly the goal of his or her spiritual movement and finally channels all negative (avidyā) and positive (vidyā) propensities towards the supreme source, parama puruṣa. The Sixteen Points of AM assist the practitioner in doing precisely that – channelling and sublimating all propensities by transmuting physical energy into psychic energy, psychic energy into spiritual energy, and finally spiritual energy into consciousness itself, whence both vidyā and avidyā find their consummation and synthesis in the wholeness of metempirical puruṣa.

Along the way of dialectical spiritual progress, the AM practitioner experiences certain biopsychological changes in his or her body and mind as a result of regular sādhanā. These changes include (1) increase in the glamour of the skin owing to a sentient diet; (2) hormonal changes resulting in (a) development of beard, moustache and chest, and deepening of voice in males, (b) growth of self-reliance and reduction of irrationality, vanity and quarrelsome nature in all persons, (c) strong desire for parama puruṣa, and (d) growth of universal love, among others; and (3) development of and increased hormonal secretion from the pineal and pituitary glands, resulting in revitalisation of lower glands and nerve plexuses.

Profound mind transformation in terms of attainment of various states of samādhi involves the gradual purification and development of the kośas of the mind, enabling the mirror-like mind to expand to cosmic proportions and to fully reflect the shining luminosity of infinite puruṣa. As each kośa is purified and expanded, it merges into the next kośa and so on, continuing until all kośas merge into the cosmic mahat, which in turn, finally merges into cosmic puruṣa. Thus, the static dominance of the kāmamaya kośa gives way to the mutative dominance of the manomaya kośa and atimānasa kośa, then to the sentient dominance of the vijñānamaya kośa and hiraṇmaya kośa, and finally to the non-qualified parama puruṣa.

Sarkar gives several schemas of meditative stages and attainments. They consist of: (1) the six stages of realisation – sālokya, sāmīpya, sāyujya, sārupya, sārṣṭhi, and kaivalya; (2) the four stages of pratyāhāra – yatamāna, vyātireka, ekendriya, and vaśīkāra; (3) the three stages of knowing – ava-ātmasthikārana, upa-ātmasthikārana, and samyak-ātmasthikārana; (4) a range of meditative absorptions comprising dharmamegha samādhi (discussed in Section 5.1), anindyānanda rasa samādhi (discussed in Section 5.1), kaṇkālamālinī samādhi, rāgānuga samādhi, rāgātmika samādhi, tanmātrika samādhi, and atimānasa yoga samādhi; and (5) four states of spiritual ecstasy – daśā, bhāva, bhāva samādhi, and mahābhāva. I have attempted to correlate all these schemas of spiritual realisation in a table on page 266 under subsection 6.3.3.

Finally, I have discussed the role, types, and functions of microscopic emanations of pure consciousness, which Sarkar terms microvita. Sarkar speaks of seven major types of microvita: yakṣa,
gandharva, kinnara, vidyādhara, prakṛtilīna, videhalīna, siddha. These microvita are generally considered positive though they do not always induce spiritual progress in the practitioner. Gandharva, kinnara, vidyādhara, yakṣa, prakṛtilīna, and videhalīna microvita are not invariably harmful to humans but can distract the spiritual practitioner from realising the ultimate goal of parama puruṣa. Siddha microvita are invariably ‘friendly’ and can assist in the spiritual progress of the AM practitioner. The sadguru has the ability to emanate and direct positive microvita in order to inspire or enlighten anyone he or she chooses. Such microvita exert their benevolent effects through the recipient’s cakras, and are in essence the kṛpā (grace) of the guru.

We have now completed our separate explorations into the cosmology, ontology, psychology, epistemology, and soteriology of AM, as taught by the late P. R. Sarkar. In the next chapter, I will critically compare and contrast Sarkar’s AM with older Indian traditions of thought and practice, attempting to draw out their commonalities and differences and to highlight how Sarkar has re-invented Tantra through his unique blend and innovation of concepts and practices from these traditions. In doing so, I aim to argue the thesis that Sarkar is an authentic, but in many ways, a radical, contemporary guru of the long and possibly ancient Tantric tradition.
Chapter 7
The Indian Philosophical Legacy

7.1 The Indian Spiritual Panorama
The spiritual legacy of India embraces both identity and change, both unity and diversity, within its historically unique episteme. It seeks the very depths of the self for answers to the perennial quest for truth and liberation from suffering. Many varied and colourful strands of Indian speculative philosophy and praxis exist within this spiritual panorama, including the classical orthodox schools of Sāṃkhya, Vedānta, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya, and Vaiśeṣika; and the heterodox schools of Buddhism, Jainism, and the Cārvāka philosophy. In particular, the orthodox philosophical schools of Sāṃkhya, Vedānta, and Yoga, and the heterodox teachings of Buddhism will be examined in relation to Sarkar’s thought, as they bear the closest resemblance to his ideology. The pan-Indian movement of Tantra synthesises many of these strands of thought but adds a unique mode of praxis that radically transforms the way to spiritual fulfilment and realisation. This Tantric strand straddles Buddhist, Hindu, and Jaina traditions, and exhibits many practical commonalities with all these traditions, despite varying philosophical speculations.

In this chapter, we will be attempting to map out a selection of Indian philosophical traditions and to compare each of them with Sarkar’s Ānanda Mārga. In this process, similarities and differences will be highlighted, and an analytical account of how Sarkar may have appropriated and redefined traditional Indian concepts will be offered. On the basis of his philosophical and practical conformity, albeit with some innovative re-interpretations and conceptual syntheses, with much of traditional Yogic and Tantric teachings, I will argue, in Chapter 9, that Sarkar is an authentic guru of the Tantric tradition, despite his non-allegiance to any known disciplic lineage (sampradāya) of Tantra. The method employed is both historical-comparative and phenomenological. It seeks to trace possible lines of influence on Sarkar’s thought by surveying various historical manifestations of Indian spirituality and comparing their central ideas and practices with Sarkar’s on their own terms. Common phenomenological features and themes will be explored and cross-compared, and divergences will be noted and accounted for wherever possible.

As it has been argued that a presuppositionless exegesis is impossible, the current comparative study takes place in the dynamic context of dialogical fusion of horizons of the reader and the texts. One expression of such fusion of horizons can be observed in the use of the phenomenology of


869 On the integral nature of Indian philosophy and religion, Raju comments: ‘Indian religion is a reflective way of life and therefore embodies philosophy also. In its purely academic formulations, which appeared later, this
meditative experience to illuminate aspects of the texts being read. This happens only rarely in this study and I have made it explicit whenever this is done. In the main, however, the analyses are based purely on textual evidence and scholarly opinion, and the interface of the phenomenology of experience and textual exegesis is merely hinted at as a potentially useful approach in future Sarkarian studies. I must admit that in accounting for both possible borrowings on Sarkar’s part and his departures from traditional thinking, more can and should be examined from the perspectives of history and linguistics. A more extensive and profound use of historical research and evidence as well as a more thorough linguistic analysis of primary texts, may prove extremely fruitful in Sarkarian-Indological comparisons. However, such a line of inquiry falls outside the scope of the current study and will be left to other scholars or some future work.

It is also important that I clarify certain assumptions I have made in relation to the textual-comparative endeavour. First, it is assumed that Sarkar, having been born and bred in modern-day India, would have had access to the plethora of ideas and texts that characterises India’s spiritual heritage. Whether he assimilated those ideas through formal studies or through informal ‘osmosis’ by virtue of his socio-historical location in Indian culture and history, is hard to know and would require more careful historical research. Suffice to say that Sarkar’s attendance at Vidyāsagar College in Calcutta would have exposed him in some measure to the historical and spiritual legacy of his forefathers, and may well have been an important source of his religious knowledge and subsequent philosophical constructions. Second, assuming that Sarkar’s philosophical knowledge has its roots in conventional learning in no way dismisses or negates the traditional understanding within AM (or within any Indian spiritual tradition for that matter) that Sarkar draws his insights and knowledge from an infinite, transcendent source, being, as his followers hold, a fully realised guru who is one with cosmic consciousness. It may well be that Sarkar’s epistemological roots lie in a realm beyond history and language, but in so far as his ideas bear resemblance (in varying degrees) to traditional Indian philosophies, it is not unreasonable to attempt to chart possible lines of intertextual relationships; for texts are as much historical documents as they are pools of wisdom, ideas, and knowledge of the collective consciousness of people across space and time and perhaps even beyond that. That Sarkar may have drawn on this collective pool of knowledge, whether through conventional learning or through meditative realisation, inevitably points to intertextual connections (if we understand texts in the way just described), and to the validity of this study’s aims and approach, whichever epistemological mode one chooses to privilege.

The selection of classical Indian systems is arguably best limited to those traditions deemed most similar to Sarkar’s project and hence most relevant for comparative study. In this chapter, the Vedic and Upanisadic roots of Sarkar’s thinking will be explored first with a view to situating Sarkar in the historical stream of Indian religiosity and spirituality. The Vedantic concepts of brahman, māyā, muktī, and mokṣa will then be compared with their Sarkarian counterparts to draw out their combination of philosophy and religion may not be so obvious, except when the problems of ethics and salvation

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similarities and differences. Sarkar’s extensive usage and redefinition of Śāmkhya terminology in his cosmology suffice to characterise him as a neo-Śāmkhya philosopher, while his heavy reliance on Yogic techniques of meditative training places him within the traditional lineage of Yoga, though not without idiosyncratic modifications to commonly accepted interpretations. Finally, Sarkar’s ideology and praxis will be compared with their Buddhist counterparts, and a preliminary attempt to highlight the Buddhist strands in his thinking will be made.

7.2 Vedic Sources: The Saṃhitās and the Upaniṣads
Almost all the salient ideas and practices of Indian spirituality can be traced to the ancient source texts of the Veda, the ‘sacred knowledge’. According to Klostermaier, the Veda consists of several categories of literature: the four Saṃhitās (‘Collections’), the early Upaniṣads, the Brāhmaṇas, and the Āraṇyakas, which together, comprise the Śruti (‘that which has been heard’), divine revelation. Other texts such as the Dharmāṣṭras, Itiḥāsa, and the Purāṇas constitute the Śmrī (‘that which has been remembered’), sacred tradition. Proponents of later Śaiva, Śākta, and Vaiṣṇava traditions argued, against vehement opposition from the orthodox Brahmaṇic camp, for the inclusion of their own revealed scriptures – the Āgamas, the Tantras, and the Saṃhitās – within the fold of Śruti. In practical terms, the Āgamas, Tantras, and Vaiṣṇava Saṃhitās exerted as much influence on the development of Hinduism as the Veda did, and could justifiably be considered part of the Śruti. In terms of religious orthodoxy, however, many Hindus would reject the claim that these later texts constitute infallible, divine revelation.

Of the four Saṃhitās found in the Vedic corpus, the Rgveda Saṃhitā is the oldest and acknowledged by some scholars as a source for the composition of the Sāmadeva Saṃhitā and the Saṃhitās of the Black (Kṛṣṇa) and White (Śukla) Yajurveda. Klostermaier (1997) draws on Gonda’s observation that the final codification of the four Vedas took place in pre-Buddhist times (ca. 600 B.C.E.), following centuries of oral transmission. In this chapter I will focus primarily on the Rgveda since its textual material is the oldest and perhaps most relevant to the comparison with Sarkar’s work. I will also make a brief examination of the Atharvaveda in relation to Sarkar’s AM, since the Atharvaveda has been regarded by scholars as containing ostensibly Tantric material, evident in its many magical spells and charms. While comparisons between the Vedic corpus and Sarkar’s AM texts show obvious parallels, it is unlikely that Sarkar himself would have drawn directly from Vedic material. It is far more likely that Sarkar is intellectually indebted, if at all, to later classical religious traditions which have either drawn on the Vedic corpus in their separate textual constructions or used Vedic scriptural quotes to legitimise their separate philosophical positions within mainstream

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orthodox religion. Whichever may be the case, it is instructive to note conceptual parallels between Sarkar and the Vedas, insofar as Vedic notions may have indirectly filtered down to him via the classical and medieval schools of Indian religiosity.

The Rgveda
Reat (1990) locates the composition of the Rgveda as extending from 1500 to 800 B.C.E.\(^{874}\), while others, such as Feuerstein, date its composition to as far back as between 4000 and 2000 B.C.E.\(^{875}\) Notwithstanding the uncertainty about its dating, the Rgveda contains ancient material that may have provided germinal ideas for the subsequent metaphysical speculations of the Upaniṣads. According to Reat (1990), the Rgveda is conspicuously silent on three major themes of the later Upaniṣads, namely: (1) the notion of an innermost essence that is the Self (ātman) of the person; (2) the notion of cyclical rebirths driven by the accumulated karma of individual beings; and (3) the possibility of spiritual liberation (moksha), escape from the cycle of rebirths synonymous with realisation of brahman.\(^{876}\) However, in several of the later hymns, it does contain, in germinal form, the notion of a singular ultimate reality in the form of a cosmic puruṣa. This monistic tendency is said to be an outgrowth of Vedic speculations and to foreshadow the subsequent development of the Upaniṣadic idea of brahman as the terminal and singular ground of all being.\(^{877}\)

The Rgveda consists of a collection of more than a thousand hymns dedicated to various deities, such as Agni (the fire god), Sūrya (the sun god), and Indra (the thunder god). Elements of the Rgveda were extracted to form the bulk of both the Śāma ved and the Yajurveda. In the case of the Śāma ved, the hymns are coupled with appropriate musical instructions for recitation; in the Yajurveda, the hymns are incorporated into instructions for performance of Vedic ceremonies. The Atharvaveda is a collection of hymns and spells of different sorts, and may have its origin partially in the indigenous culture of India. Scholars differ in opinion on the true purport and purpose of the four Vedas. Some see them as mere instruments for the performance of Vedic sacrificial rites (yajña),\(^{878}\) while others perceive a deeper mystical dimension to these ancient texts, seeing in them the presence of a Proto-Yoga or a primitive technology of consciousness transformation.\(^{879}\)

Feuerstein argues that certain hymns of the Rgveda point to (1) speculations on the ultimate singular source of the variegated universe, (2) the creation and evolution of the cosmos, (3) a

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873 See Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, p. 353.
876 Reat, Origins, pp. 7-8.
877 Ibid. For an interpretation of the Vedic religious vision, see William K. Mahoney, The Artful Universe: An Introduction to the Vedic Religious Imagination (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998). According to Mahoney, earlier Vedic texts also speak of the ‘unified integrative principle’, rta (cosmic order or universal law), which is ‘that hidden structure on which the divine, physical, and moral worlds are founded, through which they are inextricably connected, and by which they are sustained. … the Vedic concept of Rta can rightly be understood to stand as the precursor to the classical South Asian notion of dharma …’ (p. 3).
878 See Klostermaier, Survey, p. 67.
879 See Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, pp. 136-141.
conception of the non-Vedic ascetic or proto-yogi termed keśin, and (4) a quasi-spiritual practice of ‘visionary, ecstatic intuition’ (maniṣā). Of particular interest to Feuerstein in relation to Vedic monistic speculations are verse 6, verses 20 to 22, and verse 46 of hymn 1.164, the famous Asya-vāmīya Sūkta. Verse 6 enquires about the nature of the unborn One who is the cause of the universe. Verses 20-22 speak of two birds that occupy the same tree, with one bird eating the fruits of the tree while the other merely looks on. These three verses can be interpreted in various ways, the best-known being the Vedāntic interpretation of the fruit-eating bird as the deluded being trapped in conditioned existence, and of the onlooking bird as the detached Self that underlies the whole of nature. Verse 46 speaks of the nameless singular Being who is given different names by various sages:

They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, and he is heavenly nobly winged Garutmān. To what is one, sages give many a title; they call it Agni, Yama, Mātrāśvan.

These verses arguably point to the germinal conception of a singular underlying cause and ground of the pluralistic universe, foreshadowing the later Upaniṣadic conception of brahman and the equating of it with the innermost essence of one’s self, ātman.

Hymn 10.129, known as the Nāsadiya Sūkta or ‘Hymn of Creation’, is an instance of Vedic philosophical speculation on the creation and evolution of the cosmos. The verses of this hymn ask probing questions on the origin of the universe, and the seventh verse even proffers an equivocating rhetorical question on whether the One knows or knows not the whence and wherefore of creation:

Whence arose this creation, whether it created itself or whether it did not? He who looks upon it from the highest space, He surely knows. Or maybe He knows not.

An idea in hymn 10.129 that is of interest to us is the notion of desire being the first seed of the mind, which in turn gives rise to the existence of the world:

In the beginning, desire – the first seed of mind – arose in That. Seer-poets, searching in their heart with wisdom, found the bond of existence in non-existence.

This earlier Vedic cosmogony arguably contributes to the psychocosmogony of the later Upaniṣads and classical philosophical systems (darśana), wherein the primal source of the objective universe is also the source of the subjective mind-structures of intelligent human beings.

Another hymn that points to cosmogonic speculations is hymn 10.90, the Puruṣa Sūkta or ‘Hymn of Person’. In this particular hymn, the primeval Person (puruṣa) is said to cover the entire

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880 See Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, pp. 136-141. The quote is taken from p. 138.
882 Rg Veda 10.129: 7, translated in Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, p. 151.
universe and extend ten digits beyond it, suggesting the notion that the Creator pervades his creation yet transcends it. The primeval *puruṣa* gives rise to the created order through sacrifice and dismemberment of his body.

1. A thousand heads hath Puruṣa, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet. On every side pervading earth he fills a space ten fingers wide.
2. This Puruṣa is all that yet hath been and all that is to be; the lord of immortality which waxes greater still by food.
3. Such is his greatness; and Puruṣa is superior to this. All existing things are a quarter of him, and that which is immortal in the sky is three quarters of him.
4. With three-fourths Puruṣa went up; one-fourth of him again was here. Thence he strode out to every side over what eats not and what eats.
11. When they divided Puruṣa, into how many parts did they distribute him? What was his mouth? What were his arms? What were called his thighs and feet?
12. The Brāhmaṇa was his mouth; the Rājanya became his arms; the Vaiśya was his thighs; the Śūdra sprang from his feet.\(^{884}\)

Verses 11 and 12 describe the creation of human beings through enumeration of the four ‘castes’ of Vedic society at that time, correlating each caste with a particular body part of the cosmic Person.

In both the *Nāsadiya-Sūkta* and the *Puruṣa-Sūkta*, we find concepts that are remarkably similar to ones taught by Sarkar, although it is unclear whether Sarkar borrowed these notions directly from the Rgveda (as discussed at the beginning of section 7.2).\(^{885}\) Firstly, the notion of a singular cause underlying the entire creation is essentially Sarkar’s concept of *brahma*, which he also calls *parama puruṣa*, a term reminiscent of the cosmic *puruṣa* mentioned in the *Puruṣa-Sūkta*. While lacking the detail of philosophical speculation found in Sarkar’s monistic cosmogony, the germinal monism of the *Rg Veda* nevertheless provides the earliest concept of cosmic unity known to India, a monism that is later to contribute to the sophisticated speculations of the classical *darśanas*. (The potential line of influence on Sarkar’s thought from three of the six classical *darśanas* will be investigated in the next section.) Secondly, the Vedic idea of desire as the ‘first seed of the mind’ and thus of the entire cosmos is echoed in Sarkar’s concept of *kāma-bīja*, the seed of desire or vertex point from where the cosmogonic process bursts forth. In Sarkar’s elaborate *brahma-cakra* theory, it is the spontaneous desire and will of *parama puruṣa* that provides the impetus for creation. Thirdly, the Vedic concept of *puruṣa* as pervading the cosmos with ‘one-quarter’ of its ‘body’ and extending beyond it with ‘three quarters’ is reflected in Sarkar’s twin notions of *saguna brahma* and *nirguna brahma*. For Sarkar, *saguna brahma* is the localised portion of the spatially infinite *nirguna brahma* that has been transmuted from pure consciousness into mind and matter. As such, *saguna brahma*

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\(^{883}\) *Rg Veda* 10.129: 4, translated in Feuerstein, *Yoga Tradition*, p. 150.

\(^{884}\) *Rg Veda* 10.90: 1-4 and 11-12, quoted in Reat, *Origins*, pp. 18-20.

\(^{885}\) In *SS* Part 24, pp. 51-54, Sarkar quotes and comments on Verses 1 and 2 of the *Puruṣa-Sūkta*, explaining them in the context of his *brahmacakra* theory and biopsychology. Here, Sarkar appears to be quoting from the *Rg Veda* in an attempt to legitimise his own ideology, rather than using it as a source for his own ideas.
appears analogous to the one quarter of puruṣa present in ‘all existing things’ and nirguṇa brahma to the three quarters of puruṣa ‘immortal in the sky’.⁸⁸⁶ Fourthly, the basic idea of the universe and its cause being of a single substance, as found in the Puruṣa Sūktā, is again reflected in Sarkar’s notion of consciousness (which he takes to be the meaning of the term ‘puruṣa’) as the fundamental ‘stuff’ of which reality, both objective and subjective, is made. Thus, Sarkar, in formulating his philosophical synthesis of AM, appears to be drawing on notions common to Upaniṣadic and Tantric constructions, constructions that may be traced back to the emerging cosmogonic speculations of the ancient Vedas. The issue of the conceptual and practical origins of the Upaniṣads and Tantras is subject to much scholarly debate and beyond the scope of this study.⁸⁸⁷

The Rgveda offers no direct or detailed information on spiritual practices such as the yoga and meditation that were central to many later texts, such as the comparatively late Yoga Upaniṣads (ca. 900-1200 C.E.?), for example.⁸⁸⁸ However, several scholars, such as Miller (1974), Frawley (1991), and Crange (1994), perceive an underlying structure of spiritual praxis in the Vedas, arguing that a range of meditative methods have been utilised and spoken of by the Vedic ṛṣis.⁸⁸⁹ According to Miller, there are two main words for prayerful meditation in the Vedas, namely brahman (from the verbal root brh meaning ‘to expand’) and dhī (meaning ‘intensive thought, inspired reflection, or meditative vision’). Three distinct but related stages of ‘meditation’ are said to be documented in the Vedas, namely (1) ‘mantric meditation’ – in which the Vedic ṛṣis become mentally absorbed through the use of sacred utterance or mantra; (2) ‘visual meditation’ – in which a particular deity is prayerfully visualised; and (3) ‘absorption in mind and heart’ – in which ‘the seer, on the basis of what Miller calls a ‘seed-thought’, explores the great psychic and cosmic mysteries that led to the composition of the cosmogonic hymns’.⁸⁹⁰ The culmination of these three meditative stages is realisation of the ‘fearless Light’,⁸⁹¹ or ‘the sun hidden by darkness’,⁸⁹² which Feurstein equates with ecstasy or samādhi. Crange discusses the notion of upāsanā or ‘substitution meditation’ and argues that the shift from external sacrifice to internal worship/meditation represents an important stage in late Vedic contemplative practice.⁸⁹³ While the practice of dhī or deity visualisation is highly probable in the

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⁸⁸⁶ From Rg Veda 10.90: 3.
⁸⁸⁸ See Feurstein, Yoga Tradition, p. 415.
⁸⁹⁰ Feurstein, Yoga Tradition, p. 139.
⁸⁹¹ Rg Veda 6.47: 8.
⁸⁹² Rg Veda 5.40: 6.
ritual context of the Vedas, it is less likely that a state understood by yogis to be *samādhi* was actually described in the Vedas. Reat argues:

… the case that can be made for the development of Indian *yoga* from these few vague concepts found in the *Rg Veda* is extremely weak. An equal or better argument can be advanced in favour of the theory that many of these Vedic concepts, if they have any relationship to *yoga* at all, derive from contact with non-Vedic thought.\(^{894}\)

The ‘few vague concepts’ that Reat mentions are notions found in three classes of hymns, namely those dealing with (1) ritual ingestion of the drug *soma*; (2) *tapas* (‘mystical heat’); and (3) the ‘long-haired’ (*keśīn*) shaman. In Reat’s view, these Vedic examples ‘resemble Indian *yoga* only insofar as any examples of shamanistic mysticism must necessarily resemble *yoga*.\(^{895}\) Whatever the case may be, the mantra utterances and deity visualisation of Vedic prayerful meditation may well be precursors to the later and more sophisticated Tantric techniques of *mantra* and *iṣṭa-devatā* (one’s chosen tutelary deity) meditation. If this indeed is the case, the embryonic quasi-Tantric praxis of the Vedas can be said to contribute, at least in part, to the pool of knowledge of later medieval Tantra, from where Sarkar may have drawn some of his Tantric ideas such as *mantra* incantation and cosmic ideation (contemplating the unity of self and cosmic *puruṣa*).

*The Atharvaveda*

Feuerstein dates the composition of the Atharvaveda to a few centuries after the *Rg Veda*, but contends that much of its material may be as old as the oldest hymns of the *Rg*.\(^{896}\) As mentioned in the previous section, the Atharvaveda consists mostly of magical spells and charms, aimed at promoting peace, health, prosperity, love, and even misfortune on enemies. The contents of the Atharvaveda thus appear to be proto-Tantric in character insofar as they share magical and mundane concerns that are evident in the mantric rites of later Tantra. Interspersed throughout the Atharvaveda appear to be several cosmogonic and quasi-mystical hymns that suggest an element of esoteric speculation, speculation that may have contributed to later, more developed Tantric ideas such as *nādi* and *prāṇa*.

Feuerstein identifies a number of hymns that arguably contain mystical or quasi-mystical elements that suggest links between the Atharvaveda and later Yoga. For example, hymn 4.1 supposedly tells of Vena’s mystical realisation of the ‘womb (*yoni*) of being and non-being’\(^{897}\) and hymn 9.1 supposedly intimates the ‘secret of the ‘honey whip’ (*madhu-kaśa*), which is a ‘ … mysterious substance … said to have sprung from the elements that were generated by the Gods and upon which the sages contemplate.’\(^{898}\) Hymn 10.7 is said to consist of an enquiry into the nature of the ‘World Pillar’ (*skambha*), a divine ground that sustains the whole universe. In the same hymn, it is

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\(^{895}\) Ibid.


\(^{897}\) Feuerstein, *Yoga Tradition*, p. 154.
said that this skambha is realised by those who ‘know the transcendent reality (brahman) within their own heart’\textsuperscript{889} and that this realisation takes place through the practice of austerities (tapas). Verse 15 of the same hymn mentions the notion of nādi (a concept later taken to mean ‘current’ of life-force or prāna), suggesting to Feuerstein that the subtle-body concept of later Hatśa Yoga and Tantra may have already been present in seed form in the ancient Vedas.\textsuperscript{900} Hymn 11.4 mentions the notion of life-force, prāṇa, which is said to ‘… clothe man, as a father could clothe his dear son.’\textsuperscript{901}

The above discussion highlights the possible contribution of the Atharvaveda to subsequent philosophical speculations of Yoga and Tantra, although as it stands, the evidence for such a contribution remains scanty and debatable. Be that as it may, the presence of notions such as madhukāsa, skambha, brahman, nādi, and prāṇa in the Atharvaveda indicates that the later Yogic and Tantric usage of these terms (or their derivatives) did not occur in a historical and contextual vacuum. Whether or not the older Vedic meanings of these terms concur with their later Yogic and Tantric counterparts, it can be said that later thinkers would have found in the Atharvaveda a readily available source of terminology for their philosophical constructions. Therefore, insofar as such historical relationship exists between the Atharvaveda and Tantra, Sarkar can be said to have ultimately based some of his own speculations on, and borrowed some of his terminology from, the incipient fund of knowledge already present in the Atharvaveda.

\textit{The Upaniṣadic Corpus}

The post-Saṃhitā part of the Vedic corpus consists of the (1) Brāhmaṇas – prose works that are systematisations of Vedic sacrificial rituals and mythology; (2) Āraṇyakas – ‘forest teachings’ very similar to the Brāhmaṇas that are meant as ritual books for retiring orthodox brahmans who lived in the forests, dedicated to a life of solitary contemplation and ritual; and (3) Upaniṣads – mystical and philosophical teachings that internalise Vedic rituals, and represent a synthesis of Vedic cosmology and non-Vedic (indigenous Indian) psychology. The Upaniṣads are also known as the Vedānta or ‘Veda’s End’, signifying their status as the culmination of Vedic speculative thought. As the Upaniṣads, far more than the Brāhmaṇas and the Āraṇyakas, contain mystical and philosophical teachings directly relevant to our current comparative project, I will limit my discussion to them. The present discussion, like all other sections in Chapters 7 and 8, is not meant to be exhaustive of the topic. I merely aim to highlight some obvious parallels between Upaniṣadic and Sarkarian thought, sufficient to argue the case for Sarkar’s intellectual debt to earlier strands of Indian philosophising. While it is possible that Sarkar drew directly from the Upaniṣads, it is perhaps more likely that he was influenced by Upaniṣadic ideas elaborated in the historically later darśanas. Be that as it may, Sarkar’s debt to the Upaniṣadic legacy, whether direct or indirect, will be the focus of this subsection.

\textsuperscript{889} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{890} Feuerstein, \textit{Yoga Tradition}, p. 155.
\textsuperscript{900} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{901} Ibid.
I will focus on comparisons of Sarkar’s teachings with selections from the early Upaniṣads, leaving aside comparisons with the later ones, in particular a collection of sectarian texts known as the Yoga-Upaniṣads (possibly 900-1200 C.E.). Although these later texts contain developed Yogic ideas that are closer to Sarkar’s own than the early Upaniṣads, they reflect historical sectarian development of more fundamental ideas, some of which are traceable to the early Upaniṣadic corpus. As this section is concerned with the ancient Indian roots of Sarkar’s thinking, I will therefore not deal with these later Upaniṣads.

The Earliest Upaniṣads

Traditionally, the principal Upaniṣads are said to number variously ten, eleven, fourteen, or eighteen, depending on the authorities that translate or comment on them. According to Olivelle (1996), the scholarly consensus is that the Brhadāraṇyaka and the Chāndogya are the earliest Upaniṣads, and most likely pre-Buddhist (ca. 700-500 B.C.E.). They are followed by three other prose Upaniṣads – Taittirīya, Aitareya, and Kaushitaki – which are probably pre-Buddhist and date to approximately 600 to 400 B.C.E. Next come five verse Upaniṣads – Kena, Kaṭha, Īśa, Śvetāsvatara, and Muṇḍaka – all of which are probably ‘the earliest literary products of the theistic tradition, whose later literature includes the Bhāgavad Gītā and the Purāṇas. They are assigned to the last few centuries B.C.E., and are followed by two late prose Upaniṣads, the Praśna and the Māṇḍūkya, both of which were probably composed at the beginning of the common era. In this section, I limit discussion to the ten earliest Upaniṣads starting with the Brhadāraṇyaka and ending with the Muṇḍaka.

The Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad is both an Āraṇyaka and an Upaniṣad, as is recognised in its title. It is probably the oldest of the Upaniṣads, apart from some individual passages that may be younger than those of others, in particular, the Chāndogya. Two passages from the first chapter of the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad articulate a notion that is echoed in Sarkar’s concept of brahma:

In the beginning this world was just a single body (ātman) shaped like a man. He looked around and saw nothing but himself. The first thing he said was, ‘Here I am!’ and from that the name ‘I’ came into being. …

… In the beginning this world was only Brahma, and it knew only itself (ātman), thinking: ‘I am brahman.’ As a result, it became the Whole. … If a man knows ‘I am brahman’ in this way, he becomes the whole world.

This Upaniṣadic conceptualisation of brahman becoming conscious of its self-existence is reflected in Sarkar’s notion of cosmic mahat, the first evolute, that is basically a reflexive self-awareness of

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903 Ibid.
904 Ibid.
905 Ibid.
906 Ibid.
907 Ibid.
908 BU 1.4.1 translated in Olivelle, p. 13.
909 BU 1.4.10 translated in Olivelle, p. 15.
brahma, a sense of ‘I am’ or ‘I exist’. An AM practitioner who realises oneness with the cosmic mahat becomes unified with the cosmos, just as the Upaniṣadic sage becomes ‘this whole world’ upon realising that he or she is brahma.

Sarkar likens the human being attempting to find and merging into parama puruṣa to a salt doll trying to fathom the depth of the ocean and inevitably dissolving in it. This analogy resembles a comparison made in the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad:

When a chunk of salt is thrown in water, it dissolves into that very water, and it cannot be picked up in any way. Yet, from whichever place one may take a sip, the salt is there! In the same way this Immense Being has no limit or boundary and is a single mass of perception. It arises out of and together with these beings and disappears after them …

The passage quoted above also underscores the message that the ultimate Being or reality is limitless and consists of a boundless perception that is co-emergent with all beings. This idea seems to be expressed in Sarkar’s notion of the cosmic mind (comprising citta, aham and mahat), a mind that is infinite in scope and gives rise to the multitudinous world while simultaneously perceiving it.

In chapter 2 of the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, there is a section comparing all reality to honey, and in particular, describing the self (ātman) as the ‘honey of all beings’. The following passages expound the honey doctrine (madhu-vidyā) by declaring that all reality is contained in the ātman and the ātman in all things, each being like honey to the other:

This self (ātman) is the honey of all beings, and all beings are the honey of this self. The radiant and immortal person in the self and the radiant and immortal person connected with the body (ātman) – they are both one’s self. It is the immortal; it is brahman; it is the Whole. This very self (ātman) is the lord and king of all beings. As all spokes are fastened to the hub and the rim of a wheel, so to one’s self (ātman) are fastened all beings, all the gods, all the worlds, all the breaths, and all these bodies (ātman).

This honey-like nature of reality and the ātman is echoed in Sarkar’s notion of all things as sweet, blissful expressions of the supreme puruṣa or brahma. This insight is most concretely expressed in the second meditative lesson of AM, which is named madhu-vidyā (‘honey knowledge’). Also, Sarkar’s concept of the relationship between entities and purusottama sounds familiarly close to the notion that all things are fastened to the ātman, just as ‘spokes are fastened to the hub and rim of a wheel’. In his view, all entities in the cosmos are intimately linked to purusottama, the cosmic nucleus of the infinite ātman within which the universe exists.

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909 BU 2.4.12 translated in Olivelle, pp. 29-30.
910 BU 2.5.14-15 translated in Olivelle, p. 32.
The _Chāndogya Upaniṣad_ is primarily concerned with the cosmic and ritual correspondences of the Śāman (the Śāmavedic chant in the Soma sacrifice) and the High Chant (Udgīthā).\(^\text{911}\) There is little in the Chāndogya that is of interest for our comparison with Sarkar’s AM, except for an allusion to the honey doctrine (madhu-vidyā) in the third chapter, and some references to the ātman in the third and seventh chapters. The third chapter begins with a comparison of the sun to the honey of the gods and the rays of the sun to honey cells of the hive. It is difficult, from the passages themselves, to claim that the notion of the universe as a honey-like manifestation of brahman exists in the Chāndogya. The passages on the ātman are less ambiguous and point to the notion of an infinite and inexhaustible reality that is simultaneously within and without. Verses 12 and 14 describe the nature of brahman and ātman respectively, and Verse 14 equates the two:

And take what people call ‘brahman’ – clearly, it is nothing but this space here outside a person. And this space here outside a person – clearly, it is the same as this space here within a person. And this space here within a person – clearly, it is the same as this space within the heart; it is full and non-depleting. Anyone who knows this obtains full and non-depleting prosperity. …\(^\text{912}\)

… This self (ātman) of mine that lies deep within my heart – it is smaller than a grain of rice or barley, smaller than a mustard seed, smaller than even a millet grain or a millet kernel; but it is larger than the earth, larger than the intermediate region, larger than the sky, larger even than all these worlds put together. This self (ātman) of mine lies deep within my heart – it contains all actions, all desires, all smells, and all tastes; it has captured this whole world; it neither speaks nor pays any heed. It is brahman.\(^\text{913}\)

Sarkar’s notion of the ātman resembles the same notion described in the passages quoted above, although as discussed in Chapter 3, Sarkar articulates the notion of ātman in a seemingly non-substantialist and process manner. He speaks of ātman as a continuum of cognisance that witnesses and knows, without any sense of an ‘I’ or a self. This ‘I’ feeling, according to Sarkar, is merely a thought construct, termed mahat. To Sarkar, it is this dynamic flow of cognisance that spontaneously bursts forth into thoughts, feelings, propensities, and the multitudinous objects of the universe in the process of brahma-cakra. The infinite and inexhaustible nature of this flow of cognisance termed the ātman echoes a similar notion in chapter 7 of the Chāndogya, a notion of the ātman as the ‘plenitude’, albeit in a manner that does not suggest a non-substantialist metaphysic:

Plenitude, indeed, is below; plenitude is above; plenitude is in the west; plenitude is in the east; plenitude is in the south; and plenitude is in the north. Indeed, plenitude extends over this whole world. … Next, the substitution of self – “The self, indeed, is below; the self is above; the self … extends over this whole world. … A man who sees it this way, thinks about it this way, and perceives it this way; a man who finds pleasure in the self, who dallies with the self, who mates with the self, and who attains

\(^\text{911}\) Olivelle, p. 95.
\(^\text{912}\) _CU_ 3.12.7-9, translated in Olivelle, p. 122.
\(^\text{913}\) _CU_ 3.14.3-4, translated in Olivelle, p. 124.
bliss in the self – he becomes completely his own master; he obtains complete freedom of movement in all the worlds.\textsuperscript{914}

The \textit{Taittiri\r{\i}ya Upani\r{s}ad} contains several passages that are very relevant to our comparison with Sarkar’s AM. The notion of the five sheaths of the \textit{\=atman} is seen in chapter 2 of the \textit{Taittiri\r{\i}ya}, in which the self (\textit{\=atman}) consisting of food (\textit{annarasamaya}), lifebreath (\textit{pr\=\=anamaya}), mind (\textit{manomaya}), perception or understanding (\textit{vij\=\=anamaya}), and bliss (\textit{\=anandamaya}) is described:

From this very self (\textit{\=atman}) did space come into being; from space, air; … from plants, food; and from food, man. Now, a man here is formed from the essence of food. … Different from and lying within this man formed from the essence of food is the self (\textit{\=atman}) consisting of lifebreath, which suffuses that man completely. … Different from and lying within this self consisting of breath is the self (\textit{\=atman}) consisting of mind, which suffuses this other self completely. … Different from … is the self (\textit{\=atman}) consisting of perception, which suffuses … Different from … is the self (\textit{\=atman}) consisting of bliss, which suffuses this other self completely.\textsuperscript{915}

The concept of five sheaths of the self is echoed, with some modification, in Sarkar’s \textit{ko\r{s}a} theory of the mind.\textsuperscript{916} Sarkar retains the terms ‘\textit{annamaya}’, ‘\textit{manomaya}’, and ‘\textit{vij\=\=anamaya}’ but replaces ‘\textit{pr\=\=anamaya}’ and ‘\textit{\=anandamaya}’ with ‘\textit{k\=\=amamaya}’ and ‘\textit{hira\=\=nymaya}’ respectively. He also adds \textit{atim\=\=anasa ko\r{s}a} to the list, placing it between \textit{manomaya ko\r{s}a} and \textit{vij\=\=anamaya ko\r{s}a}. This addition expands Sarkar’s list of \textit{ko\r{s}as} into six. The order of the five sheaths (or six in the case of Sarkar) differs between the \textit{Taittiri\r{\i}ya} and Sarkar, as set out below:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{\textit{Taittiri\r{\i}ya Upani\r{s}ad}} & \textbf{Sarkar} \\
\hline
1. \textit{\=atma-annamayah} & 1. \textit{annamaya ko\r{s}a} \\
2. \textit{\=atma-pr\=\=anamayah} & 2. \textit{k\=\=amamaya ko\r{s}a} \\
3. \textit{\=atma-manomayah} & 3. \textit{manomaya ko\r{s}a} \\
4. \textit{\=atma-vij\=\=anamayah} & 4. \textit{atim\=\=anasa ko\r{s}a} \\
5. \textit{\=atma-\=anandamayah} & 5. \textit{vij\=\=anamaya ko\r{s}a} \\
6. \textit{\=hira\=\=nymaya ko\r{s}a} & 6. \textit{hira\=\=nymaya ko\r{s}a} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Another conceptual difference is that while the \textit{Taittiri\r{\i}ya} categorisation of sheaths pertains to the \textit{\=atman} itself, Sarkar’s \textit{ko\r{s}as} pertain directly to the mind, and only indirectly to the \textit{\=atman}. For Sarkar, the five \textit{ko\r{s}as}, together with the \textit{aham} and \textit{mahat} constitute the mind, which are themselves transformations of the \textit{\=atman} that is their source and ground.

\textsuperscript{914} \textit{CU} 7.25.1-2, translated in Olivelle, pp. 165-166.
\textsuperscript{915} \textit{TU} 2.6.1-5, translated in Olivelle, pp. 185-187.
In section 6 of the same chapter of Taittirīya Upaniṣad, there is a passage that describes the creation of the world as a result of the inherent desire of brahman to become many:

He had this desire: ‘Let me multiply myself. Let me produce offspring.’ So he heated himself up. When he had heated himself up, he emitted this whole world, everything that is here. After emitting it, he entered that very world. And after entering it, he became in turn Sat and Tyat, the distinct and the indistinct, the resting and the never resting, the perceived and the non-perceived, the real (satya) and the unreal (anṛta).

Sarkar, in his brahmaacakra theory, appears consonant with this notion of the One desiring to become many by attributing the commencement of the cosmogonic process to the will (icchā) and desire (kāma) of parama puruṣa. Sarkar terms the point in the triangle of forces from which creation begins as kāmabija (seed of desire) or icchābija (seed of will).

In chapter 3 of the Taittirīya, there is a passage attributed to the sage Bhṛgu that equates brahman with ānanda, ‘bliss’:

So Bhṛgu practised austerities. After he had practised austerities, he perceived: ‘Brahman is bliss – for clearly, it is from bliss that these beings are born; through bliss, once born, do they live; and into bliss, do they pass upon death.’

This is perhaps the clearest indication of Sarkar’s intellectual debt to the Upaniṣadic tradition, since the idea of brahman as ānanda features as the central concept of Sarkar’s entire ideology. Like the sage Bhṛgu in the Taittirīya, Sarkar speaks of ānanda (which is brahma) as the ultimate source, immanent ground, and final desideratum of the universe. Sarkar’s entire soteriological praxis is geared towards attainment of this ānanda.

Apart from the Taittirīya, we see, in the first chapter of the Aitareya Upaniṣad, another description of the urge of brahman to create the universe:

In the beginning this world was the self (ātman), one alone, and there was no other being at all that blinked an eye. He thought to himself: ‘Let me create the worlds.’

A similar idea is found in Sarkar’s articulation of the brahmaacakra theory. Sarkar echoes the Aitareya by stating that ‘monotonous loneliness’ was the reason for parama puruṣa’s creation of the universe with all its beings, beings that are essentially fragments within its cosmic mind. In section 3 of the Aitareya, there is a passage that describes how and where brahman ‘enters’ the human body and dwells therein:

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916 It seems likely that the set of kośa terminology used by Sarkar is original. To the best of my knowledge, no classical or contemporary sources predating Sarkar’s Idea and Ideology (first published in 1959) posit this modified terminology of the five sheaths.
917 AU 1.1.1, translated in Olivelle, p. 195.
918 SS Part 11, pp. 92-93.
So he split open the head at the point where the hairs part and entered through that gate. This gate (dvār) has the name ‘Split’ (vidṛti), and that is the heaven of pleasure (nāndana).\(^9\)

The point on the head where ‘the hairs part’, in the above passage, sounds very like the crown or sahasrāra cakra of Sarkar’s biopsychology. In Sarkar’s view, the sahasrāra cakra is situated at the topmost point of the central channel and is correlated with the pineal gland. He speaks of this cakra as the microcosmic seat of the infinite, non-qualified brahma and thus of supreme bliss. We can thus see the obvious similarity between the ‘gate’ mentioned in the Aitareya and the much later and more elaborated notion of Sarkar’s sahasrāra cakra. In spite of the similarities, it is likely that Sarkar drew his ideas from the Tantric tradition, where the concept of cakra is far more developed, rather than directly from the Upaniṣads. Nevertheless, it is instructive to note the possible foundations of later Indian speculative thought, at least in part, in the ancient Vedic corpus.

Another passage in the Aitareya describes brahman as cognition or the power of knowing, a concept that is very close to Sarkar’s definition of brahma:

Who is this self (ātman)? … Is it that by which one sees? Or hears? Or smells odours? Or utters speech? … Is it awareness? Perception? Discrimment? Cognition? Wisdom? … Thought? … Memory? … Will? … Love? Desire? But these are various designations of cognition. It is brahman; … It is everything that has life … Knowledge is the eye of all that, and on knowledge it is founded. Knowledge is the eye of the world, and knowledge, the foundation. Brahman is knowing.\(^2\)

Sarkar defines brahma as the supreme cognitive faculty, the infinite and unending flow of consciousness underlying and animating all existence. The passage quoted above again points to an Upaniṣadic precursor to Sarkar’s own thinking on the notion of brahma.

The Kauśitaki Upaniṣad contains one passage that describes the monistic and all-inclusive essence (brahman) of the universe as the real (satyam). This passage occurs in the form of a dialogue between brahman and a knower of brahman:

Brahman then asks him: ‘Who am I?’
And he should reply: ‘The real.’
‘What is the real (satyam)?’

‘Sat is whatever is other than the gods and the lifebreaths (prāṇa), while Tyam consists of the gods and the lifebreaths. All of that is comprehended by this word “real” (satyam). That is the full extent of this whole world. And you are this whole world.’\(^3\)

\(^9\) AU 1.3.12, translated in Olivelle, p. 197.
\(^2\) AU 3.2-3, translated in Olivelle, pp. 198-199.
\(^3\) KsU 1.6, translated in Olivelle, p. 205.
This immanent view of *brahman* is reminiscent of Sarkar’s concept of *saguna brahma*, the infinite consciousness (*puruṣa*) qualified by *prakṛti* to become real, not illusory, transmutations of its subtle essence in the form of the universe. To Sarkar, the world is real (*satyam*), though relative and changing in comparison with *brahma*, the ultimately real.\(^{922}\)

The *Kena Upaniṣad* present *brahman* as the unknowable and ineffable essence that is the creator of all, including the gods. Chapter 1 of the Kena contains several cryptic verses that bear conceptual similarities to Sarkar’s thought on *brahma*:

That which is the hearing behind hearing,
the thinking behind thinking,
the speech behind speech,
the sight behind sight — …
Sight does not reach there;
neither does thinking or speech.
We don’t know, we can’t perceive,
how one would point it out.
It is far different from what’s known.
And it is farther than the unknown — …
Which one cannot express by speech,
by which speech itself is expressed —
Learn that that alone is *brahman*, …
Which one cannot grasp with one’s mind,
by which, they say, the mind is grasped —
Learn that that alone is *brahman*,
and not what they here venerate.\(^{923}\)

The verses quoted above point to the ineffability and unknowability of *brahman*, as that which is beyond even the grasping mind. This notion is akin to Sarkar’s view that *brahma* or *parama puruṣa* is the ultimate subjectivity of the universe, an entity that can never come within the scope of the objectifying mind. In other words, Sarkar, in keeping with the Kena, speaks of *brahma* as that which can never be objectified or perceived by the mind. Rather, for Sarkar, *brahma* is known only through being *brahma*, aided by a spiritual process involving action, knowledge and devotion.

The *Katha Upaniṣad* speaks of the ultimate reality of *brahman-ātman* as residing in ‘the cave of the heart’, a concept that is echoed in Sarkar’s description of ātman (which is essentially *brahma*) concealed in the ‘cave’ (*guhā*) of the ‘I’ feeling (‘mahat’):

O Naciketas, you who understand –
the fire altar that leads to heaven,
to the attainment of the endless world,
and is its very foundation.
Know that it lies hidden,
In the cave of the heart.\(^{924}\)

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\(^{922}\) See *AS* 2.14: *Brahma satyam jagadapi satyamāpeksikam* [*Brahma* is Absolute Truth; the universe is also truth, but relative.]

\(^{923}\) *KeU* 1.2-5, translated in Olivelle, p. 227.
The primeval one who is hard to perceive, wrapped in mystery, hidden in a cave, residing within the impenetrable depth – Regarding him as god, an insight gained by inner contemplation, both sorrow and joy the wise abandon.  
Finer than the finest, larger than the largest, is the self (ātman) that lies here hidden, in the heart of a living being. Without desires and free from sorrow, a man perceives by the creator’s grace the grandeur of the self.

The verses quoted above indicate that the ātman is realised through insight, by means of ‘inner contemplation’ and the ‘creator’s grace’, suggesting that both knowledge (jñāna) and devotion (bhakti) are critical to self-realisation. Again, we see a parallel in Sarkar’s soteriology of meditation and devotion, a soteriology in which both meditative insight and devotional self-surrender to the grace of brahma are necessary for ultimate spiritual realisation.

The Isā Upanisad contains doctrines and ideas expressing theistic and devotional tendencies suggestive of other similar texts broadly assigned to the same time and milieu. The simultaneously monistic and theistic view of the Isā can be seen in Sarkar’s ‘cosmotheistic’ notion of brahma as both the immanent substance and transcendent creator of the universe. The Upaniṣad says:

This whole world is to be dwelt in by the Lord, whatever living being there is in the world. …
It moves – yet it does not move
It’s far away – yet it is near at hand!
It is within this whole world – yet it’s also outside this whole world.

Sarkar’s notions of saguṇa brahma – which is within and comprises the world – and nirguṇa brahma – which is utterly beyond the world – seem to reflect a view similar to, though intellectually more sophisticated than, the Upaniṣadic view expressed in the verse quoted above.

The Śvetāsvatara Upanisad appears to contain ideas from the Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition and to be influenced by emerging theistic tendencies that are most apparent in the popular Bhagavad Gītā. It is in the Śvetāsvatara that we first see the notion of the brahmacakra or ‘wheel of brahman’ being articulated. The term ‘brahmacakra’ is of central importance in Sarkar’s entire ideology; it is a

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924 KaU 1.14, translated in Olivelle, p. 233.
925 KaU 2.12, translated in Olivelle, p. 236.
926 KaU 2.20, translated in Olivelle, p. 237.
927 Olivelle, p. 248.
928 IU 1, translated in Olivelle, p. 249.
929 IU 5, translated in Olivelle, p. 249.
930 Olivelle, p. 252.
concept that he elaborates into a complex theory of cosmogony and evolution with the aid of
terminology and ideas from Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Śaivism, among others. Olivelle and Radhakrishnan
give variant translations of verse 6 of chapter 1 of the Śvetāsvatara, the first possibly expressing a
dualist soteriology and the second a monistic one:

(1) Within this vast wheel of brahman, on which all subsist and which abides in all, a
goose keeps moving around. When he perceives himself (ātman) as distinct from the
impeller, delighted by that knowledge he goes from there to immortality. 931

(2) In this vast brahma-wheel, which enlivens all things, the soul flutters about
thinking that the self in him and the Mover (the Lord) are different. Then, when
blessed by him, he gains eternal life. 932

Olivelle’s translation of verse 6 implies that a person realises the deathless state by seeing the
difference between his self and the prime mover of the universe, which is probably brahman, a view
that is resonant with the Sāṃkhyan soteriological notion of distinguishing puruṣa (consciousness) from
prakṛti (material nature). Radhakrishnan’s translation of the same verse implies a totally different
understanding of liberation, liberation that is realised by overcoming the separation of one’s self from
the Lord, since it is the sense of differentiation of the self from the ‘Mover’ of the brahma-cakra that
causes the self’s continual ‘fluttering’ in the world. In this case, Sarkar’s ontology and soteriology are
more consistent with the interpretive translation of Radhakrishnan than with that of Olivelle,
unequivocally stating the idea of non-dual realisation of self and brahma as the fundamental
soteriological insight. In short, Sarkar appears to have drawn from the Śvetāsvatara the notion of a
‘wheel of brahma’, symbolising the cosmological order, as well as the idea of salvation as the self
realising its ultimate oneness with the Mover of this wheel, which is brahma. The idea of the Mover
may well be a precursor to Sarkar’s conception of puruṣottama, the conscious nucleus of the
cosmological order that controls, witnesses, and enlivens all entities revolving around it.

Verse 15 of the Śvetāsvatara compares the ātman to oil in sesame seeds and butter in curd,
which can be obtained through sincere seeking and austerity:

Like oil in sesame seeds and butter in curds, like water in the river-bed and fire in the
fire-drills, so, when one seeks it with truth and austerity, one grasps that self (ātman) in
the body (ātman) – that all-pervading self, which is contained [in the body], like butter
in milk. 933

Here again, we see Sarkar’s debt to the Upaniṣadic legacy through his usage of exactly the same
analogies of oil in sesame seeds and butter in curd to illustrate the nature of consciousness, which is
concealed within the mind of beings just as oil or butter is potentially found in their respective

931 SU 1.6, translated in Olivelle, p. 253.
932 SU 1.6, translated in Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upaniṣads, p. 713.
933 SU 1.15, translated in Olivelle, p. 255.
unrefined counterparts. Just as realising the ātman requires sincerity and austerity, Sarkar states that finding this pure consciousness within the mind requires sincere and constant practice of meditation, practice that can be likened to the effort of austerity.

Finally, several verses in the Śvetāśvatara describe the nature of the one God (which is brahman) as the lone ‘witness’ that shines through the world and beyond:

The one God hidden in all beings, pervading the universe, the inner self of all beings, the overseer of the work, dwelling in all beings, the witness, the spectator, alone, devoid of qualities, …

There the sun does not shine, nor the moon and stars; there the lightning does not shine, of this common fire need we speak! Him alone, as he shines, do all things reflect; this whole world radiates with his light.

Sarkar speaks of brahma as the all-effulgent entity whose light shines brilliantly and infinitely in and beyond all things. He characterises this effulgent brahma as the witness of the cosmos, which, in its nirguṇa state, is free of all qualities that can delimit or define it. The resemblance of Sarkar’s ideas to those of the Śvetāśvatara is striking.

The Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad gives the well-known image of sparks flying out of a fire to characterise the nature of multiple entities issuing forth from a single and substantially identical source:

As from a well-stoked fire sparks fly by the thousands, all looking just like it, So from the imperishable issue diverse things, and into it, my friend, they return.

In the verse quoted above, the sparks, representing all the multifarious objects and life-forms of the cosmos, are said to ultimately return to the same source from which they came – a teleology that is deeply resonant with Sarkar’s doctrine of pratisaṅcara, the evolutionary journey of all entities back to their cosmic origin in brahma. Apart from this verse, the rest of the Muṇḍaka reiterates the general Upaniṣadic stand of monism and, to a greater extent than the other Upaniṣads, the opposition to Vedic ritualism. All these are consonant with Sarkar’s ontological stance of non-dualism and his critical view of pure ritualism bereft of any meditative or liberative significance.

The last Upaniṣad that we are going to investigate is the Māṇḍūkya, traditionally assigned to the Atharvaveda, which identifies the sacred syllable Om with the cosmos, brahman, and the ātman. The most interesting comparison between the Māṇḍūkya and Sarkar is with regard to a set of terms common to both of them – Vaiśvānara, Taijasa, and Prajñā. The beginning verses of the Māṇḍūkya read:

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934 *SU* 6.11, translated in Olivelle, p. 264.
936 *MuU* 2.1.1, translated in Olivelle, p. 271.
Brahman is this self (ātman) … consisting of four quarters.
The first quarter is Vaiśvānara – the Universal One – situated in the waking state, perceiving what is outside, … and enjoying gross things.
The second quarter is Taijasa – the Brilliant One – situated in the state of dream, perceiving what is inside, … and enjoying refined things.
The third quarter is Prājña – the Intelligent One – situated in the state of deep sleep – deep sleep is when a sleeping man entertains no desires or sees no dreams; become one, and thus being a single mass of perception; consisting of bliss; and thus enjoying bliss; and having thought as his mouth. He is the Lord of all; he is the knower of all; he is the inner controller; he is the womb of all – for he is the origin and the dissolution of beings.\footnote{937}

In these verses, Vaiśvānara appears to be the witness of conscious, waking experience; Taijasa the witness of the state of dreaming; and Prājña the witness of the state of deep, dreamless sleep. In contrast, Sarkar uses the term ‘Vaiśvānara’ to refer to the witnessing entity of the causal cosmic mind – the three subtlest kośas of the macrocosmic citta, namely the hiraṇmaya kośa, vijñānamaya kośa, and atimānasā kośa. To denote the witnessing entity of waking experience, when the kāmamaya kośa (in addition to the other four kośas) is active, Sarkar uses the term ‘Prājña’. This is in contrast to the usage of the same term in the Māndūkya, wherein Prājña is said to witness the state of deep, dreamless sleep. With regard to the state of dreaming, Sarkar uses the term ‘Taijasa’ to denote the witnessing entity of the manomaya kośa, the subconscious layer of the mind that is said to be particularly active in dreaming. Thus, Sarkar and the Māndūkya agree on the usage of the term ‘Taijasa’. The above discussion indicates that Sarkar may have borrowed his terminology pertaining to the various functional forms of the witnessing entity from the Māndūkya Upaniṣad, a possibility corroborated by evidence of conceptual similarities between Sarkar’s teachings and the Upaniṣadic corpus unearthed in this section.

7.3 Classical Hindu Philosophies
The foregoing presentation focussed on the roots of Indian religion found in the Vedas and Upaniṣads, and provided an overview of similarities, differences, and possible connections of core Indian religious ideas with the concepts of Sarkar’s AM. Critical comparisons were made from the viewpoint of religious doctrine and to some extent religious praxis. In this section, the focus shifts towards a more philosophical critique of Sarkar’s ideas, examining how they converge with, diverge from, and perhaps synthesise the various premises and arguments of classical Hindu philosophical schools, most notably Sāṃkhya, Yoga, and Vedānta. I will elucidate how Sarkar attempts to resolve some of the major logical and philosophical problems posed by these systems in his arguably syncretic way.

As noted in Chapter 1, the demarcation of religion from philosophy in Indian thought is somewhat artificial and perhaps alien to the Indian worldview, where the strands of religion, philosophy, ritual, art, and myth are all woven together into an organic and seamless whole.
However, in this phenomenological comparison of ideas between Sarkar and his Indian predecessors, such a demarcation serves a practical exegetical purpose. It allows a more analytical and thorough treatment of the ideas presented in Indian thought in a manner that is both systematic and clarifying. Admittedly, the style and content of this demarcation reflects my horizon as a reader, based on my understanding of how Indian thought can best be understood.

### 7.3.1 Sāṃkhya and Sarkarian Metaphysics

Of all the systems of Indian philosophy, the school of thought (darśana) that comes closest to Sarkar’s philosophy is probably Sāṃkhya, ‘Enumeration’. With origins lost in antiquity, Sāṃkhyan metaphysics has had a huge impact on Indian thought in general, having been incorporated, in one form or another, into the philosophical elaborations of later Indian systems (in the theologies of Śāktism, Śaivism, and Vaiṣṇavism, for example). Possibly the oldest among Indian systems, Sāṃkhyan ideas have been found in the cosmogonic hymns of the Rgveda, parts of the Atharvaveda, and in the Upaniṣads. The idea of all things evolving from one principle that divides itself, and the Upaniṣadic classification of phenomena under a finite number of categories, may reflect Sāṃkhyan influence, though there is insufficient evidence to support either of the two contending views: that the Upaniṣads are based upon a developed Sāṃkhyan philosophical system; or that Sāṃkhya developed out of the ideas found in the Upaniṣad. The major textual sources for the Sāṃkhya system are the Sāṃkhya-Kārikā (SK) of Īśvara Krṣṇa, dating from the third century C.E., and the Sāṃkhya-Sūtra attributed to Kapila himself (regarded by traditional Indian works as having lived in the sixth century B.C.E.). Apart from Kapila, two other teachers, namely Āsuri and Pañcaśikha, are often referred to in later Sāṃkhyan treatises as important originators of Sāṃkhya philosophy. Scholarly opinion considers the Sāṃkhya-Sūtra to be a later work than the Sāṃkhya-Kārikā (perhaps as late as the fourteenth or fifteenth century C.E.) and finds little evidence to support the historicity of Kapila, Āsuri or Pañcaśikha.939

*Metaphysical Cosmology*

The basic philosophy of Sāṃkhya has been classified as dualistic realism, positing two fundamental and irreducible realities that exist from beginningless to endless time: puruṣa (the male principle identified as pure consciousness) and prakṛti (the female principle identified as the material matrix of the universe). Larson describes Sāṃkhya variously as ‘process materialism’, 940 ‘contentless consciousness’, 941 and ‘rational reflection’, 942 highlighting the cosmological, teleological, and

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937 *MaU* 2-6, translated in Olivelle, p. 289.
941 Larson, *Encyclopaedia*, pp. 73-83.
pedagogical dimensions of Śāmkhya philosophy. According to the SK, multiple puruṣas and a singular prakṛti exist separately in polarity prior to the creation of the universe. When puruṣas come into proximity with prakṛti, they mysteriously and mistakenly identify with the changes undergone by the three gunas or forces of prakṛti, while primordial prakṛti herself is divided into the multiplicity out of which evolve the entire cosmos and all the individual entities within it.\textsuperscript{943} There is regularity and pattern in the evolution of microcosms, in that each microcosmic entity is characterised by the presence of the three gunas in different proportions. These three gunas are sattva or lightness, rajas or passion, and tamas or darkness, which in their original state, prior to the influence of puruṣa, are in equilibrium with one another. Cosmic evolution begins when the association of puruṣa with prakṛti causes the gunas to lose their equilibrium and to start the evolutionary process. The first product of evolution is the mahat (the ‘great one’) or buddhi (‘intellect’), followed by the ahamkāra (‘ego principle’), which issues from it. From ahamkāra arises manas (the ‘lower mind’) and the ten indriyas (five cognitive senses of sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing and five conative senses of speech, prehension, movement, excretion, and reproduction). In addition, the ahamkāra gives rise to five tanmātras (‘subtle essences’) that underlie the five sensory abilities. In turn, the tanmātras give rise to the five bhūtas (‘gross material elements’) of earth, water, fire, air, and ether. In total, classical Śāmkhya recognises twenty-four principles of material existence (prakṛti) together with an infinite number of transcendental consciousnesses (puruṣa).\textsuperscript{944} The whole thrust of Śāmkhya soteriology is to remove human beings from the ‘threefold misery’ of life and to offer, as the primary means for doing this, the method of ‘discriminative knowledge of the manifest, the unmanifest and the knower’.\textsuperscript{945} This is understood to be a process of separating pure consciousness (puruṣa) from the material principles (prakṛti) by discriminative gnosis and not through any form of Yogic or meditative practice. The emancipatory process involves puruṣa casting off sensory perception, and realising the true nature of prakṛti, the source of ego and conceptual thought. This liberation of puruṣa occurs at death, when prakṛti finally ceases its activity and puruṣa gains kaivalya, ‘aloneness’ or ‘perfect freedom’.

Interesting and fruitful comparisons can be made between Śāmkhya and Sarkarian metaphysics, as Sarkar’s texts are replete with terminology common to Śāmkhya. In Idea and Ideology, one of his two philosophical masterpieces, Sarkar uses extensively the binary opposition of puruṣa and prakṛti to characterise his ultimate reality, which he calls brahma. The Śāmkhya-Kārika\textsuperscript{a} describes puruṣa as a ‘witness, solitary, indifferent, spectator, and non-agent’,\textsuperscript{946} in other words, a passive and detached observer. As in Śāmkhya, Sarkar describes puruṣa as pure cosmic consciousness, the witnessing cognitive aspect of ultimate reality, and prakṛti as cosmic energy, the dynamic operative aspect of the same. But unlike Śāmkhya, he describes puruṣa not only as

\textsuperscript{944} Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, p. 103.
\textsuperscript{945} Śāmkhya-Kārika\textsuperscript{2}, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{946} Śāmkhya-Kārika\textsuperscript{19}, p. 18.
witnessing consciousness (sākṣi) but also controller of the gunas (gunayāntraka).\textsuperscript{947} While stating that puruṣa does no action on the world directly (akārta), he nevertheless describes puruṣa as acting indirectly by controlling the operation of the gunas. Thus, Sarkar’s conception of puruṣa as dynamic and creative witness is in contrast to Śaṅkhyā’s notion of puruṣa as mere passive witness, a theoretical move that aligns Sarkar closer to the Tantric viewpoint.\textsuperscript{948} Sarkar dialectically unifies puruṣa and prakṛti on a higher level into an integral entity he calls brahma, the supreme cosmological, ontological, and soteriological truth. Instead of regarding puruṣa as entirely distinct and separate from prakṛti, a stance often labelled dualist (with reference to a single puruṣa and the singular prakṛti) or pluralist (with reference to multiple puruṣas and the singular prakṛti), Sarkar sees puruṣa and prakṛti as merely two polar aspects of one unity-totality. In the terminology popularised by Mircea Eliade, Sarkar’s unity of polarities is an instance of coincidentia oppositorum.\textsuperscript{949} For Sarkar, ultimate reality is unequivocally singular and the multiplicity of the universe emerges and evolves out of the ‘body’ of brahma – a monistic stance echoing that of Kashmir Śaivism, and to a much less extent Advaita Vedānta.

While some scholars maintain that Śaṅkhyā’s dualism of puruṣa and prakṛti reflects a dualism of a male and female principle,\textsuperscript{950} others argue that the perceived male-female polarity in Śaṅkhyā’s puruṣa-prakṛti pair is a result of the influence of Tantric conceptions of reality, an error of superimposition made by scholars who claim that such gender polarity exists in Śaṅkhyā.\textsuperscript{951} Sarkar unambiguously ascribes a masculine identity to puruṣa and a feminine identity to prakṛti (see subsection 3.2.1 for discussion), suggesting his conformity to a Tantric rather than Śaṅkhyā interpretation of these paired concepts. The terms śiva and śakti, rather than puruṣa and prakṛti, are used in Tantric traditions, and Sarkar’s obvious equations of śiva with puruṣa and śakti with prakṛti clearly indicate his attempt to synthesise, in his Ānanda Mārga cosmo-ontology, Śaṅkhyān and Tantric ideas.

Sarkar’s cosmogony begins with the sequential and progressive qualification of puruṣa by the three gunas of prakṛti within the infinite attributeless ( nirguna) brahma. This process of qualification results in the graded metamorphosis of puruṣa into progressively less subtle and more limited forms, though puruṣa substantially remains unchanged in any way. Thus, while substantially immutable, puruṣa metamorphoses itself from one into many and from subtle into coarse, much like water vapour condensing into liquid water, or liquid water freezing into ice while remaining essentially H₂O. In contrast, Śaṅkhyā posits that the proximity and association of multiple puruṣas with the singular prakṛti triggers a cascade of evolutionary changes within the body of prakṛti, resulting in the various

\textsuperscript{947} AS II.15, p. 24.  
\textsuperscript{950} See e.g. Narendranath Bhattacharyya, History of the Tantric Religion (Delhi: Manohar, 1987), p. 113.  
categories of material existence. In Sāṃkhya, prakṛti is the material and instrumental cause of the universe, both macrocosmic and microcosmic, while the distinct and plural puruṣas remain essentially unchanged by the activities of prakṛti. Though unchanged, puruṣa nonetheless interacts with prakṛti and mysteriously and mistakenly identifies with the manifold activities of prakṛti.

In Sarkar’s cosmogony, the first evolve that emerges out of the delimiting influence of prakṛti over puruṣa is the cosmic mahat or the sense of self-existence within brahma, cosmic consciousness. Mahat is the first expression of qualified (saguna) brahma as a result of the action of sattvaguna, and is also the first and subtlest layer of cosmic mind. For the sake of clarification, it is worthwhile reinforcing that, in Sarkar’s view, saguna brahma is constituted of the cosmic mind in association with its witnessing consciousness (puruṣottama) throughout the entire cycle of creation (brahmaacakra). There appears to be no substantial difference between the Sāṃkhyan and Sarkarian views of the three guṇas (the forces of prakṛti) except in relation to the definition of rajoguna. Hatley (2000) points out:

These forces are ubiquitous in Indian thought, particularly in Sāṃkhya, and are typically utilised for building taxonomic classifications and associations: tamas is dark, heavy, static; rajas is movement, passion, activity; sattva is light, pure, sentient … Sarkar however opts for a dialectical understanding of the guṇas by declaring rajas as merely an intermediate phase of sattva and tamas. To further emphasise the opposition between these two, Sarkar largely removes the negative qualities traditionally associated with rajas, such as passion, making it a neutral ‘mutative’ principle.952

Hatley adds, however, that there are times when Sarkar applies the usual triplicate nature of the guṇas in ways that leave out a dialectical interpretation. Be that as it may, it is reasonable to say that Sarkar makes some attempt to modify the commonly understood meaning of rajoguna as and when it suits his purpose.

According to Sarkar’s cosmogony, out of the singular mahat arises the singular cosmic aham, the sense of individuating agency within the cosmic mind, as a result of the action of rajoguna. From the cosmic aham arises the cosmic citta, the objectified portion of the cosmic mind that functions as a perceptive mental plate as well as substratum for the thought projections that form the material universe. Sarkar views the manifold objects of the universe as essentially thought-forms within the cosmic citta, all of which are constitutively microscopic waves of consciousness vibrating at varying frequencies and wavelengths. The cosmic citta and all its objectified thought-forms are produced through the action of tamoguna. It is in this vein that Sarkar calls the universe a ‘macropsychic conation’, a case of matter emerging from mind.

Sarkar shares with Sāṃkhya this idea of matter emerging from mind but conceives the nature of the events and their sequence differently. In Sāṃkhya, the first evolve arising out of the interaction of multiple puruṣas with prakṛti is again the mahat, though there is ambiguity as to whether it is
macrocosmic, microcosmic, or both, in nature. The Sāṃkhya mahat appears phenomenologically identical to Sarkar’s mahat, though Sarkar makes a clear distinction between the cosmic mahat that emerges out of puruṣa in the first phase (sañcara) and the unit mahat that forms in the second phase (pratisañcara) of the cosmic cycle. The Sāṃkhya ahamkāra also appears phenomenologically identical to Sarkar’s aham, whether taken microcosmically or macrocosmically, though again, Sarkar locates the macrocosmic and microcosmic counterparts of aham sequentially at specific points in his brahmacakra while Sāṃkhya seems not to do so. For that matter, Sāṃkhya does not present the cosmogonic process in a neat cyclical fashion as does Sarkar.

The next evolute in Sāṃkhya is manas or lower mind, and though it appears very similar to Sarkar’s citta, it differs from it in one very important respect: in Sāṃkhya, manas does not give rise to the bhūtas and tanmātras as does the cosmic citta; instead ahamkāra does. Moreover, it is unclear whether in Sāṃkhya the term manas refers to some sort of macrocosmic ‘lower mind’, or a microcosmic one, or both. In addition, while Sāṃkhya sees the ten indriyas as arising directly out of the ahamkāra, Sarkar conceives of the indriyas as evolving biologically out of sufficiently complex physical and mental structures, which have themselves been formed from the five fundamental factors (bhūtas) that evolved out of cosmic citta.

The above discussion suggests that the Sāṃkhyan influence in Sarkar’s thought may be so great as to qualify him as a neo-Sāṃkhyan thinker. Sarkar’s re-writing of Sāṃkhyan concepts of puruṣa and prakṛti appears to have solved two difficulties faced by Sāṃkhya philosophy as identified by Loy: (1) the issue of how numerous, distinct and unrelated, yet omnipresent puruṣas could occupy the same infinite space without affecting one another; and (2) the problem of how the radical dualism of puruṣa and prakṛti allows for any possibility of alliance between them. In his redefinitions of puruṣa and prakṛti, Sarkar appears to have done precisely what Loy suggests as potential resolutions to the above problems: ‘(1) conceiving of puruṣa not as distinct from each other, but as various aspects or reflections of one unitary consciousness; and (2) conceiving of prakṛti not as distinct from this unified consciousness, but as an aspect of it.’ Thus, these departures from traditional Sāṃkhyan cosmogony and ontology, as highlighted above, align Sarkar more closely with Tantric integralism and bipolar monism. (We will investigate Sarkar’s connections with Tantra more closely in Chapter 8.)

Soteriology
In terms of soteriology, Sāṃkhya conceives of liberation (here termed kaivalya) as simply the process of progressive withdrawal of individual puruṣas from the influence of prakṛti by discriminative wisdom. As Klostermaier puts it:

Spirit, having been restless in connection with matter, realises matter to be the cause of its restlessness. By realising the nature of prakṛti as contrary to its own nature and recognising all objective reality as but evolutes of prakṛti the spirit becomes self-satisfied and self-reliant. The very dissociation of puruṣa from prakṛti is its liberation.955

The Śāmkhya-Kārikā gives a vivid simile to describe the relationship and soteriological dynamics between puruṣa and prakṛti.956 Puruṣa is compared to a spectator observing prakṛti as a dancer, who after showing all her skills, has no choice but to repeat her performance over and over again. The spectator loses interest as he realises the repetition, and seeing that he no longer pays any attention to her, the dancer ceases all performance. This simile indicates how the witnessing puruṣa gradually loses interest in and becomes disengaged from the activities of prakṛti after an insight into their repetitive nature, finally resulting in the cessation of prakṛti’s activities and its own emancipation. This emancipation can occur while the individual is still alive, with puruṣa remaining associated with the body, though no new momentum is produced that will bind puruṣa further in material existence. This is compared to the way a potter’s wheel keeps moving for a while even without being pushed, owing to the forces applied previously.957 In contrast, Sarkar sees liberation not as a dissociation of individual puruṣas from prakṛti but as a process of prakṛti merging, in stages, back into the infinite and singular puruṣa with which she is coeval. As the power of prakṛti wanes through the course of pratisaṅcara, coupled with the meditative efforts of the spiritual practitioner and the attractive force of the cosmic witnessing nucleus (puruṣottama), the human mind overcomes the bondage of prakṛti, expands into deeper kośas, and finally merges into its source, the ātman that is essentially one with parama puruṣa. Attaining this final merger results not from discriminative knowledge alone but from a balanced application of action (karma), knowledge (jñāna), and devotion (bhakti). The introversial force (vidyāmāyā) and grace (kṛpā) of parama puruṣa are crucial to this process of emancipation.

Hence, while for Śāmkhya, liberation consists in puruṣa-prakṛti dissociation, for Sarkar, liberation is a matter of prakṛti-puruṣa merger. The Śāmkhya soteriological process involves progressive withdrawal of consciousness from all objective perceptions, and mental and egoic activities so as to be totally alone in a state of kaivalya; the Sarkarian approach involves progressive mental expansion such that pure consciousness becomes so increasingly reflected that mind finally merges into consciousness – a state which Sarkar also calls kaivalya. Sarkar’s kaivalya differs, however, from its Śāmkhya counterpart in that it is not a state of utter ‘aloneness’ of individual puruṣas from one another and from the world but rather a state of profound unity with the attributeless ground of all existence (nirguṇa brahma) and thus with all things. Sarkar’s kaivalya is synonymous with nirvikalpa samādhi or merger into nirguṇa brahma. Again, while Śāmkhya achieves its goal by

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954 Loy, p. 67.
955 Klostermaier, Survey, p. 401.
means of discriminative knowledge or wisdom alone, Sarkarian Tantra does so by means of a combination of action, knowledge, devotion, cosmic attraction, and grace.

Theory of Causation

Finally, it is instructive to compare the theory of causation elucidated by Sarkar with that of Śāṅkhya. Śāṅkhya’s causation theory is technically called satkāryavāda, meaning that the effect (kārya) is pre-existent (sat) in its cause, and also prakṛtiparināmavāda, meaning that the effect is a real transformation (parināma) of nature (prakṛti). The SK describes it thus:

The effect is ever existent, because that which is non-existent, can by no means be brought into existence; because effects take adequate material causes; because all things are not produced from all causes; because a competent cause can effect that only for which it is competent; and also because the effect possesses the nature of the cause.\[^{958}\]

This theory is opposed to the vivarta (‘illusory change’) doctrine of idealistic schools of thought such as Vedānta and the Cittamātra school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Prakṛtiparināmavāda does not apply to Sarkar’s philosophical stance on causation, a stance that could possibly be described by the term ‘puruṣaparināmavāda’. Sarkar does not, however, mention the terms satkāryavāda and puruṣaparināmavāda in any of his published discourses. He nevertheless posits that all created entities are produced out of the ‘stuff’ of pure consciousness, being transformed and tangible states of the formless and limitless ground of existence. The created universe is real and not illusory, though it exists as a conventional reality in relation to the ultimate reality of brahma. Hence, the universe does not arise out of nothing but rather is a manifestation of latent creative potential embedded within purusa. (See Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of Sarkar’s cosmogonic and causation theory.)

While Sarkar and Śāṅkhya disagree on the original material of the universe and the details and sequence of the cosmogonic process, they nevertheless seem to concur on the doctrine of parināmavāda – the view that the effect is a real, not illusory, transformation of its cause. This indicates yet another Śāṅkhyan line of influence on Sarkar’s thought.

It is debatable whether Sarkar accepts the causation view of satkāryavāda, which amounts to the argument that the variegated universe already exists in the undifferentiated, unconditioned reality of brahma. In our discussion of Sarkar’s cosmogonic theory in Chapter 3, we note that the objective universe is essentially a thought projection of brahma, an actual metamorphosis of the fundamental ‘stuff’ of pure cognisance. While the basic material of the universe pre-exists in its cause, brahma, the universe itself does not yet exist in the primordial ocean of pure cognisance. In this sense, Sarkar seems not to have advocated the doctrine that the universe ‘pre-exists’ in its material cause, stating instead that the universe exists as a real potential awaiting actualisation rather than as a fully actualised

\[^{957}\] Śāṅkhya-Kārikā 67, p. 49.
effect in nirguna brahma. This potential for universal manifestation is activated as a result of the innate desire (kāma) and will (icchā) of brahma, which permit prakṛti (the operative aspect of brahma) to exert its binding and transformative influence over the puruṣa (the cognitive aspect of brahma) of infinite manifestive potential.

7.3.2 Yoga and Sarkarian Soteriology

We will now proceed to a discussion of the dimensions of praxis within classical Yoga in comparison with Sarkarian Tantric Yoga. The term ‘Yoga’, apart from its technical reference to the system of thought and praxis associated with Patañjali, is often used to refer to various styles or methods of practice aimed at union with ultimate reality. Chaudhuri mentions several well-defined Yogic disciplines, namely the ‘yoga of breath control’ (ḥaṭha), ‘yoga of mind control’ (rāja), ‘yoga of action’ (karma), ‘yoga of love’ (bhakti), ‘yoga of knowledge’ (jñāna), ‘yoga of being-energy’ (kuṇḍalini), and ‘yoga of integral consciousness’ (pūrṇa).\(^{959}\) In this section, we will refer to Yoga not in this general sense of style or method but in the specific sense of Yoga as primarily the system encoded by Patañjali in his Yoga-SAutra.

The classical Yoga of Patañjali shows parallels to Sāṃkhyan metaphysics but, unlike Sāṃkhya, elaborates a range of Yogic practices aimed at the attainment of its highest goal, samādhi (usually translated as ‘ecstasy’ or more accurately ‘enstasy’). While some scholars claim that the Yoga of Patañjali is nothing but a ‘meta-psychological technique based upon the philosophy of the Sāṃkhya’,\(^ {960}\) others support the view that while Yoga does draw on parts of Sāṃkhyan philosophy, it nevertheless gives them new interpretations, thus justifying Yoga’s recognition as a separate philosophical system.\(^ {961}\) Sarkar’s emphasis on spiritual practices for the concrete realisation of his philosophical and theological ideals warrants a close comparison with traditional Yogic praxis and ideals.

The authoritative school (darśana) of classical Yoga can be traced to two main authoritative sources. One of these is the Yoga-SAutra (YS) composed or compiled by Patañjali (ca. second - third century C.E.). YS is regarded by some scholars as a text that represents the culmination of a long development of Yogic speculation and technology.\(^ {962}\) The other main authoritative source for classical Yoga is the Yoga-Bhāṣya (YB) of Vyāsa (ca. fifth - sixth century C.E.), a commentary to the YS.\(^ {963}\) In this section, we will be examining the philosophy and practice of yoga espoused in the YS and YB, drawing freely from scholarly studies on the topic, and comparing and contrasting with


\(^ {960}\) See e.g. P. T. Raju, The Philosophical Traditions of India (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), p. 165.

\(^ {961}\) See e.g. Ian Whicher, The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana: A Reconsideration of Classical Yoga (Albany: State University of New York, 1998), p. 45.

\(^ {962}\) See Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, p. 284.

Sarkar’s formulation of his Yogic path. A comparative examination of the metaphysics, cosmogony, psychology, soteriology, and higher states of consciousness (*samādhi*) will be attempted.

**Metaphysics**

Classical Yoga can be described as both a psycho-metaphysics and a soteriology, expounding both a map of the inner and outer universe and a path of practice leading from bondage to salvation. The central and most important concept of classical Yoga is that of the pure identity called *puruṣa*, the ‘unseen seer’ behind the field of physical and mental experience. Whether *puruṣa* is to be regarded as singular or plural is unclear, but its characteristic as pure consciousness (*cit*) or sheer awareness (*citi*) is well established. The exact nature, function, and mechanism of this correlation are not entirely clear, though the predominance of *sattvaguna* or factor of luminosity in the subllest level of *prakṛti* indicates it is like the intrinsic luminosity of *puruṣa*. It is possible that this similarity between *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* allows their mutual interaction, bestowing upon the *prakṛti* mind a sense of self (*asmitā-mātra*) and intelligence (*buddhi*).

Whereas classical Yoga is ambiguous with regard to the singularity or plurality of *puruṣa*, Sarkar unequivocally declares *puruṣa* to be singular, and gives it the name *parama puruṣa* to signify its ultimate and all-inclusive nature. To Sarkar, it makes no sense to speak of plural monadic entities that are fundamentally free of all qualities and qualification underlying the apparent manifestations of the universe. Following Tantric non-dualism, he sees only one, singular entity, which encompasses the totality of reality within its very ‘body’; and he argues that this is the conclusion pluralistic or dualistic philosophies have to reach if they are to follow their own logic to the very end. While accepting *cit* (pure consciousness) and *citi* (sheer awareness) as essential features of *parama puruṣa*, Sarkar does not hesitate to add *sat* (unchangeability) and *ānanda* (bliss) to its being. Sarkar’s *puruṣa* is not a mere detached witness but also a vibrant and blissful existence intimately connected to the manifest world. Defining *prakṛti* as inseparable from and coeval with *puruṣa*, comprising two essential aspects of *brahma*, Sarkar avoids the problem of how an eternally isolated *puruṣa* can associate and interact with *prakṛti*. He cleverly proposes that while it is possible to functionally

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965 See YS II.23-24 and YB II.17 in Hariharānanda, pp. 190-198 and 151.
966 See YB II.17.
distinguish puruṣa from prakṛti, they are in reality not dual but singular. In the nirguna state, brahma is attributeless and ultimately undefinable, and the closest conceptualisation of it that one can obtain is to say that puruṣa just exists while prakṛti is dormant or inoperative as its three guṇas have yet to differentiate from one another. In nirguna brahma, prakṛti is merely an undifferentiated matrix of haphazardly moving forces that defies linguistic categorisation. The will of paraṇa puruṣa is what triggers off the process of creation, beginning with the formation of triangles of forces, leading to the bursting forth of creative energy and the progressive qualification of puruṣa into māhat, aham and citta to form the cosmic mind. The qualification of puruṣa signals the stage of saguṇa brahma, which is essentially a ‘localised’ portion of the infinite ocean of nirguna brahma undergoing a process of metamorphosis. In the nirguna state, brahma is objectless and there is only pure consciousness and sheer awareness ad infinitum. In the saguṇa state, consciousness reflects on the cosmic mind and on subsequently-evolved material elements and living entities as cosmic witnessing awareness. Hence, since puruṣa and prakṛti are coevol and co-acting by their very nature, Sarkar resolves the conundrum of how the pristine and transcendent puruṣa can ever be influenced (in a hitherto unknown and mysterious way) by another power that is eternally apart from it.

Cosmogony

The cosmogony of classical Yoga is very similar to the Śāṃkhyan model, involving the singular or plural puruṣa(s) on one side, and the ‘transcendental core of material existence’ (prakṛti-pradhāna) on the other. Prakṛti-pradhāna is also termed the ‘undifferentiated’ or aliṅga, a primordial undifferentiated field of energy containing the infinite possibilities of the universe. In this field, the three guṇas are said to be in perfect balance until the proximity of puruṣa upsets the harmony and triggers the unfolding of the various principles of existence. The first principle to emerge out of the aliṅga is the liṅga-mātra, the ‘matrix of differentiation’ or ‘higher mind’ (buddhi), which is identical to the Śāṃkhyan māhat. This is also viewed from a psychological perspective as the cosmic sense of individuation or pure existence, asmitā-mātra. The principle of individuation (asmitā), which is synonymous with the Śāṃkhyan ahamkāra, is the microcosmic counterpart of asmitā-mātra. From the liṅga-mātra (or buddhi or asmitā-mātra) arise the five ‘subtle potentials’ (tanmātras) and the eleven ‘senses’ (indriyās), with the ‘lower mind’ (manas) regarded as the eleventh sense. The five subtle potentials in turn give rise to the five ‘material elements’ (bhūtas) that form the basic building blocks of the universe.967

Sarkar’s cosmogony echoes that of classical Yoga as well as that of Śāṃkhya, but with three very important differences. First, as noted previously, puruṣa and prakṛti are not separate entities but two aspects of the same whole. In keeping with the Tantric tradition, Sarkar identifies puruṣa and prakṛti with śiva and śakti respectively. Second, whereas in classical Yoga, the liṅga-mātra or buddhi is a transformed state of prakṛti and material in essence, in Sarkarian Tantric Yoga, the māhat

967 See YS II.19-24 and Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, pp. 319-324.
(the Sarkarian counterpart of liṅga-mātra or buddhi) is but a transformed state of puruṣa under the binding influence of prakṛti. Similarly, the asmitā of Yoga and the aham of Sarkar are further transformations of their respective causa materialis – prakṛti for Yoga and puruṣa for Sarkar. Third, Sarkar applies the term alīṅga to the unmanifested and unqualified puruṣa, not to the undifferentiated matrix of matter (prakṛti), as is the case with classical Yoga. The reasons for these differences can only be speculated upon and hinted at. It is possible that Yoga’s dualism and Sarkar’s monism are in whole or in part, due to the different perspectives adopted in light of distinctive insights gained from distinct meditation practices of the two traditions. It is obvious that both Yoga and Sarkar’s Ānanda Mārga are not mere speculative philosophy but essentially forms of praxis aimed at ultimate liberation of the mind. It is thus reasonable to assume that the distinctive meditative experiences and insights of the founders of these two systems would have impacted on their philosophical formulations.

In the case of Yoga, the recognition that all material and mental existence is gross and conducive to suffering may have led to a meditative practice that strives to eliminate all forms of sensory perception and cognitive modifications (yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ), so that the complete cessation of all objects and all egoic activity in kaivalya is deemed the highest state. From the vantage point of this lofty state, all forms of experience are crude, liable to suffering, and utterly different from the transcendence of kaivalya. Hence, the natural philosophical speculation to arise out of such an experience (or non-experience) would be the positing of a pure transcendent puruṣa that is completely separate from the mutable material prakṛti. In Sarkar’s case, while not denying the close similarity between his nirvikalpa samādhi and Yoga’s kaivalya (and thus the similar if not identical meditative experiences they point to), one can see in Sarkar’s non-dualism a more integral and encompassing vision at work. The unity of vision afforded by a spacious clear awareness that is co-emergent with the objects of the mind and that simultaneously observes and knows them may allow for a radically different philosophical picture to emerge. The experience of bare attention and insightful observation, where thoughts, feelings, and sensations are seen to arise out of and dissolve back into the expansive silence of the mind (and thus are essentially non-distinct from the silent awareness that ‘lights up’ within them), may well be the source of Sarkar’s cosmogonic speculations. As investigation of possible correlations between meditative experience and speculative philosophy requires far more extensive methodological discussion and textual examination than can be undertaken here, it is best left for future studies. The above discussion is just a brief, and no doubt less than satisfactory, foray into this potentially fruitful area of research.

Adding to the foregoing debate is the argument by Whicher that kaivalya denotes not an ontological state of isolation of puruṣa from prakṛti, but an epistemological re-alignment of the relationship between puruṣa as pure witnessing awareness and prakṛti as objects of the mind. The ‘aloneness’ of puruṣa refers not to an ontological isolation but to the freedom of reflexive consciousness from misidentification with the objects of mind and body, so that it shines forth in its true nature as it engages with prakṛti in a non-attached and non-reactive way. The puruṣa-realised person is able to act creatively in the world, to have thoughts and emotions and experiences, without
being enslaved by egoic identification or ensnared by the wiles of prakṛti. Whicher’s view is supported by Chapple, who argues that the final passage of the YS affirms kaivalya as a purified ‘way of being in the world without falling into the trap of considering oneself different from what is seen: a moment of pure consciousness takes place wherein the seer does not become enmeshed in prakṛti.’

This interesting proposition brings the Yoga viewpoint much closer to Sarkar’s Tantric perspective.

**Psychology**

Alongside Yoga’s cosmogony is the Yogic theory of mind, which espouses the idea that ‘habit patterns’ (vāsanās) and ‘deeply rooted impressions’ (samskāras) drive, and are in turn fed by, a person’s ‘mental processes’ (vṛtti). In Yoga psychology, it is the complex interplay of vāsanās, samskāras, and vṛtti that sustains the affective sense of self (asmitā), resulting in suffering. Sarkar’s yoga psychology seems to echo the classical Yoga concepts of samskāras and vṛtti but curiously leaves out the notion of vāsanās. An examination of Sarkar’s elaboration on samskāras can, however, shed some light on why this might be the case. Let us recall from Chapter 3 that Sarkar describes various types of samskāras that may be imposed upon a person by the world. In this connection, vṛttigata samskāras, habituated behaviours formed as a result of physical, social, cultural, and educational conditioning, closely resemble Yoga’s concept of vāsanās or habit patterns. It is thus possible to see vāsanās as incorporated under the concept of samskāra in Sarkar’s Yogic discourse.

Another point of similarity between Sarkarian and classical Yoga psychology is the bidirectional nature of the mind. Patañjali’s discussion of ‘subtilisation’ (pratiprasava) as a means for liberation is based on the notion that the mind can be directed outwardly toward expression or channelled inwardly to the point of cessation (nīrodha). This invites comparison with Sarkar’s discussion of the extroverted and introverted movement of the cosmic mind (see Chapter 3), and more specifically, of the extroverted (which leads to crudification and affliction) and introversial tendencies (which leads to subtilisation and liberation) of the individual mind.

Sarkar’s conceptualisation of mental functioning is basically Yogic, while his elaboration of biopsychology, drawing on both biological and Yogic concepts, shows him up as a modern reinterpreter of traditional Yogic ideas. Sarkar’s correlation of vṛttis with endocrine glands is a salient example of his attempts at reinterpretation.

**Soteriology**

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968 YS IV.34: ‘Kaivalyam is the calling back of the guṇas which have been emptied of their purpose (of performing) for puruṣa. Then there is steadfastness in the own form (of the seer): the power of pure consciousness (citi-sakti)’, translated in Christopher Chapple, ‘The Unseen Seer and the Field: Consciousness in Śāṅkhya and Yoga’, in Robert K. C. Forman, The Problem of Pure Consciousness (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 67.


971 YS III.13.

972 YS III.9.
As classical Yoga is first and foremost a praxis aimed at liberation from suffering, it is to Yogic soteriology that we will now turn our attention, comparing it, in some detail, with the soteriological praxis of Sarkar. The soteriological praxis advocated by Patañjali is his eight-limbed path to union (astānga yoga) comprising the eight factors of discipline (yama), restraint (niyama), posture (āsana), breath control (prāṇāyāma), sense-withdrawal (pratyāhāra), concentration (dīrānā), meditation (dhyāna), and ecstasy or enstasy (samādhi).

Sarkar recognises the same eight limbs but reinterprets some of them. For Patañjali, yama consists of five ethical principles aimed at regulating the social interactions of the yogi by channelling all actions towards a higher goal. Ahīṃsā or non-harming is non-violence in thought and action towards others. Satya is truthfulness in speech and asteya is non-stealing of what does not belong to oneself. Brahmacārya is defined as abstention from sexual activity in thought, word, and deed. Aparigraha is defined as non-acceptance of gifts, expressing the spirit of greedlessness of a yogi. Sarkar does not differ greatly from the traditional understanding of yama, though he does make several adjustments to the concepts of ahīṃsā, satya, asteya, brahmacārya, and aparigraha in light of modern and pragmatic considerations. For him, ahīṃsā is not pure and total non-application of force but rather purposeful non-infliction of pain on any creature in thought, word, or deed. This allows for the use of force for physical survival, for self-defence, or to prevent a greater harm, without violation of the principle of ahīṃsā. Satya, in Sarkar’s thinking, is transformed into benevolent truthfulness rather than strict adherence to truth per se. This recognises that it may be necessary to withhold the truth for compassionate reasons. Asteya is not mere non-stealing both physically and mentally, but also refraining from depriving others of their due both physically and mentally. Sarkar radically reinterprets brahmacārya by defining it not as total abstention from sexual activity but as remaining inwardly attached to brahma. He gives a Marxist critique of the equation of brahmacārya with celibacy by commenting that such an idea is but a political and socially legitimising move to maintain the superior position of celibate brahmans and religious professionals in society. For Sarkar, brahmacārya is more an inner state of intimacy with God than an outward abstention from sex. The Sarkarian critique and definition of brahmacārya also reflect his egalitarian concerns in line with the Tantric legacy he is supposed to represent. Aparigraha is, for Sarkar, not mere non-acceptance of gifts but a life of voluntary simplicity such that one does not indulge in pleasures at the expense of the rest of society. It also involves ensuring that the minimum needs of all members of society are met, the definition of minimum needs being set in accordance with changes in time, place, and person. It can be argued that in Sarkar’s hands, yama undergoes a modern transformation that includes an egalitarian concern and renders it more applicable to contemporary life.

In Yoga, niyama consists of another five principles aimed at harmonising the inner self of the yogi, further channelling the psychophysical energy freed up through yama towards ultimate reality. Suddha or cleanliness is purity of body and mind, with external cleanliness achieved by bathing and proper diet and internal cleanliness achieved by concentration and meditation according to the YB. Santeṣa or contentment is a sense of renunciation that sees pleasure and pain, success and failure with
equanimity. Tapah or austerity comprises such practices as prolonged immobilized standing or sitting; bearing of hunger, thirst, cold, and heat; formal silence; and fasting. Svādhyāyā or study is deep penetration into the meanings of sacred texts and for some commentators, also means meditative recitation (japa) of the texts. Īśvara-pranidhāna is devotion to the Lord, where the Lord is one of the transcendent puruṣas regarded as special and distinct from the others owing to its omniscient and omnipotent self-awareness. In other words, īśvara is not subject to the illusion of finitude as are all other puruṣas in the cosmos, and hence acquires divine status in relation to the rest.

Here again, Sarkar partially accepts traditional interpretations of niyama but adds to them new dimensions of meaning suggestive of social egalitarianism and practical common sense. He regards šauca as both external (physical, environmental) and internal (mental) cleanliness, and suggests that the best way to cultivate the latter is to develop feelings of selflessness and universalism. He does not depart much from the classical interpretation of šauca except that in place of concentration and meditation for mental purity, he advocates selfless service to all beings as the method of choice. For Sarkar, santoṣa is ‘a state of proper ease’\(^973\) where one is contented with one’s life and financial situation and the body and mind are not under undue stress. He advocates the practice of autosuggestion as a way of cultivating santoṣa, by consciously and regularly reinforcing ideas of letting go and greedlessness in one’s mind. He warns, however, against the folly of being exploited or cheated by greedy persons as a result of cultivating santoṣa and recommends vigilance of one’s rights and the strength to stand up for them as and when necessary. Unlike classical Yoga, Sarkar does not advocate ascetic austerity for austerity’s sake; he states that the only purpose of tapah is ‘to shoulder the sorrows and miseries of others to make them happy, to free them from grief, and to give them comfort’.\(^974\) He sees tapah as a powerful means of expanding the mind to include the whole universe, and says that any form of physical labour for the sake of serving others can be regarded as tapah. He expresses his social concern here by emphasising that tapah should be practised only for those who really need it and not for those who are merely out to exploit. Svādhyāyā, according to Sarkar, is to clearly understand the true meaning and significance of any religious text or idea. Unlike classical Yoga, he does not equate svādhyāyā with japa and he warns against religious professionals who interpret scriptures in distorted ways so as to support their vested interests. In this understanding of svādhyāyā, Sarkar’s social critique and anti-exploitative consciousness are again clearly demonstrated. Finally, Sarkar views īśvara not as merely one special puruṣa out of the many (as is the case in classical Yoga) but as identical to sagūṇa brahma, the qualified supreme consciousness that is the creative ground of all existence and the controller of the universe. To him, īśvara-pranidhāna is adopting sagūṇa brahma as the shelter and refuge of one’s life and moving towards him as rapidly as one can through mental ideation or bhāva. More specifically, Sarkar identifies īśvara-pranidhāna with the first meditative lesson of sahaja yoga. Obviously, the difference between

\(^973\) GHC, p. 56.
\(^974\) GHC, p. 59.
Sarkar’s and Patañjali’s interpretations of īśvara-pranidhāna lies in their differing metaphysical, cosmological, and soteriological speculations.

Let us now compare Sarkar’s definition of the other limbs of the eight-limbed yoga with that of classical Yoga. Āsana or posture, according to Patañjali, is the immobilisation of the body, deemed an efficacious method of preparing the physical body for deep inner work. The YS recommends that the yogi’s posture should be stable and comfortable, with limbs folded, and the mind allowed to become inwardly quiet. The large number of postures commonly associated with Hatha Yoga does not, strictly speaking, belong to the contents of the YS but to a later historical work of yoga, the Haṭha-yoga-pradīpīkā, composed around the fourteenth century C.E.

Prāṇāyāma or breath control is essentially a technique of controlling and directing the body’s life force or vital energy (prāṇa) through regulation of the breath. The breath is thought to be intimately linked to prāṇa and, by extension, to the mind. Control of the prāṇa aids in the control of the mind.

In pratyāhāra or sense withdrawal, the next step in Patañjali’s Yogic path, the mind’s attention is effectively withdrawn from the environment and the senses so as to become increasingly absorbed in inner consciousness. All the preceding steps have progressively moved from social and personal regulation, to bodily regulation, and now to sensory inhibition leading to mental composure.

The next step, dhrāṇā or concentration, is holding the mind on a specific object or locus, which may be a part of the body (such as a cakra) or an external object that is internalised (such as the image of a diety). The underlying process is ekāgratā or one-pointedness – a state of focussed attention that is held on a particular object for a period of time.

When dhrāṇā becomes continuous so that the attention fixed on the object is smooth and without a break, one has attained the next stage, dhyāna or meditation. Whereas in dhrāṇā, the fixity of attention is intermittent and in succession (like drops of water), in dhyāna it becomes an unbroken stream like a flow of oil or honey. Of dhyāna, Hariharananda (1983) comments that when ‘... knowledge is continuous it appears as though a single idea is present in the mind’.975

When the above five stages of Patañjali’s yoga are compared with Sarkar’s corresponding definitions, there appear only minor divergences; Sarkar appropriates most of what is commonly accepted in the Yoga tradition. However, it can be noted that Sarkar’s prescription of specifically forty-two āsanas for physical health and mental composure, and his modern biological explanation of the effects of āsanas represent departures from the classical view embedded in the YS. He also seems to favour a physiological explanation of the effects of prāṇāyāma, prosaically saying that the long pause between inhalation and exhalation calms and stabilises the waves of the nervous system, which is in turn conducive to mental silence and meditation. Also, for Sarkar, prāṇāyāma is not merely control of the breath and vital energy but involves a subtler process of mental ideation. In relation to this, he strongly recommends the use of cosmic ideation – that is, imbuing the mind with an expansive

975 Hariharananda, Yoga Philosophy, p. 251.
sense of cosmic consciousness – during the entire process of prānāyāma. Specific details of the practice are given in Sarkar’s fourth meditation lesson of sahaja yoga and in the difficult viśeṣa yoga.

An innovation of Sarkar’s in relation to the eight-limbed yoga is his practice of cakra śodhana, which constitutes the fifth meditative lesson of sahaja yoga. He asserts that cakra śodhana is a practice unique to Ānanda Mārga sādhanā, one that is not found in the eight-limbed yoga. Cakra śodhana is a dynamic practice of cakra purification, the mechanics of which place it somewhere between dhāranā and dhyāna. While it certainly involves some measure of concentration, it is not fixity on one point but a fluid movement of attention through different points. It thus possesses the qualities of both concentrative dhāranā and smooth-flowing dhyāna.

**States of Samādhi**

The final step in Patañjali’s yoga is samādhi or meditative absorption, characterised by total identification of the meditator with the meditated object. In this state, ‘… meditation becomes so deep that only the object stands by itself, obliterating as it were, all traces of reflective thought’.\(^{976}\) A series of increasingly deep states of samādhi culminating in complete liberation or kaivalya is mentioned in Patañjali’s yoga. These states are classified into samprajñāta samādhi (conscious ecstasy), asamprajñāta samādhi (supraconscious ecstasy), and dharmamegha samādhi (‘cloud of dharma’ ecstasy). Feuerstein equates samprajñāta samādhi with the Vedantic savikalpa samādhi and asamprajñāta samādhi with nirvikalpa samādhi, although it is uncertain whether Patañjali would agree with such an equation.\(^{977}\) Six forms of samprajñāta samādhi are mentioned in YS: (1) savitarka samāpatti (‘ecstasy coinciding with cogitation’); (2) savicāra samāpatti (‘ecstasy coinciding with reflection’); (3) nirvicāra samāpatti (‘ecstasy beyond cogitation’); and (4) nirvicāra samāpatti (‘ecstasy beyond reflection’). In Vācaspati Miśra’s commentary on YS, the Tattva-Vaiśārādī (TV) (ca. ninth century C.E.), four other states are mentioned: (1) sânanda samāpatti (‘ecstasy coinciding with bliss’); (2) sāsmītī samāpatti (‘ecstasy coinciding with sense of individuation’); (3) nirānanda samāpatti (‘ecstasy beyond bliss’); and (4) nirasmiita samāpatti (‘ecstasy beyond sense of individuation’).\(^{978}\) In contrast to samprajñāta samādhi, wherein some mental concept whether gross or subtle is present as the meditative object, asamprajñāta samādhi is a totally arrested state of mind wherein all mental fluctuations disappear, leaving only latent impressions of both the fluctuations and the arrested state. It is devoid of all mental objects, a cessation of phenomenal experience attained only through supreme detachment (para-vairāgya). Asamprajñāta samādhi can be equated with temporary realisation of kaivalya, a state wherein puruṣa is freed from prakṛti influence and stands ‘alone’ in its power of pure seeing (citisakti). Dharmamegha samādhi is the highest state attainable immediately prior to realisation of kaivalya. This samādhi is characterised by full saturation of the mind by a permanent discriminative discernment (viveka khyāti), which sees clearly the distinction

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976 Hariharānanda, Yoga Philosophy, p. 252.
978 Whicher, Integrity of the Yoga Darśana, pp. 253-254.

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between puruṣa and buddhi (the first evolute). On attaining this state, all afflictions due to ignorance and all saṃskāras or karmāsayas of past actions, virtuous or otherwise, are totally eliminated. From dharmamegha samādhi arises the liberation of puruṣa from prakṛti – the final freedom that is kaivalya. It is unclear from the YS whether asamprajñāta samādhi and dharmamegha samādhi are identical or whether one precedes the other.

The question of living liberation or jīvamukti is also not clarified in the YS, leaving the possibility of such attainment an open question. However, Chapple argues that discriminative discernment (viveka khyāti) ‘provides a way to prevent the predominance of ignorance and the other four affictions (kleśas), and can be equated with a state of living liberation.'979 This argument finds support in Whicher, who champions an epistemologically oriented interpretation of puruṣa-prakṛti disentanglement. He affirms:

As a fully liberated being the yogin is now able to engage in life spontaneously and innocently yet animate freely a full range of feelings, emotions, and passions without being overtaken by them and without causing harm to others.980

Comparing classical Yoga’s list of meditative stages with Sarkar’s, we find certain commonalities as well as some differences. Before proceeding with the critical comparison, a note on methodological stance is warranted here. In the process of intra- and inter-textual comparison of the phenomenological features of meditative states, my horizon as a meditatively-trained reader plays an important role. It is worth mentioning again that my personal meditative experiences and reflections have an impact on how I read the texts. They form an integral part of the horizon I bring to the texts, which playfully engages the texts in the production of meaning and truth. That such a fusion of horizons between text and reader occurs in the following discussion is made explicit at this juncture.

The first point of comparison is Sarkar’s and Patañjali’s separate descriptions of two meditative attainments, namely samprajñāta samādhi (conscious ecstasy) and dharmamegha samādhi (‘cloud of dharma’ ecstasy). Sarkar does not delineate the various forms of samprajñāta samādhi as Patañjali does in his YS (or as Vācaspati Miśra does in his TV, for that matter), but instead gives a list of six realisation stages he calls sālokya, sāmīpya, sāyujjya, sārūpya, sārṣṭhi, and kaivalya. For Sarkar, these six stages of samādhi signify progressively deeper levels of communion (or union in the sixth stage) with cosmic consciousness, and are based on focussed contemplation of the subtlest divinity itself rather than on any gross or subtle representation of the divine. In other words, these samādhi states rely not on the physical or mental image of divinity (or of tanmātra, ahaṃkāra, buddhi, or prakṛti for that matter, as in Patañjali’s yoga), but on a deeply-felt, intuitive presence of pristine consciousness that is attended to by the mind in meditation. Ideation, for Sarkar, is not mere thinking or cogitation but an experiential recollecting of sheer awareness so as to establish that awareness in the

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stream of experience. Since sheer awareness or pristine consciousness can never be objectified, one has to literally become awareness in the process of trying to ideate on it. Also, in Sarkar’s meditative pedagogy, the essential object of attention is the mantra, a vocalic and semantic tool that quickens and aids the process of ideation. In the initial stages, the mantra’s sound and meaning become increasingly established within and begin to occupy the entire field of awareness. Continued awareness of this field of sound and meaning then gradually gives way to a deeply-felt intuitive sense of vast, sheer awareness. Persisting even further leads to intensification of the awareness and dropping away of the mantra altogether to reveal a dynamic pulsation accompanied by spacious clarity and autoreflexivity. The foregoing description is a highly condensed phenomenological summary of the first lesson of AM meditation. In light of the preceding discussion, it would seem as if Sarkar’s six stages could not, in any way, correlate with Patañjali’s four samāpattis of samprajñāta samādhi, given that they (Patañjali’s) utilise mental concentration on gross or subtle representations of cosmic principles (tattvas).

However, it may still be possible to draw rough correspondences between these two sets of meditative attainments provided we apply a degree of interpretative licence to the four samāpattis of Patañjali. Instead of interpreting vitarka and vicāra as gross and subtle images of tattvas in the literal sense, we can take them to mean relatively coarser and finer apprehension of any meditative object, be it a tattva or a subtle conception of parama puruṣa. In the case of Sarkar’s Tantric meditation, where the object used is the intuitive feeling of infinite consciousness via a mantra, savitarka samāpatti could mean the initial state of reliance on a subtle conception of that consciousness (where subject-object duality is present) while savicāra samāpatti could indicate the gradual fading away of the concept to give the actual experience of consciousness itself (in which the subject-object duality becomes attenuated and the mantra fades away). As the meditation deepens, cogitation, however refined, dissolves altogether, giving a direct, whole-body experience of pure consciousness in two degrees of profundity (corresponding to nirvitarka and nirvicāra samāpatti). Hence, it may be that (1) savitarka samāpatti corresponds to Sarkar’s sālokya samādhi, wherein one feels the simultaneous existence of one’s self and the cosmic consciousness at the initial stages of ideation; (2) savicāra samāpatti corresponds to sāmīpya samādhi, wherein one feels extremely close to cosmic consciousness, indicating an increasing union of subject and object; (3) nirvitarka samāpatti corresponds to sāuyujja samādhi, wherein one feels the physical touch of cosmic consciousness (which ideation continues at a refined level), indicating an even greater degree of unity and deeper intensity of experience; and (4) nirvicāra samāpatti corresponds to sārūpya samādhi, wherein one feels the pervading presence of pure consciousness in one’s whole being and everywhere. In nirvicāra samāpatti or sārūpya samādhi, even the mantra and refined ideation on consciousness have disappeared, revealing an integral experience of pulsative clarity and sheer aware presence. In addition, Sarkar’s six stages may well correspond in some way to Vācaspati Miśra’s four samāpattis,

\[^980\] Whicher, *Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*, p. 292.
though it remains extremely difficult and highly speculative to correlate them precisely and this will not be attempted here.

The second point of comparison between Sarkar and Patañjali is with regard to another meditative attainment, asamprajñāta samādhi (supraconscious ecstasy. An examination of Patañjali’s description of asamprajñāta samādhi shows that it is an objectless state of consciousness wherein no mental fluctuations (vyṛtti) exist and all cogitation has ceased. It is also identified with a temporary attainment of kaivalya, free from both the meditating subject and the object of meditation. This seems very similar to Sarkar’s conception of nirvikalpa samādhi, the objectless state of full mergence into nirguna brahman. Though the YS does not say the same of asamprajñāta samādhi, Sarkar makes it clear that nirvikalpa samādhi, though objectless, is nonetheless a state of perfect bliss.

Third, Sarkar uses the Vedāntic appellations, savikalpa samādhi and nirvikalpa samādhi throughout his discourses and weaves them into his schema of six meditative stages. The YS makes no mention of savikalpa and nirvikalpa samādhi, while Sarkar’s terms for the first five stages (sālokya, sāmīpya, sāyujya, sārūpya and sārṣṭhi) can be found in medieval Vaiṣṇavism. In Chapter 6, we saw how Sarkar defines samprajñāta samādhi as synonymous with savikalpa samādhi, wherein the mind’s samkalpātmaṇa action is only nominally active. In the same chapter, I also argued why and how dharmamegha samādhi is a less advanced stage than savikalpa samādhi. This observation contrasts with classical Yoga’s placement of dharmamegha samādhi above samprajñāta samādhi in its scheme of soteriological praxis. From this discrepancy, it appears that Patañjali’s dharmamegha samādhi cannot be equated with Sarkar’s, based as they are on two different sets of hierarchical structuring of soteriological experience, in spite of outward similarity in terminology. One can thus surmise that Sarkar’s sārṣṭhi or savikalpa samādhi, rather than his dharmamegha samādhi, is more likely to be synonymous with Patañjali’s dharmamegha samādhi. This is consistent with YS’s view that dharmamegha samādhi is penultimate to the attainment of kaivalya (the temporary attainment of which is asamprajñāta samādhi), just as Sarkar’s savikalpa samādhi (= sārṣṭhi) is penultimate to the attainment of mokṣa or kaivalya, the sixth stage of realisation (the temporary attainment of which is nirvikalpa samādhi). For clarity and ease of comprehension, the foregoing comparison of meditative attainments in Patañjali’s Yoga and Sarkar’s Tantra is set out in the following table:

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981 Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, p. 375: ‘Liberation is thought to be of different degrees, depending on the devotee’s level of proximity to, or identification with, the Lord. At the lowest stage, the devotee dwells in the divine location … in the Lord’s company. This is called sālokya mukti. When the devotee’s power and glory equals that of the Lord, it is known as sārṣṭi mukti. When he or she is abiding in close proximity to the Lord, it is called sāmīpya mukti. The penultimate level of liberation is sārūpya mukti, in which the devotee attains perfect conformity with the Lord. Finally, there is ekatva mukti, or the “liberation of singleness” … ’ Sarkar uses the same terms (except for ekatva mukti and qualifying them as samādhi rather than mukti) but defines and orders them differently; he adds another state, sāyujya, to the list and names the highest attainment kaivalya, a term probably borrowed from Śāmkhya-Yoga.
The foregoing discussion of meditative states in classical Yoga and Sarkarian Tantra concludes our foray into this area. It points to a potentially fruitful approach to Indological research, one which combines phenomenology of meditative experience with critical exegesis of textual accounts of meditation, in order to shed light on otherwise obscure and technical teachings. We now go on to examine Sarkar’s relationship to what is perhaps Hinduism’s most articulate and prominent school of thought, Vedānta.

7.3.3 Vedānta and Sarkarian Ontology

Vedānta (‘Veda’s End’), also known as Uttara-Mimāmsā (‘Later Inquiry’), is probably the best known and most widely expounded tradition of Hindu thought outside India. As its name suggests, Vedānta centres its theoretical and practical speculations on the later two portions of Vedic revelation: the Āraṇyakas (forest treatises composed by hermits) and the Upanisads (mystical scriptures composed by contemplative sages). These two collections of texts provide a ‘… metaphoric reinterpretation of the ancient Vedic heritage’ and ‘… preached the internalisation of the archaic rituals in the form of meditation’.982 Textual sources of the Vedānta comprise the voluminous Upanisads, the widely-accepted Bhagavadgītā (possibly c. 600-500 B.C.E.), and the Brahma Sūtra of Bādarāyana (c. 200 C.E.).983

Vedānta is divided into several branches, each of which attempts to define the non-dual, singularly whole nature of absolute reality in one form or another. The greatest exponents of Vedānta are Śaṅkara (c. 788 -820 C.E.), associated with the Advaita (non-dualistic or monistic) strand of Vedānta; Rāmānuja (c. 1017 - 1127 C.E.), associated with Viśiṣṭadvaita (qualified non-dualistic) Vedānta;984 and Madhva (c. 1238 - 1317 C.E.), associated with Dvaita (dualist) Vedānta.985

Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta

Of the three, Śaṅkara is perhaps the best-known representative of Vedānta, whose non-dualistic ontology bears some resemblance to, and perhaps exerts some influence on, Sarkar’s view on the

982 Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, p. 99.
983 Ibid.
984 Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, p. 100.
985 Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, p. 385.
nature of brahma. Śaṅkara’s rejection of all subject-object knowledge as false and distorted also resembles Sarkar’s assertion that all conventional dualistic knowledge is merely the shadowy ‘umbra’ and ‘penumbra’ of true knowledge. It is to a comparison of Śaṅkara’s and Sarkar’s epistemological and ontological views that I now turn.

Among Śaṅkara’s best known works are his commentary on Gauḍapāda’s Kārikā to the Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad, his Śārīraka-bhāṣya, and his commentary on the Brahma Sūtra of Bādarāyana known as Śaṅkara-bhāṣya. Śaṅkara asserts that all human knowledge based on subject-object duality is ‘… distorted by adhyāsa, superimposition, which falsifies knowledge in such a way that the subject is unable to find objective truth.’ He further claims that while the object of knowledge may be true, doubtful, or false, the subjective ‘knower’ is nevertheless always true, independently existent, and distinct from all objects. He calls this inherently existing and a priori subject the ātman, which is ultimately satcitānanda – existence, consciousness, and bliss. Human beings are said to be normally unaware of the distinction between ātman, the absolute undifferentiated reality, and non-ātman, the relative reality of myriad things and persons. This unawareness, termed avidyā or ignorance, is there even prior to one’s birth and is what keeps beings trapped in the cycle of birth and death, samsāra. Avidyā, also termed māyā, creates the illusion that the pluralistic universe comprising manifold objects and individuals actually exists, when the only reality that ever was, is, and ever will be, is the singular ātman. Thus, in Śaṅkara’s ontology, human beings (jīva) are said to be ‘fictional self-identities performing unreal activities out of attachment to objects, emotional states and ideas about a world that does not really exist.’ In other words, the world as perceived by the ordinary person is mithyā, illusory. According to Śaṅkara, it is only through Self-knowledge or ātma-jñāna, synonymous with elimination of the obscuring avidyā, that the undifferentiated singular reality of ātman manifests, obliterating the phenomenal world and all signs of plurality.

Epistemologically, Sarkar follows Śaṅkara in saying that only non-dual ātma-jñāna is true knowledge in the sense that it is the only form of knowledge free from all perceptual mediation and distortion. For Sarkar, ātma-jñāna is identical to spiritual knowledge (aparokṣa bodha), realised through a merging of the unit mind into nirguṇa brahma, which is also the attributeless, infinite ātman prior to all qualification and manifestation. Like Śaṅkara, Sarkar also speaks of ātman as the ultimate subject, the supreme subjectivity or witnessing entity that substantiates the existence of all objects. He even applies the Vedāntic appellation of satcitānanda to the ātman, portraying it as the

986 Klostermaier, Survey, pp. 413-416.
987 Klostermaier, Survey, p. 415.
989 See e.g. Kalidas Bhattacharyya, ‘Vedanta as Philosophy of Spiritual Life’, in K. Sivaraman (ed.), Hindu Spirituality: Vedas through Vedānta (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989), pp. 231-258. Bhattacharyya says that Advaita Vedāntins, though provisionally recognising the world, ‘… seek ultimately to get away from it, leaving it so much to the limbo of nothingness that as once experienced it appears in retrospect to have been a wholly inexplicable magic show’ (p. 246).
eternal, cognisant, and blissful entity underlying all phenomenal expressions. One noteworthy feature of Sarkar’s description of ātman is the use, on several occasions, of process-like metaphors such as pravāha, dhārā, or rāsa (all translated as ‘flow’) to express the essential nature of ātman. For example, he defines paramātman (or brahma) as akhānda cidaikarāsa – an unbroken flow of cognisance991 – and as ekam jñānam anantam – a continuous, infinite flow (pravāha) of knowledge or intellect.992 Ontologically, however, Sarkar does not appear to have subscribed to the notion of ātman as a static, inert pure consciousness and an uninvolved witness (sākṣi) of all personalities (jīva) and objects – a notion often ascribed to Advaita Vedānta metaphysic.993

Another key difference between Sarkar’s epistemology and Śaṅkara’s lies in the means to ultimate ātman realisation. While Śaṅkara extols jñāna as the supreme means to such realisation, Sarkar privileges the liberative praxis of bhakti. For Śaṅkara, inquiry into brahman (which is ultimately identical to ātman), rooted in the path of knowledge is the only means to perfect brahman cognition. For Sarkar, the process of spiritual cultivation begins with intellectual inquiry but continues with intuitional knowledge born of concentration, and finally culminates in total surrender of the ego-sense to the infinite brahma (which is devotion). To him, knowledge leads up to but does not, by itself, bring about full brahma realisation. This can only come by means of devotional self-surrender at the penultimate phase of spiritual practice. When full devotional surrender (kevala bhakti) is established, the limited self dissolves into nirguna brahma, and perfect knowledge – wherein the knower, the knowing, and the object of knowledge become one – is said to be attained. A similarity, however, can be seen in Śaṅkara’s and Sarkar’s separate notions of renunciation, though Sarkar appears to have stressed the importance of renunciation in karma yoga far more than Śaṅkara did. For Śaṅkara and Sarkar, a key aspect of renunciation is abandoning the sense of authorship in activities, which comes about through realisation of ātman as the sole, unbounded reality.994 But adding to Śaṅkara’s emphasis on ātman-realisation as the crux of renunciation, Sarkar also stresses the importance of (a) seeing all entities acted upon as manifestations of brahma, and (b) surrendering the fruits of all action to brahma. This difference can be accounted for by Sarkar’s leanings towards a realist interpretation of consciousness, a consciousness that expresses itself in all forms and objects through metamorphosis of its essential subtle cognisance. Thus, for Sarkar, the world of objects, persons, actions and their results is not illusory (as in Śaṅkara’s case), but is rather a real (or better, conventionally real) existent, since its ultimate constituent is pure consciousness. The contemplative

991 AMI Parts 5-8, p. 502.
992 YP, p. 175 and AMP Part 3, p. 182.
attempt to view all entities as expressions of brahma and to surrender the result of actions to brahma can be read as valid steps to ultimate realisation of brahma as the All.

A third difference between Sarkar’s epistemology and Śaṅkara’s is in the way they each conceive of the nature of avidyā or māyā. For Śaṅkara, māyā is the illusion that many separate beings and objects exist, when in reality only brahman is real. He says that māyā itself is neither real nor unreal and disappears for one who is able to see the only reality there is – brahman – through jñāna.995 Perhaps conflating Śaṅkara with his Advaita successors, Sarkar criticises what he deems as Śaṅkara’s illusionistic view of māyā by arguing that it is self-contradictory and nonsensical to talk about unreal objects appearing as real by virtue of an equally unreal māyā.996 For Sarkar, māyā is as real as brahma, being essentially the operative aspect (prakṛti), coeval and co-existing with the cognitive aspect (purusa), of the infinite brahma. He describes māyā as having both avidyā and avidyā qualities, with vidyāmāyā as the force that attracts unit beings towards the nucleus and source of their existence (purusottama) and avidyāmāyā as the force that repels or obscures unit beings from the same. Thus, unlike Śaṅkara, who views māyā as ultimately neither real nor unreal and essentially concealing or distorting in its effect, and in contrast to post-Śaṅkara Advaitins who uphold an illusory māyā, Sarkar views māyā as a real force that exerts itself on the mind and has either a binding or a liberating effect.

Śaṅkara’s ontology, as previously mentioned, is essentially non-dualistic and philosophically termed visuddhādvaitavāda, the doctrine of pure non-dualism. Śaṅkara shares the Upaniṣadic view of ētān-brahman identity and asserts that the inherent self of a person is none other than the universal self of all existence. In his view, the ultimate reality of brahman is ‘eternal (nitya), infinite (anantam), unchanging (nirvikāra), non-characterisable (acintya), and without parts, properties, or distinctions within it (nirviśeṣa).’997 Interpreting the Upaniṣadic doctrines of ultimate brahman and īśvara, the Lord and Creator of the universe, Śaṅkara makes a distinction between nirguṇa brahman (brahman without attributes) and saguṇa brahman (brahman with attributes); he equates nirguṇa brahman with the Upaniṣadic supreme brahman (parabrahman) and saguṇa brahman with īśvara (aparabrahman).998 In his view, saguṇa brahman or īśvara is only ‘… a temporal manifestation of

996 NKS, pp. 77-95 and pp. 106-115.
998 See Bradley Malkovsky, ‘The Personhood of Śaṅkara’s Parabrahman’, The Journal of Religion, 77.4 (1997): 541-562. Malkovsky argues, contrary to common scholarly perception of nirguṇa brahman as impersonal and with some evidence from primary texts, that ‘to ascribe personhood to Śaṅkara’s parabrahman not only is legitimate exegetically but also does not thwart his basic intent, which is to teach the necessity of knowing the supreme brahman for the sake of liberation … [and that] despite Śaṅkara’s formal distinction between nirguṇa and saguṇa brahman, in practice he does not shy away from ascribing features to the supposed attributeless nirguṇa brahman. These same characteristics he also frequently assigns to īśvara. Both are conscious, sinless, omnipresent, eternally complete, pure, and free’ (pp. 552-553). In other words, Malkovsky says that nirguṇa brahman, while definitely not anthropomorphic, is nonetheless personal in so far as it exists as a subjective intellectual agency, one whose relationship with the created world ‘cannot be ontological but logical only’ (p. 558).
brahman, creator for as long as creation lasts999 and is ultimately ontologically subservient to nirguna brahman, the pure and unchanging reality. Nevertheless, īśvara is said to be ‘eternally inseparable from his intelligence (prajñā), which is characterised by omniscience’, and the innately free (svātantrya) creator of the universe.1000 To account for the creative ‘activity’ of saguna brahman, Śaṅkara appeals to the metaphor of līlā – the world is created by the spontaneous, effortless, playful, motiveless sport of īśvara, a non-contingent action that in no way modifies or particularises īśvara in the process.1001 It is worth mentioning that Śaṅkara and his philosophical successors (post-Śaṅkara Advaitins) differ in their view of the causative role of brahman. For Śaṅkara, brahman is the material cause of the universe, while for later Advaitins, brahman is described as cause ‘only in the sense of vivarta (manifestation)’.1002 In connection to this, there is clearly an observable difference between Śaṅkara’s understanding of the concept of maya and that of the Advaitins who come after him. In Śaṅkara’s authenticated works such as his commentary (bḥāṣya) on the Brahma-sūtra, he appears to make īśvara ‘practically interchangeable with the para brahman in the great majority of cases in which the terms appear.’1003 Hacker argues that rather then seeing īśvara as unproblematically equated with saguna brahman, and thus subordinate to the higher nirguna or para brahman, it is more accurate to view terms such as īśvara and para brahman as equally applicable to the highest reality.1004 While Hacker did not go so far as to differentiate Śaṅkara’s ontology from that of post-Śaṅkara Advaita, considering them both as illusionistic, De Smet argues to the effect that Śaṅkara is better understood as teaching a realist ontology rather than the illusionistic one of his Advaita successors.1005 In other words, for Śaṅkara then, māyā as a cognitive concealing and distorting force is neither ontologically real nor unreal, while for later Advaitins who follow him, māyā is an illusory entity that has no ontological significance in the light of supreme non-dual brahman. In this regard, Sarkar appears ontologically closer to Śaṅkara than to post-Śaṅkara Advaitins. It is also possible that personhood in the sense of intellectual agency can be ascribed to Śaṅkara’s nirguna brahman, placing Sarkar far closer to Śaṅkara in their conceptions of ultimate reality.1006 In this case, Śaṅkara’s nirguna brahman would not be merely an inert, transcendent witness but also a personal agent that stands as the final logical cause of the universe. However, Sarkar, in line with Tantric thinking, expands on Śaṅkara’s

1001 Orr, p. 76.
1002 Orr, p. 83.
definition to portray *brahma/brahman* as a plenitude of dynamism and creative potency, actively transforming itself into the universe and acting in it.

The post-Śaṅkara Advaita tradition claims that the notion of *līlā* is merely a provisional teaching, one viewed from the empirical perspective (*vyāvahārika*) of cosmic ignorance (*māyā*). From the absolute point of view (*pāramārtika*), according to Advaitins, there is only undifferentiated oneness; *līlā* and all multiplicity are fully ‘subrated’ in *brahman*. In contrast, Sarkar would appear to reject the Advaitins’ description of *līlā* as a delusion rooted in *māyā*, opting instead for a realist definition of divine playfulness. In other words, for Sarkar, the spontaneous creative activity of *parama puruṣa* is real, not illusory, and the plural universe, made up ultimately of condensed consciousness, is also real, albeit relatively. In this connection, it is worthwhile noting that it is equivocal as to whether *ānanda* (bliss) obtains as a feature of *nirguṇa brahman*, equal in value and status to features of *sat* (existence) and *cit* (consciousness). Some scholars argue that *ānanda* is indeed accepted by Śaṅkara as a feature of *nirguṇa brahman*, while others argue that ‘no features of *brahman*, in the sense of *viśeṣas* or characteristics, are permissible under Śaṅkara’s system’. In contrast to Śaṅkara’s apparent ambiguity in relation to the issue of *ānanda*, Sarkar unequivocally asserts that *brahma* is *ānanda*, that ultimate reality is trans-empirical bliss beyond the opposites of pleasure/happiness and pain/sorrow. Here again, Sarkar seems to be in keeping with a Tantric conception of reality while seemingly using Advaita terminology.

Leaving aside the concept of *līlā*, Śaṅkara’s concepts of *saṅguṇa brahman* and *nirguṇa brahman* give rise to several difficulties, namely: (1) the difficulty in accounting for the manifestation of *saṅguṇa brahman* if *brahman* is simultaneously conceived as being unchanging (*nirvikāra*), partless, without distinctions (*nirvīśeṣa*), and non-characterisable (*acintya*); (2) the nature and degree of reality of *saṅguṇa brahman*, the creator, if creation is ultimately unreal; and (3) the difficulty in reconciling a purely non-dualistic ontology with the idea of *brahman* that is differentiated into two distinct forms.

Sarkar appears to follow Śaṅkara’s lead by making a distinction between the qualified aspect of *saṅguṇa brahma* and the unqualified aspect of *nirguṇa brahma*. However, Sarkar superimposes a third aspect, *tāraka brahma*, onto the above twofold scheme, articulating the need for a linking, interfacing entity between the transcendent reality of *nirguṇa brahma* and the immanent ground of *saṅguṇa brahma*. In relation to the first dilemma faced by Śaṅkara, Sarkar posits that *saṅguṇa brahma* is a transformation (*parināma*) of *puruṣa*, pure consciousness, by the contemporaneous *prakṛti*, the operative principle, within the limitless ‘body’ of *nirguṇa brahma*. He resolves the problem of change in an unchanging entity by arguing that apparent transmutation of form in no way affects the essential nature of consciousness. He also argues that transmuting a localised portion of infinite *puruṣa* takes

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1009 Sarkar cites the term *brahman* without the final *n*, as in *brahma*. 334
nothing away from it, nor does it break purusa into parts, just as subtracting a limited (or any) quantity from infinity leaves infinity undiminished in any way. In relation to the second dilemma, Sarkar asserts that both sarguna brahma and the universe are equally but only conventionally and empirically real – sarguna brahma is a metamorphosis of ultimate consciousness into mind, while the universe is a metamorphosis of cosmic mind into matter and life-forms. By subscribing to a form of metaphysical and epistemological realism, one based on the primacy of consciousness as substance, Sarkar avoids the problem of having to posit a nebulous mahājā to account for the existence of an ontologically indeterminate creator and creation. Finally, with regard to the third dilemma, Sarkar explains that while sarguna brahma, tāraka brahma, and nirguṇa brahma are three distinct forms and functions of the singular brahma, they are nevertheless identical in substance and essence – the nature of pure consciousness remains unstained and unchanged through all three forms of brahma; only the degree of expression of consciousness differs. For example, sarguna brahma comprises the omniscient cosmic mind with its three layers of mahat, aham, and citta, as well as the multivariate material and animate entities in the universe. The totality of all these is none other than quintessential consciousness existing in varying degrees of latency or expression. Thus, mahat is materially much ‘subtler’ than a stone, not because the consciousness that makes up the stone has been substantially altered in some way from that of mahat, but because consciousness, having a greater scope of auto-reflection as mahat, is manifested to a far greater degree in mahat than in the stone. The fundamental nature of consciousness as satcitaranānda remains unaltered.

From the above discussion, it appears that Sarkar might have been aware of philosophical problems in Śaṅkara’s thought, and perhaps attempted to resolve some of them through philosophical synthesis and innovation exemplified in his AM ideology. In any case, Sarkar’s philosophical effort demonstrates an appropriation of Advaita Vedānta terminology and to a considerable extent, its ontology and epistemology. It justifies the assertion that an overlay of Vedānta concepts and reasoning characterises Sarkar’s AM ideology.

Rāmānuja’s Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta

Rāmānuja, the proponent of a qualified non-dualist form of Vedānta, differs most considerably from Śaṅkara in terms of ontology. Among Rāmānuja’s best known works are Śrī Bhāṣya, a commentary on the Brahma Sūtra, and Vedārtha Saṃgraha, a compendium of Viṣṇava Vedānta. Sources of Rāmānuja’s philosophy include the textual legacy of the Upanisad, the Gītā, and the Brahma Sūtra, supplemented by the Pāñcarātra Āgamas and the Divya Prabhanda, a rich collection of Tamil devotional poetry composed by the Ālvars (‘souls submerged in the love of God’). Unlike Śaṅkara, who asserts that brahman is the sole and absolute reality, Rāmānuja advocates a less

\[1010\] For a clear articulation and philosophical exegesis of Rāmānuja’s metaphysical and epistemological realism, see C. J. Bartley, Theology of Rāmānuja: Realism and Religion (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002).

\[1011\] Klostermaier, Survey, p. 251.
extreme version of non-dualism, wherein the pluralistic universe, consisting of all objects, living beings, and conscious subjects, is not unreal but exists as the ‘body’ of brahman, the ultimate reality that is personal, not impersonal. He argues that reality is tiered into three levels: (1) ‘the world of material things’, (2) ‘the multiplicity of jīvātmas, individual beings’, and (3) ‘brahman, who is identical with īśvara …[and] none other than Viṣṇu’.1013 Thus, Rāmānuja’s ontology of qualified non-dualism suggests that while the many are essentially one, their oneness in substance does not obliterate the real distinctions amongst them.

Another point of disagreement between Rāmānuja and Śaṅkara is in relation to the concept of brahman. Rāmānuja conceives of brahman as entirely sāguṇa, rejecting the Advaita distinction between sāguṇa and nirguṇa brahman. He argues for the personal concept of īśvara, who is none other than sāguṇa brahman, and the creator and lord of nature (prakṛti) and living beings (jīvas). Rāmānuja’s īśvara is said to have a perfect, radiant body that is ‘immutable’, ‘full of beauty and youth and strength’, ‘omnipresent’, and existing as antaryāmin, ‘the inner ruler of all.’1014 Rāmānuja defines and describes brahman as follows:

The word brahman means puruṣottama, who is by his very essence free from imperfections and possesses an unlimited number of auspicious qualities of unsurpassable excellence. The term brahman applies to all things possessing greatness, but primarily it denotes that which possesses greatness essentially and in unlimited fullness; … Hence the word brahman primarily denotes him alone and in a secondary sense only those things that possess a small amount of the Lord’s qualities … The term is analogous with the term bhagavat. It is the Lord alone who is sought for the sake of immortality by all those who are afflicted by the threefold misery.1015

Thus, for Rāmānuja, brahman is the personal supreme being, puruṣottama, who is infinitely great and the auspicious Lord of salvation. Rāmānuja’s personal conception of brahman lends itself to a soteriology that is devotional rather than cognitive, extolling the primacy of divine grace and the need for self-surrender on the part of the devotee in the quest for salvation.1016

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1013 Klostermaier, Survey, p. 419.
1014 Ibid.
1015 Klostermaier, Survey, p. 420.
1016 Raghavachar describes Rāmānuja’s spiritual pathway as comprising, in ascending order, karma yoga, jñāna yoga, and bhakti yoga. In this schema, karma yoga is ‘the progression to God through action’ whereby the devotee regards the Lord as the ‘paramount agent’ and oneself as a tool of the divine (p. 265). Jñāna yoga is the link between karma and bhakti and consists of contemplation of ‘the human self as a centre of knowing by the exercise of that very knowing itself and by developing that potency to its fullness of actualisation through the knowing of God’ (p. 266). Bhakti yoga is the final or supreme way to God-attainment, which is ‘love of God founded on knowledge …’, and is ‘self-rectifying … self nourishing and [which] grows through practice’ (p. 268). Parābhakti is the highest devotion prior to direct vision of God (parājñāna), a vision that results in subsequent greater love for God termed paramā-bhakti. According to Raghavachar, bhakti yoga culminates in ‘prapatti (self-surrender), or saranāgati (seeking refuge) or bhara-samarpana (burden-transfer)’ (p. 270), which is a final, unrepeatable, and absolute giving up of one’s responsibility to God.
Ontologically, Sarkar’s non-dualistic vision of *advaitadvaitadvaitavāda* appears to echo Rāmānuja’s *viśiṣṭadvaitavāda* in that both view the world and its multiplicity not as illusory distinctions due to the effects of some mysterious māyā, but as real entities existing within the infinite ‘body’ of brahma/brahman. Sarkar, however, makes it plain that all created entities are ultimately real transformations of the subtle material of pure consciousness in varying degrees of development, and that they will all, in their own time, return to pure consciousness at the pinnacle of their evolution. At the culmination of each unit being’s evolution, the delimited and contracted consciousness is released from the binding forces of prakṛti and plunges into the oneness and evenness (samatā) of parama puruṣa. This ontological and soteriological orientation is different from that of Rāmānuja. In the case of Rāmānuja, the basic distinction between the unit being and ṣiva (who is identified with Viṣṇu) does not fully disappear at the point of liberation; the unit merely becomes liberated from its limitations and assumes the ‘same form’ (sarūpya) as the Lord. Such a state is characterised as ‘a kind of fellowship with and in the divine Person – a condition of continuous love-devotion …’¹０¹ and is attained only after death. In this sense, Sarkar’s non-dualism appears to go further than that of Rāmānuja to argue for a kind of non-dual ontological finality. Put another way, Rāmānuja’s and Sarkar’s concepts of mokṣa are not the same, with Rāmānuja positing a quasi-dualistic divine communion of devotee and the divine, and Sarkar propounding a non-dual obliteration of all barriers between jīva and brahma.

A key difference between Sarkar’s and Rāmānuja’s ontological views is with regard to the nature of brahma/brahman. While Rāmānuja sees brahman solely as a personal Lord full of auspicious qualities and hence saguṇa, Sarkar maintains a tri-aspect view of brahma as simultaneously nirguṇa (without qualities), saguṇa (with qualities), and tāraka (liberative and personified). While Sarkar agrees with Rāmānuja that brahma is an entity of infinite greatness, he describes brahma as ultimately an unsullied, pulsative ocean of cognisance that is constantly engaged in a process of blissful expression. Sarkar’s Tantric conception of brahma allows for the notion of a creative and salvific personification of consciousness in the form of tāraka brahma, who is simultaneously the supreme teacher of spiritual practices and the focus of devotional surrender. In this way, Sarkar appears to be attempting, in his AM ontology, to reconcile the Advaita Vedāntic notion of saguṇa-nirguṇa brahma with the Viśiṣṭadvaita Vedantic notion of a personal ṣiva.

From a soteriological point of view, Sarkar’s mokṣa is akin to Rāmānuja’s liberation in one sense: they are both attained post-mortem. However, as discussed in Chapter 5, it is likely Sarkar also speaks of the supreme attainment of jīvan-mukti, an embodied liberation that is not admitted in Rāmānuja’s philosophy. In the case of soteriological praxis, both Sarkar and Rāmānuja uphold the view that devotion and self-surrender constitute the ultimate means for salvation. This mode of salvation is made possible in Sarkar’s AM by the concept of personified consciousness, tāraka brahma, which enables the AM practitioner to visualise and develop devotional sentiment toward a

¹０¹ Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, p. 385.
personal form of parama puruṣa. Unlike Rāmānuja’s approach and final goal, Sarkar’s devotional praxis is aimed at catapulting the AM practitioner into the unconditioned expanse of nirguṇa brahma through the devotional ‘pole-vault’ of tāraka brahma. As such, devotional sentiment cultivated towards the personified brahma can be seen as a pedagogical device that harnesses the immense power of devotional love in the service of ultimate liberation.

Madhva’s Dvaita Vedānta

On the surface, Sarkar’s non-dualistic ontology appears incommensurate with Madhva’s dualistic version of Vedānta. However, several aspects of Madhva’s thought make it worthwhile comparing with Sarkar’s AM, in as much as Sarkar’s devotionalism, based on the personal concept of tāraka brahma, gives room for expression of quasi-dualistic ideas and practices. Madhva’s best known works include the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya (a commentary on the Brahma Sūtra), the Anuvyākhyāna (a short summary exposition of the Brahma Sūtra),1018 and the Gītā Bhāṣya and Gītā Tatparya (two commentaries on the Bhagavad Gītā).1019 Madhva is regarded to have ‘evolved a synthesis between the Vedic and the Vaiṣṇava traditions’1020 and to have transformed the formless and attributeless brahman of Advaita into ‘God with infinite qualities and innumerable manifestation forms.’1021

Madhva’s ontological position is that of radical dualism, seeing a fundamental and eternal separation between individuals and God. He bases his entire system ‘upon the presupposition of the paṇca bheda, the five differences between iśvara and jīvātman, between prakṛti and iśvara, between the individual jīvas and the various inanimate objects.’1022 Like Rāmānuja, Madhva conceives of brahma as iśvara, who is Viṣṇu, the personal yet absolute creator of the entire universe who is omnipotent and omniscient. Viṣṇu is said to be of the nature of sat (being), cit (consciousness), ānanda (bliss), cetanā (spiritual), and anantaguṇaparipāṛṇa (possessing an infinite number of attributes).1023 He has a spiritual, non-material (aprākṛta) body, which manifests at will in the world as the various avatāras. Viṣṇu is also known as Hari, who creates the universe through an act of spontaneous playful will – his līlā, and on whose will depend all events and activities of the cosmos. Like Rāmānuja, Madhva conceives of Hari living in the created order as antaryāmin, the inner ruler, and additionally as sākṣi, the inner witness, residing in each and every living being. In his view, Hari controls and wields nature (prakṛti) as an instrument in his hands.1024

On the microcosmic scale, each living being possesses an ātman, a soul that is of the nature of satcitatānanda and a mirror image of Hari/Viṣṇu. The relationship between a living soul and the divine Lord is that of bimba-pratibimba, a metaphor of reflection in which God is the independent

1018 Klostermaier, Survey, p. 423.
1019 Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, p. 580.
1022 Klostermaier, Survey, p. 423.
1024 Klostermaier, Survey, p. 423.
‘archetype’ and souls are dependent ‘prototypes’. The individual ātman is powerless in itself and depends entirely on God for all its activities. The universe functions entirely to God’s will and individual souls possess innate inclinations of which there are three: sāttvika (noble inclination), rājasa (mixed inclination), and tāmasa (ignoble inclination). These innate natures of the souls are unchangeable and rājasika and tāmasika souls are not likely to attain any spiritual progress, if left to themselves. However, all souls possess ‘delegated freedom of will’ (from God) and thus have limited freedom to pursue either a noble or an immoral direction in life, with sāttvika souls having a greater chance of progress.

Soteriologically, Madhva conceives of total self-surrender to Viṣṇu as the ultimate means to liberation, a surrender that is effected by love centred on ritual worship of the image of Viṣṇu. Upāsanā, worship and meditation, consists of a number of esoteric ‘knowledges’ (vidyās) that the devotee seeks to cultivate, including prāṇavidyā (knowledge of vital energy), madhuvidyā (honey-knowledge), paṇcāgnividyā (knowledge of the ‘five fires’), and puruṣavidyā (knowledge of pure consciousness). The spirit of all worship is devotional surrender (bhakti), and devotion developed through śravaṇa (listening to scripture), manana (reflection), and nididhyāsana (meditative contemplation), is said to lead to right knowledge (jñāna), which in turn secures the grace of the Lord that leads one to mukti, liberation. Hence, Madhva conceives of a spiritual developmental process that begins with spiritual learning, continues through spiritual reflection and meditation, and culminates in spiritual devotion that bestows final liberating knowledge of the Lord. In his view, final liberation is not total merger of the ātman into Viṣṇu, but consists in eternal freedom of the soul in the blissful company of the Lord. In keeping with the concept of a personal God of infinite qualities, the Madhva tradition does not advocate nirgунopāsana, ‘worship and meditation on God as devoid of all attributes.

In terms of spiritual attainment, Madhva speaks of a state functionally similar to that of Advaita’s jivanmukti, a state characterised by eradication of all negative forms of karma through God’s grace, and leaving only residual karma (effects of past actions currently ripening) to work itself out. This state of embodied liberation is termed aparokṣa-jiñāna, direct knowledge of God. Madhva posits that the highest and final stage of liberation is bhoga, post-mortem enjoyment of the Lord, which is granted to sincere practising devotees by an act of grace. Bhoga comprises various forms of post-mortem realisation, namely: (1) sālokya – remaining in one world or another to help

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1031 Sheridan describes bhoga as ‘supreme bliss, the direct and immediate knowing of God as God with full consciousness … [and] the culmination of aparokṣa-jiñāna already begun while embodied’ (p. 106).
other seekers; (2) sāmīpya – being in proximity to God and attending upon Him; (3) sārūpya – assuming forms similar to God; and (4) sāyujya – uniting with God and enjoying spiritual bliss.  

Ontologically, Sarkar’s non-dualistic stance departs from Madhva’s dualistic view. Several similarities can, however, be noted. Sarkar resembles Madhva in that (1) he calls the ultimate reality Viṣṇu and Hari, though he uses these names to illustrate respectively the all-pervasiveness and ‘saṁskāra-stealing’ natures of parama puruṣa rather than as actual names for a personal deity; (2) he sees the universe as an expression of the spontaneous līlā of the supreme, and prakṛti as the instrument of puruṣa (identical in status to Madhva’s Viṣṇu); and (3) he describes ātman as satcitānanda (though he differs from Madhva regarding the nature, ontological status, and scope of the ātman).

Soteriologically, Sarkar agrees with Madhva on the ultimate efficacy of bhakti and appears to have borrowed from Madhva in his usage of the terms śravaṇa, manana, and nididhyāsana. Sarkar, however, expands on the meaning of śravaṇa to include listening to devotional songs such as kīrtans and bhajans, in addition to attending spiritual talks. He interprets manana as reflecting deeply on spiritual truths learnt through śravaṇa, and nididhyāsana as meditative self-surrender (exemplified in guru dhyāna) that is synonymous with bhakti. Thus, while Sarkar uses Madhva’s terms in his soteriology and in most cases does not depart very much from Madhva’s own view, he does give certain terms a different slant in meaning, which is in keeping with his self-understanding of the spiritual path (for example, nididhyāsana). A key difference between Sarkar’s and Madhva’s conceptions of bhakti is that, while Madhva relies on ritual worship of the image of Viṣṇu as a focal point of devotion, Sarkar eschews all forms of image-worship, maintaining that mūrtipūjā or image-worship is a crude practice not suited to spiritual aspirants seeking the ultimate subtlety of liberation. Yet, Sarkar does not object to the visualisation of the personal form of the divine (embodied in the guru) in meditation; rather, he promotes it as the supreme practice of dhyāna that can lead the aspirant to nirvikalpa samādhi, the highest realisation devoid of all attributes. In this sense, Sarkar paradoxically appears to be in harmony with the Dvaita tradition’s rejection of nirguṇopāsanā as the method of choice for liberation-attainment, while subscribing to the goal of attributeless samādhi. Sarkar adopts the terms used by Madhva to describe advanced states of spiritual realisation, namely sālokya, sāmīpya, sārūpya, and sāyujya, but re-interprets them in the context of his non-dualist praxis (see Chapter 6, subsection 6.3.3). In Sarkar’s approach, these states describe increasing depth of the sense of meditative identification with cosmic consciousness, rather than any real co-existence or communion with God in some divine realm.

In conclusion, a preliminary comparison of Sarkar’s AM with the three major forms of Vedāntic thought shows how Sarkar has attempted to reconcile some of the opposing viewpoints

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1033 Sarkar speaks of parama puruṣa, in the form of tāraka brahma, as having such great compassion for suffering beings that he freely ‘steals’ or takes the burden of saṁskāras of suffering beings upon himself without them knowing.
represented by these schools, and in the process constructed a synthetic blend of their central ideas in his AM ideology. This Vedāntic blend appears to resolve some of the philosophical dilemmas of Advaita ontology discussed earlier. It also serves as a surface structure over more fundamental notions derived from Śāmkhya and Yoga, as we have seen, and on an essentially Tantric vision of reality, as we shall see in Section 7.5.

7.4 Buddhist Comparisons

In this section, we make preliminary comparisons between Sarkar’s Ānanda Mārga and the basic teachings of Buddhism. As Buddhism has a long and rich history replete with philosophical and practical innovations, the present study will limit its focus to essential doctrines and practices of Buddhism. In particular, I rely largely on the Pali Nikāyas (in English translation) as primary source references, as these texts contain some of the earliest recorded and arguably most authentic teachings of the historical Buddha. I also refer to the English-language translation of the Visuddhimagga, an important text belonging to the Theravāda Buddhist tradition, the oldest surviving teaching lineage that relies heavily on the Pali Nikāyas. Except for a few cursory remarks, I do not attempt to compare and contrast accounts of AM and Buddhist meditation to any great extent. This is because such a task requires far greater academic rigour and detail than can possibly be achieved in this section. I limit my discussion to the Pali tradition not because of any bias against the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna traditions, but simply because of practical constraints of space. Interesting comparisons can be made between Sarkar’s AM and the systems of philosophy-praxis in both Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism. For example, Sarkar’s sadvīpa ideal can be compared with the Mahāyāna bodhisattva ideal, while his concepts of puruṣa and Śiva can be compared with the Vajrayāna concepts of ‘clear-light mind’ and ‘intrinsic awareness’. However, for the reasons already mentioned, such comparisons are left to some future work.

The Four Noble Truths\textsuperscript{1036}

Gotama, the historical Buddha, summed up his teachings with the systematic and pithy axioms of the Four Noble Truths (Pali: cattāri ariya-saccāni). These state the reality of: (1) dukkha or


\textsuperscript{1036} I have discussed in detail elsewhere the comparisons between Sarkar’s cosmo-soteriology and the Buddha’s four noble truths, and will not be doing so here. This section gives an overview of the four noble truths and notes Sarkar’s polemical and conceptual move in reframing these truths within his discourse on bliss. See Chris Kang, ‘Sarkar on the Buddha’s Four Noble Truths’, Philosophy East and West (forthcoming).

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‘unsatisfactoriness’ in life and experience; (2) the origin of dukkha (dukkha-samudaya), which is tanhā-avijjā or ‘craving bound up in ignorance’; (3) the cessation of dukkha (dukkha-nirodha), which is nibbāna or final deliverance from suffering; and (4) the path leading to the cessation of dukkha (dukkha-nirodha-gāminī-patipadā), namely the Noble Eightfold Path (ariya atthaṅgika magga). Gotama states his first Noble Truth thus:

And what, monks, is the Noble Truth of Suffering? Birth is suffering, ageing is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress are suffering. Being attached to the unloved is suffering, being separated from the loved is suffering, not getting what one wants is suffering. In short, the five aggregates of grasping are suffering.1037

The ‘five aggregates of grasping’ are the five component processes comprising a human being, pervaded by the force of grasping, namely: the aggregate of form or materiality (rūpa), the aggregate of feeling (vedanā), the aggregate of perception (saññā), the aggregate of mental formations (saṅkhārā), and the aggregate of consciousness (viññāna). The origin of this suffering is located in craving that manifests in three different forms:

And what, monks, is the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering? It is that craving which gives rise to rebirth, bound up with pleasure and lust, finding fresh delight now here, now there: that is to say sensual craving, craving for existence, and craving for non-existence.1038

For Gotama, craving by the psychophysical organism drives the whole process of rebirth and its natural corollary of suffering, both physical and psychological. In a sense, the arising of the entire life-world of the individual living being is a direct result of craving, and when once arisen, this individual life-world is marked with suffering, again due to the force of craving. This points to another central piece of Buddhist doctrine, namely that of Conditioned Arising (paṭicca-samuppāda). The standard version of PS (paṭicca-samuppāda) is given in terms of a series of twelve links (also known as bhavacakra, the ‘cycle of becoming’) beginning with ignorance (avijjā-paccayā) and ending with aging-and-death (jarā-maraṇa), grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and despair – the entire mass of suffering.1039

Bucknell points out that the PS formula ‘ . . . purports to explain the origin of suffering (dukkha). . . ’ and is, in effect, ‘ . . . an elaboration of the second Noble Truth, tracing the chain of causal dependence back beyond craving (tanhā) to its ultimate origin in ignorance (avijjā).’1040 This

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1038 Walshe, p. 346.
1040 Bucknell, p. 312. In his footnote, Bucknell bases his equation of the PS formula with the second Noble Truth on AN 1: 177.5-14.
individual life-world and its arising, as elaborated in PS, can be interpreted in a dual sense: microcosmic and psychological, and/or macrocosmic and physical.\textsuperscript{1041} PS and by extension, the second Noble Truth, can thus be seen as purely mental genesis of suffering on an individual level and/or a cosmic physical process of life-world origination in space and time, expressed in the cycle of rebirths.

Gotama’s third Noble Truth purports to explain the possibility of suffering’s end through the relinquishing of craving for sensual pleasure, existence, and non-existence:

And what, monks, is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering? It is the complete fading-away and extinction of this craving, its forsaking and abandonment, liberation from it, detachment from it.\textsuperscript{1042}

Thus, Gotama describes the cessation of suffering in a negative formulation that entails the total extinction of craving, the cause of suffering. In terms of PS, this means the elimination of ignorance, which then automatically results in the cessation of craving and of the entire chain of causation leading to suffering. This cessation of suffering is equated with \textit{nibbāna}, an ineffable state which is complete freedom from all craving and \textit{dukkha}. \textit{Nibbāna} is often depicted as ‘without support, non-functioning, objectless’ (\textit{appatīṭhām, appavatām, anārammaṇam}).\textsuperscript{1043} In positive terms, Gotama describes \textit{nibbāna} as ‘the highest bliss’ (\textit{nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukham})\textsuperscript{1044} and as ‘discernment, non-manifestive, infinite, shining in every respect’ (\textit{vīnāṇam anidassanam anantam sabbato-pabham}).\textsuperscript{1045} \textit{Nibbāna}, in other words, is the final goal of life and the culmination of Buddhist spiritual practice. Realising the cessation of \textit{dukkha}, which is \textit{nibbāna}, also signifies the end of all future rebirths.

How this goal is achieved is stated in the fourth Noble Truth:

And what, monks, is the Noble Truth of the Way of Practice Leading to the Cessation of Suffering? It is just this Noble Eightfold Path, namely:- Right View, Right Thought; Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood; Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration.\textsuperscript{1046}

The Noble Eightfold Path is traditionally divided into the three trainings of morality (\textit{sīla}), concentration (\textit{samādhi}), and wisdom (\textit{paññā}), to be personally practised and realised in the context of a structured disciplined lifestyle of a monastic or dedicated lay follower.

In a \textit{SS} discourse, Sarkar critiques the Buddhist model of the Four Noble Truths for portraying a pessimistic view of existence. Sarkar does not formulate his AM ideology in a manner directly

\textsuperscript{1041} For a brief statement of this dual interpretation of PS, see Bucknell (1999), pp. 327-328, footnote 46.
\textsuperscript{1042} \textit{Thus Have I Heard}, p. 347.
\textsuperscript{1043} Peter Harvey’s translation, in his \textit{The Selfless Mind: Personality, Consciousness and Nirvana in Early Buddhism} (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1995), p. 203.
\textsuperscript{1045} Harvey, \textit{The Selfless Mind}, p. 199.
\textsuperscript{1046} Walshe, \textit{Thus Have I Heard}, p. 348.
mirroring the Four Noble Truths, but offers an alternative vision of existence, a vision that he claims is optimistic and affirmative when compared to the Buddhist one. In his vision, Sarkar offers counterstatements that can be organised into a fourfold structure: (1) the ‘world is not full of sorrows, rather it is full of joys’\textsuperscript{1047} (ānanda); (2) the cause of the universe is the personal parama puruṣa, the ‘embodiment of bliss’\textsuperscript{1048} (ānanda-svarūpa); (3) all entities ‘exist with Him, and ultimately they will all merge in Him’\textsuperscript{1049}; and (4) the way towards supreme bliss is by ‘doing sādhanā and kīrtana .’\textsuperscript{1050} Echoing the Taittiriya Upaniṣad’s proclamation of bliss, Sarkar argues that:

… the world is certainly full of joy because it is from joy that the universe has emerged, in joy it is being maintained, and finally the culminating point of all movement is the Supreme Bliss.\textsuperscript{1051}

In this way, it can be said that Sarkar does offer an alternative version of the ‘Four Noble Truths’, one that is couched in terms of the ontological concept of puruṣa and its epistemological correlate, ānanda. Suffice to conclude here that, for Sarkar, the project of self-realisation and social liberation has to start from the premise of bliss, not suffering. He cleverly uses the Indian notion of ānanda as a self-defining, demarcating point of difference to promote what he deems a more optimistic pathway to total emancipation for the individual and the collective in the here and now.

\textit{The Noble Eightfold Path}  
Sarkar’s appropriation of an eight-factored pedagogy in his \textit{āstāṅga yoga} framework compares interestingly with the Gotama’s noble eightfold path, which consists of a different set of eight factors. In particular, Gotama’s emphasis on mindfulness (sati) (factor 7 of the noble eightfold path) is strikingly absent from Sarkar’s eight-limbed yoga, which seems \textit{prima facie} to focus more heavily on withdrawing (pratyāhāra), concentrating (dharanā), directing (dhyāna), and transforming the mind’s energy than on clear awareness of it. In his discussion on the four foundations of mindfulness (\textit{satipaṭṭhāna}), Gotama emphasises the cultivation of knowledge of and insight into the impermanence, selflessness, and dukkha-eliciting nature of body and mind. Such insight is said to lead the Buddhist practitioner from bondage of dukkha to ultimate liberation, \textit{nibbāna}. Sarkar does not include insight as a specific item in his eight-limbed yoga, and while insight is not formally acknowledged in the Buddhist noble eightfold path, it is nevertheless commonly associated with the practice of mindfulness. As such, insight is arguably implicit in the Buddhist eightfold path.

In Chapter 5, I mentioned Sarkar’s idiosyncratic interpretation of the Buddha’s eightfold path, and highlighted some key differences between Sarkar’s and the Buddha’s delineations of the path.

\begin{flushleft}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{1047} SS Part 11, p. 90.}  
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{1048} SS Part 11, p. 91.}  
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{1049} SS Part 11, p. 94.}  
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{1050} SS Part 11, p. 94.}  
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{1051} SS Part 11, p. 97.}
\end{flushleft}
Here, I attempt to further compare Sarkar’s interpretation with the traditional Buddhist interpretation of the eightfold path.\(^{1052}\) First, Buddhists interpret right understanding (Pali: sammā diṭṭhi) as proper understanding of the Four Noble Truths, seeing these truths as the framework for one’s entire path of practice. Sarkar re-interprets right understanding as possession of a proper philosophy and vision of life, one that is rooted in parama puruṣa. Second, the Buddhist interpretation of right thought (sammā saṅkappa) as thoughts of renunciation (nekhamma), non-ill will (avyāpāda), harmlessness (avihimsā) contrasts with Sarkar’s general statement that sammā saṅkappa is having firm and proper determination to achieve one’s spiritual goal. Third, right speech (sammā vācā) in the Buddhist sense means refraining from lying, slander, and harsh and frivolous speech; in Sarkar’s case, right speech is taken to mean proper control of one’s sensory and motor organs so that one’s behavioural expressions will be wholesome and beneficial to society. Fourth, right action (sammā kammanta) in the Buddhist sense is refraining from taking life, stealing, and sexual misconduct; in Sarkar’s case, it is to finish one’s allotted work properly and without giving up halfway. Fifth, Buddhists define right livelihood (sammā ājīva) as refraining from certain harmful vocations such as butchery, arms trade, and slave trade; Sarkar defines it as having socially beneficial vocations (without specifying what occupations are proscribed), and more importantly, as occupying one’s mind with the thought of parama puruṣa. Sixth, right effort (sammā vāyāma) in the Buddhist sense is exerting effort to prevent or eliminate unwholesome mind-states, and to arouse or perfect wholesome mind-states; in Sarkar’s sense, right effort is proper physical, mental and spiritual exercise so as to maintain physical health and promote spiritual development. These exercises are the various Yogic and meditative practices of AM. Seventh, Buddhists define right mindfulness (sammā sati) as cultivating the four foundations of mindfulness, namely mindfulness of body (kāyatānupassanā), feelings (vedanānupassanā), mind (cittānupassanā), and mind-objects (dharmānupassanā); Sarkar defines right mindfulness as proper recollection of parama puruṣa, achieved through moment-to-moment practice of madhuvidyā, AM’s second meditative lesson. Finally, Buddhists define right concentration (sammā samādhi) as attaining the four jhānas; Sarkar defines sammā samādhi as attaining either savikalpa samādhi (oneness with qualified puruṣa) or nirvikalpa samādhi (oneness with unqualified puruṣa), or both.

While mindfulness and insight are absent from Sarkar’s rendering of the eight-limbed yoga, one can nevertheless note the practice of mindfulness incorporated in Sarkar’s AM in three ways: in the first and second lessons of sahaja yoga, respectively iśvara pranidhāna and madhuvidyā, and in the meditative stance of madhurabhāva. In the first lesson, iśvara pranidhāna, the meditator’s attention is focussed on the iṣṭa cakra while simultaneously ideating on the true infinite nature of the mind, which is parama puruṣa. While doing so, the subjective awareness witnesses the objective ideation and paradoxically becomes enhanced as a result of the doubling back of the ideation onto its witnessing counterpart. This is because the ideational concept is none other than that of infinite witnessing consciousness, reminding the meditator of the fundamental nature of the mind and

\(^{1052}\) The following definitions of the Buddhist eightfold path are drawn from Walshe, pp. 348-349.
strengthening his or her very awareness in the process. In this sense, the quality of mindfulness and clarity is systematically developed through the first lesson. In paying attention to the *iṣṭa cakra*, a specific point on the body, some degree of mindfulness of the body (kāyānupassanā) can be said to be present. In witnessing the subtle, pleasurable feeling of mantric pulsations during the process of ideation, some degree of mindfulness of feelings (vedanānupassanā) is also present. In being aware of the resulting expansiveness and clarification of the mind through ideation, an element of mindfulness of mind-states (cittānupassanā) exists. Finally, in witnessing the sound and imaginative meaning of the mantra in the meditation proper, one can be said to be observing the very components of thought, which can have auditory, visual, and semantic aspects. This observation of a ‘special thought’, the mantra, is arguably a kind of mindfulness of mind-objects (dhammānupassanā). Thus, it can be noted that the first lesson utilises and develops the faculty of clear mindfulness, although in deeper stages, it eliminates other random, uncontrolled thoughts and expands the clarified mind to infinite proportions, approaching perhaps the arūpa states of concentration of the Buddhists.

In the second lesson, madhuvidyā, the meditator’s attention is skillfully directed and expanded to include all observable phenomena in his or her experience, free from all emotional or cognitive distortions. To the extent that it involves clear, open awareness of phenomena without emotional entanglement, madhuvidyā resembles the Buddhist practice of mindfulness. It can thus be argued that some degree of mindfulness, as practised in the Buddhist sense, is essential to successful practice of AM’s second lesson. The essential difference is that madhuvidyā observes all experiential content and simultaneously utilises the subtle ideation that all objects are natural expressions of pristine consciousness; mindfulness merely observes whatever appears in one’s experiential field without judgement, ideation or comment. The paradox of madhuvidyā, however, lies in the fact that such ideation returns the mind’s attention back onto itself, which is the clear, unbounded knowing and witnessing nature of consciousness. Also, Sarkar’s techniques of awareness and insight may be included in more advanced meditative lessons, such as viśeṣa yoga; or may have otherwise been expressed in a hidden and highly philosophical language requiring further interpretation. The philosophical notion of a witnessing entity pervasively and eternally aware of all objects and events in the cosmos suggestively points to a meditative stance of clear, insightful awareness. However, to interpret such a notion in meditative terms would require the use of a meditation-based hermeneutic. A deeper discussion on insight awareness and the use of a meditation-based hermeneutic in Sarkar’s teachings is beyond the scope of this thesis.

In Chapter 5, I suggested that madhurabhāva may be the essential realisation underlying the third state of jīvanmukti. A salient feature of madhurabhāva is that the meditator observes and realises that everything and every being in the universe is blissful and sweet, as they continually emerge and dissolve within the infinite sphere of his or her shining consciousness. This stance of madhurabhāva comes about through having previously realised both nityabhāva (= nirvikalpa samādhi) and līlabhāva (savikalpa samādhi). The inclusive, blissful and sweet awareness of madhurabhāva resembles the stance of mindfulness to the extent that they are both non-judgemental, non-discriminating, and all-
embracing. However, no mention is made of ‘sweetness’ in Buddhist mindfulness though a subtle bliss intrinsic to mindfulness is said to be present.\textsuperscript{1053}

Sarkar’s interpretation of the eight factors of the Buddha’s path clearly departs from the Buddhist, non-substantialist understanding of its path. Through his interpretation, Sarkar appropriates Buddhist concepts in the service of his cosmotheistic and equivocally substantialist project. Furthermore, Sarkar’s soteriological praxis, when compared with its Buddhist counterpart, suggests a greater emphasis on concentricative meditation (\textit{samatha}) than on insight/awareness (\textit{vipassanā}) meditation. However, this point is complicated by the fact that (1) cultivation of moment-to-moment awareness is not entirely absent in AM praxis; and (2) awareness and insight practice, possibly hinted at in Sarkar’s cosmological concept of \textit{puruṣottama}, may exist in the advanced practices of \textit{viśeṣa yoga}.

\textit{Meditative Concentration: Jhāna, Arūpa and Nirodha}
In this section, I briefly mention some possible connections between Sarkar’s and the Buddha’s accounts of meditation, with the aim of highlighting the need for more rigorous analysis in some future work. In the Pali Buddhist texts, frequent mention is made of progressively deeper states of meditation known as the four \textit{jhānas} and the four \textit{arūpas}, and in some cases, the state of cessation of perception and feeling (\textit{saññā-vedayita nirodha}). The four \textit{jhānas} represent a sequence of meditative concentration characterised by progressively deeper one-pointedness, clarity, and equanimity. The four \textit{arūpas} (also known as \textit{arūpa} or non-material \textit{jhānas}) describe advanced and highly subtle states of absorption in (1) the realm of infinite space (\textit{ākāśa-nañcayatana}), (2) the realm of infinite consciousness (\textit{viññāna-nañcayatana}), (3) the realm of no-thingness (\textit{ākīna caññāyatana}), and (4) the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (\textit{nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatana}). The state of \textit{saññā-vedayita nirodha} is said to be the culmination of the \textit{jhānas} and the \textit{arūpas}.

On surface comparison, the four \textit{jhānas} do not appear to resemble any of the meditative attainments spoken of by Sarkar. The Buddha’s description of the four \textit{jhānas} does not focus on the form and content of meditative experience, but rather on the process of it, detailing what mental factors arise and cease as the mind becomes progressively one-pointed and subtilised. This contrasts interestingly with Sarkar’s description of the stages of realisation – \textit{sālokya, sāmūya, sāvyujya, sārūpya, sārṣṭi}, and \textit{kaivalya} – in terms of the ontological concept of \textit{parama puruṣa} (see Chapter 6). However, the Buddha’s extremely terse, content-oriented descriptions of the \textit{arūpa} states, characterised by infinity of space, infinity of consciousness, no-thingness, and neither-perception-nor-non-perception, may find an echo or two in Sarkar’s description of \textit{savikalpa samādhi} or \textit{sārṣṭhi}. In Sarkar’s meditative progression, each stage of realisation is defined by the degree of closeness or

\textsuperscript{1053} In the Buddha’s description of the third \textit{jhāna}, the factor of mindfulness is accompanied by joy (\textit{sukha}). In \textit{AS} II.3, Sarkar defines bliss (\textit{ānanda}) as infinite happiness (\textit{sukhamanantam}).

\textsuperscript{1054} For the Buddha’s description of the \textit{jhānas} and \textit{arūpas}, see e.g. Walshe, \textit{Thus Have I Heard}, pp. 102-104 and pp. 229 respectively.
union between the meditator’s mind and the ‘object’ of supreme consciousness. Thus, accounts of the arūpas and AM meditative realisations may be commensurately compared in terms of their respective objects of meditation and phenomenological features. Also, it may be possible, from an analysis of the AM meditative process itself rather than of its content, to draw out similarities between Sarkar’s and the Buddha’s accounts of meditation. For reasons already mentioned at the beginning of this section, this task is best left to a separate work.

In several instances in the Pali Buddhist texts, the series of meditative attainments is said to culminate in the cessation of perception and feeling (sāññā-vedayita nirodha or nirodha samāpatti). This ultimate state of cessation is highly regarded in the Theravāda Buddhist tradition and has been equated with realisation of nibbāna in the here and now. On one occasion, Anuruddha, one of the foremost disciples of the Buddha, gave the following reply to the Buddha’s query:

> Here, venerable sir, whenever we want, by completely surmounting the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, we enter and abide in the cessation of perception and feeling. And our taints are destroyed by our seeing with wisdom. Venerable sir, this is another superhuman state, a distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones, a comfortable abiding, which we have attained by surmounting the preceding abiding, by making that abiding subside. And venerable sir, we do not see any other comfortable abiding higher or more sublime than this one.

In his counter-reply to Anuruddha, the Buddha praises him and supports his assertion that there is ‘… no other comfortable abiding higher or more sublime than that one.’ Buddha ghosa, the prominent commentator on the Pali texts of the Theravāda tradition, states the reason for attaining the ultimate ‘jhāna’ of cessation:

> Why do they attain it? Being wearied by the occurrence and dissolution of formations, they attain it thinking ‘Let us dwell in bliss by being without consciousness here and now and reaching the cessation that is nibbāna’.

Buddhaghosa also mentions that only ‘non-returners’ (anāgāmi) and ‘noble ones’ (arahant), the penultimate and ultimate attainments possible for a Theravāda Buddhist practitioner, are able to attain sāññā-vedayita nirodha. The above discussion suggests that the experience of sāññā-vedayita nirodha is synonymous with a temporary realisation of nibbāna, a state that is accessible only to highly realised practitioners who are near or have reached the completion of their spiritual paths.

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1055 See e.g. DN II 71 (in Walshe, p. 229) and MN I 209.
1058 Ibid.
This particular view of saññā-vedayita nirodha bears close resemblance to Sarkar’s description of the state of nirvikalpa samādhi, the ‘highest’ meditative absorption possible for an AM practitioner, characterised by total mind transcendence and an ineffable vacuity that is simultaneously full of bliss. In nirvikalpa samādhi, no experience in the ordinary sense of the word is possible, since it is beyond mind and experience; the fact that this state is one of infinite bliss is inferred by the practitioner immediately post-samādhi. In other words, the AM practitioner, following emergence from nirvikalpa samādhi, infers from the deep composure and bliss that persist in his or her mind that the preceding ‘experience’ must have been one of ultimate bliss and peace. This is very similar to the following description of post-saññā-vedayita nirodha:

It is a Nibbānic ‘experience’ indirectly – by inference, by anticipation, and by ‘postexperience.’ As stoppage of thought and feeling, it is inferred to be Nibbānic. With cessation already predefined as Nibbāna-in-this-life, the meditator so views it when anticipating or preparing to enter it. And in the postexperience, it is felt as utter, irrefragable peace because of the feeling tone of the stoppage of thought just occurring and the prestoppage conception of cessation as Nibbānic.\footnote{Theravāda Buddhist meditative praxis rests on the dual cultivation of samatha (calm) and vipassanā (insight), or in some cases, vipassanā alone, culminating in the threefold insight into anicca (impermanence), dukkha (unsatisfactoriness), and anattā (non-self). It is insight into anattā alone that is said to destroy all kilesas (defilements) and finally release one from dukkha – realisation of nibbāna. The apparent diametric opposition of Buddhist anātta to Hindu ātman suggests that Buddhist meditative realisations are incommensurable with Hindu (and perhaps AM) ones, pointing as they do to different sets of insights and experiences. However, as Loy argues, it is possible to attempt a reconciliation of Buddhist and Hindu realisations by seeing them as two sides of the same coin, one as first-person phenomenological description and the other as third-person philosophical description of the same experience. Loy says: ‘Early Buddhism may be seen to emphasise the nothing, the extensionless point which shrinks to non-existence; Śāṅkara emphasises the unique world which remains. But they are describing the same phenomenon. … One should not identify with any physical or mental phenomenon; in other words, one learns to relax and “let go” of literally everything. In doing so, the sense of self “shrinks to an extensionless point” and when that abruptly disappears – which is enlightenment – “what remains is the reality co-ordinate with it.” On the one side nothing, not even the extensionless point, is left – this is the Buddhist void, the complete absence of a self. On the other side remains – everything, the whole world, but a transformed one since it now encompasses awareness within itself; this is the non-dual brahman of Vedānta’ (p. 70): see David Loy, ‘Enlightenment in Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta: Are Nirvāṇa and Mokṣa the Same?’, \textit{International Philosophical Quarterly}, 22.1 (1982): pp. 65-74.}
is able to attain, at will, subsequent Fruit moments of that particular stage of sainthood. The same
applies to the other stages of sainthood. While Sarkar does not specify the number of times that
nirvikalpa samādhī needs to be attained before full liberation ensues, he does make it clear that
attainment of nirvikalpa samādhī is essential for salvation (mokṣa), just as realisation of the Path and
Fruit of all four stages of sainthood is essential for full enlightenment in the Buddhist schema.

The above discussion suggests that Sarkar’s AM and Theravāda Buddhist praxis may share
certain commonalities, although fully describing and accounting for these similarities (and differences)
require far more than what this thesis can accomplish. Suffice to mention that Sarkar, in keeping with
the Hindu inclination for metaphysical speculation, uses the ontological discourse in speaking about
meditative attainments, while Theravāda Buddhists, in keeping with the Buddha’s emphasis on
empirical observation, make greater use of the phenomenological mode of discourse. Whether the two
modes of discourse ultimately point to the same reality remains uncertain; I have merely highlighted
possible connections here, leaving the analyses and drawing of conclusions to some later work.

*Higher Wisdom: Abhiññā and Tevijjā*

The Buddha’s emphasis on insight-knowledge as the quintessential means for enlightenment
(sambodhi) is reflected in the final stages leading up to liberation from all suffering, epitomised in the
Sāmaññaphala Sutta or ‘Discourse on the Fruits of the Homeless Life’. In this sutta, the Buddha
describes the five higher knowledges (abhiññās) that a meditating monk achieves following mastery
of the four jhānas. The first abhiññā is knowing and seeing that the body is made up of four material
elements and the mind or consciousness is bound to and dependent on the body. The second abhiññā
is production of a mind-made body that possesses a form complete with all limbs and faculties – an
‘astral’ or ‘psychic’ body akin to a physical body. The third abhiññā is acquiring various supernormal
powers (iddhi) such as multiplication of self, appearing and disappearing at will, passing through solid
objects such as walls and mountains, sinking into and emerging from the ground, walking on water,
flaying through the sky cross-legged, physically touching the sun and moon, and travelling to the
celestial (Brahma) world. The fourth abhiññā is possession of the ‘divine ear’ that is able to hear
sounds, ‘both divine and human, whether far or near.’ The fifth abhiññā is knowledge of the minds
of other beings, being able to distinguish the different mind-states of other beings (e.g. a mind with or
without hate, a mind with or without passion, etc.).

The Buddha goes on to describe the three key insights (tevijjā) leading to full liberation: (1)
knowledge of previous existences; (2) knowledge of the passing away and arising of beings or the
‘divine eye’; and (3) knowledge of the destruction of the corruptions. The first of the three insight-
knowledges involves remembering every detail of one’s past lives; the second involves seeing how

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1064 Walshe, *Thus Have I Heard*, p. 105.
and where beings pass away and are reborn according to the wholesome or unwholesome kamma that
they have accumulated; the third involves knowing as it really is, the four noble truths with respect to
suffering (dukkha) and the corruptions (āsava), and being consequently delivered from the corruptions
of sense-desire, becoming, and ignorance. The third knowledge also involves recognising that one is
fully liberated from the cycle of birth and death as a result of destruction of those corruptions.

Turning now to Sarkar, we can see several similarities and differences between Sarkar’s
articulation of occult powers, omniscience, and spiritual knowledge and the Buddha’s account of the
abhīñās and teviḍ̄ā. First, the abhīñās of supernormal powers, divine ear, and knowledge of others’
minds resemble some of the eight occult powers (vibhūtis) that an AM practitioner may attain upon
becoming one with the cosmic mind. These powers are the natural capacities of the cosmic mind and
are fully exhibited in the human manifestation of tāraka brahma, otherwise known as Bhagavān, the
Lord. The eight occult powers are: (1) anīmā – ability to become very small and to penetrate into the
secrets of atomic (or sub-atomic) structure; (2) mahimā – ability to become very big, surpassing any
object in the universe; (3) laghīmā – ability to become very light, to walk on water, and to be
anywhere in the universe; (4) īśitva – ruling capacity or the ability to witness, understand and direct
the actions of all entities in the universe; (5) prakāmya – ability to take any form; (6) vaśītva – ability
to control forces of nature, create new life, and resurrect the dead; (7) prāpti – ability to immediately
materialise any thought or desire; and (8) antarayāmītva – ability to penetrate into the inner nature of
any entity.\textsuperscript{1066} Comparisons between the abhīñās and the vibhūtis can be tabulated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buddhist īddhis and abhīñās</th>
<th>AM vibhūtis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third abhīñā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Self multiplication</td>
<td>Prakāmya – taking any form at will.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Appearing and disappearing at will</td>
<td>Laghīmā – being anywhere at will.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Passing through solid objects</td>
<td>Anīmā – becoming so minute as to be able to enter into solid objects or the earth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sinking into and emerging from ground</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Walking on water</td>
<td>Laghīmā – becoming so light as to be able to walk on water and fly through the sky; being able to go anywhere at will.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Flying through sky cross-legged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Touching the sun and moon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Travelling to the Brahma world</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth abhīñā: Divine ear</td>
<td>Īśitva – being able to witness speech or sounds of all entities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth abhīñā: Knowledge of others’ minds</td>
<td>Anatarayāmītva – being able to see into the inner nature of all entities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first two abhīñās – knowledge of the elemental nature of the body and production of a mind-
made body – do not have evident counterparts in Sarkar’s AM. Similarly, three vibhūtis, namely
mahimā, vaśītva, and prāpti, do not have evident counterparts in the Sāmaññaphala Sutta.

\textsuperscript{1066} SPSSA, pp. 75-76
The Buddhist tevijjā can be compared with AM’s omniscience (trikālasarvabhūta jñāna) and spiritual knowledge (aparokṣa bodha). In particular, the first two knowledges – knowledge of previous existences and knowledge of passing away and arising of beings – fall within the scope of Sarkar’s trikālasarvabhūta jñāna, a direct knowledge of all things existing in the past, present and future. Such omniscient knowledge, according to Sarkar, is a fruit of perfection in savikalpa samādhi or merger into the cosmic mind. The third knowledge – knowledge of the destruction of corruptions – resembles, in function and status, the ultimate spiritual knowledge that is the fruit of perfection in nirvikalpa samādhi. The most obvious difference is that in the case of the Buddha’s third knowledge, the four noble truths constitute its substance, while in the case of Sarkar’s spiritual knowledge, the singular truth of parama puruṣa experienced as non-duality of knower, knowing, and the object of knowledge is of the essence. It is debatable whether these two ultimate knowledges are identical, but they have this in common that upon realising these knowledges, a total eradication of limiting and unwholesome mental tendencies occurs. In the Buddhist case, the corruptions are eliminated, never to arise again; in AM’s case, the eight bondages (aṣṭa pāśa) and six enemies (ṣadripu) no longer beset the mind.

In this comparison of AM with Buddhism, questions have been raised as well as answered. Many points of ambiguity remain and require further clarification and understanding. In the next chapter, we will return our attention to the Hindu context of Sarkar’s teachings, in an attempt to sort out the possible influences on Sarkar’s thinking, and the degree to which he is a contemporary advocate of classical and Bengali Tantra. Finally, in the concluding chapter, I will sum up all the various stands of Indian thought and praxis that appear to have contributed to Sarkar’s formulation of AM, and argue the thesis that Sarkar, in spite of his avowed non-allegiance to any known guru-disciple lineage or religious tradition, can be justifiably regarded as an authentic guru of Tantra.
Chapter 8
The Tantric Legacy

This chapter will continue from the previous chapter with an analysis of the three main schools of Tantra as understood in their traditional context. Attention will be paid to how Sarkar has reconceptualised traditional concepts in the service of his AM project. The Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava traditions are of particular interest for their relationships to Sarkar’s Tantric praxis and his concept of bhakti respectively. In particular, Sarkar’s brahmacakra theory will be compared with the cosmology of Kashmir Śaivism. The contribution of Śākta concepts such as kundalini and śakti to Sarkar’s AM will also be discussed. The Bengali milieu, in which Sarkar grew up and in which he developed his mission, is pertinent to an examination of the sources of his ideas. As such, Sarkar’s AM will be compared with Bengali Vaiṣṇavism and Tantrism for commonalities and differences, with suggestions on how Sarkar may have adapted key ideas from Bengali spirituality in formulating his own ideology.

8.1 Medieval Hindu Systems

The five major traditions of medieval Hinduism, namely the Śākta, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Gāṇapatya, and Saura strands, correspond to Sarkar’s ‘five schools of Tantra’, which form the context of his Tantric philosophy and praxis, both spiritual and social. As a pan-Indian movement from the fourth century onwards, Tantra can be historically identified as a syncretistic, popular and highly esoteric stream of Indian spirituality that draws its sustenance from a wide variety of sources.\(^{1067}\) This section will examine the general features of three out of these five Hindu Tantric systems and posit how elements from these three may have been interwoven and built into Sarkar’s spiritual worldview. The Śākta, Śaiva, and Vaiṣṇava systems will be examined in light of their similarities, differences, and possible contributions to Sarkar’s Tantra.

Mishra states that any practice or teaching that claims to be authentically Tantric needs to be measured against two criteria: (1) whether that particular practice is consistent with Tantric philosophy, and (2) whether an in-depth analysis of the Tantric texts produces evidence for that particular practice/teaching.\(^{1068}\) As mentioned previously in Chapter 5, Sarkar saw his Ānanda Mārga as a unique blending of the Śākta, Śaiva, and Vaiṣṇava systems of Tantric practice; examining the central features and doctrines of these traditional systems will allow us to gauge the authenticity of Sarkar’s AM in relation to them. It is therefore to these systems that we now limit our attention.

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8.1.1 Śāktism and Sarkarian Tantra

The Śākt tradition is identified with worship of the female aspect of the divine, Devī, in any of her varied manifestations. It is regarded by some scholars as identical to the historical movement of Hindu Tantra, whose literary works can be traced to the 5th century C.E. or slightly earlier.\textsuperscript{1069} Feuerstein (1998) argues that Goddess worship or worship of the feminine psychocosmic principle, Śakti, is central to many Tantric schools, and may have existed even in ancient Vedic times. He says:

> The Tantric masters and practitioners merely drew on the existing sacred lore and ritual practices revolving around the Goddess, as current especially in rural communities of India. Some scholars have therefore assigned to Tantra an age equalling, if not surpassing, that of the Veda.\textsuperscript{1070}

Amongst some Western scholars and believers, the Śākt tradition has been almost exclusively equated with Hindu Tantra, though from Sarkar’s perspective, the Śākt system of philosophy and practice is only one of the five major strands of Tantra. Other scholars, though, use the term ‘Tantra’ broadly to include not only the Śākt tradition, but also the Šaiva tradition of Kashmir. For clarity and consistency, I will henceforth use the term ‘Śākt-Tantric tradition’ to refer to what scholars commonly take to be Hindu Tantra, and the word ‘Tantra’ alone when referring to the broader usage of the term (which is consonant with Sarkar’s definition of Tantra). Bhattacharyya (1982) mentions the existence of five major cults in India associated with the common non-Brahmanical masses – the Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Śākt, Gāṇapatya, and Saura cults. In his view, these five cults have all been associated with Tantrism in terms of their various philosophies, rituals, and social practices. He states that these five cults amalgamated into a composite religious system over the course of history under Brahmanical (Vedic) influence to become the Smārta Paṇḍopāsanā.\textsuperscript{1071} In a rather similar way, though as a feat of modern adaptation rather than of medieval amalgamation, Sarkar’s Tantra – otherwise known as Ānanda Mārga – has been claimed by Sarkar himself to be a unique synthesis of the Śākt, Šaiva and Vaiṣṇava systems. We will now explore how Sarkar may have borrowed elements of the Śākt-Tantric tradition in the construction of his own Tantric system.

In the Śākt-Tantric tradition, the feminine principle in the form of a female deity is given prominence over all male deities such as Śiva and Viṣṇu. In this tradition, ultimate reality is seen to be the supreme matter or life-force rather than supreme spirit or consciousness (as is the case in the Šaiva tradition). The most important textual sources of this tradition include the comparatively late Devī Purāṇas – collections of myths, lore, and speculation centred on the female supreme deity – and

\textsuperscript{1068} Kamalakar Mishra, Kashmir Śaivism: The Central Philosophy of Tantrism, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{1069} See e.g. Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, p. 454. Feuerstein stresses, however, that ‘the boundaries between Śaivism and Śaktism are rather fluid’ (p. 454).
\textsuperscript{1070} Ibid.
the Śākta Tantras – a large number of texts pertaining to Śakti worship and ritual. The first three of these seven involve common Hindu practices such as common worship (Vaidikācāra), devotion to Viṣṇu (Vaiṣṇavācāra), and meditation on Śiva (Śaivaśācāra). The fourth to seventh stages represent forms of practice unique to the Śākta-Tantra tradition, namely Daksīṇācāra (‘right-handed worship’), Vāmācāra (‘left-handed worship’), Siddhāntācāra (‘perfect worship’), and Kulācāra (‘divine way of life’). Daksīṇācāra involves worship of Devī as the supreme Goddess using Vedic rites and repetition (japa) of her name, while Vāmācāra involves Goddess worship, usually in a group, where the five makāras – māṁsa (‘meat’), matsya (‘fish’), mudrā (‘parched grain’), madda (‘intoxicants’), and maithuna (‘sexual intercourse’) – are employed in a highly secretive and ritualistic fashion. Siddhāntācāra comprises all the aforementioned practices except that their practice is no longer kept a secret from the public. The public acknowledgement of one’s allegiance to such practices, widely perceived to be antinomian and anti-social, is regarded as a sign that one has transcended distinctions between pure and impure, good and bad. The highest stage of Śākta-Tantric practice is Kulācāra, wherein the practitioner has supposedly transcended all conventional morality and prohibitions as a result of his or her realisation of ultimate reality. Such a practitioner, termed a kaula, is deemed to have penetrated the veils of illusory concepts and is completely free of all bondages, seeing him or herself in all things and vice versa.

Turning to Sarkar’s articulation of his Ānanda Mārga, it can be seen that Sarkar displaces all the aforementioned ācāras with his Madhyāmācāra, the ‘middle path’. He mentions all seven stages of Tantric practice in his texts but does not identify any of them with his Ānanda Mārga, a path to which he gives the new term ‘Madhyāmācāra’. Sarkar’s Madhyāmācāra is characterised by struggle against the forces of māyā (śakti in its world-creating and world-deluding phase) and a constant movement towards spiritual enlightenment with brahma as the ultimate goal. He eschews all practices involving ritualistic worship and the five makāras (to which he gives subtler psychological and Yogic interpretations), privileging instead the inner practices of meditative concentration and ideation. While agreeing with the general Kulācāra view that a realised soul has transcended all duality, moral judgement, and differentiation, Sarkar nevertheless enjoins a strict moral and social code for followers of his Madhyāmācāra. This strict adherence to morality is said not to be due to a differentiating, unenlightened mind that mechanically judges between good and bad, but rather to be rooted in the integral vision of the world as relative truth – a real world with truly existing objects – whose essence is ultimately brahma, infinite consciousness. In other words, Sarkar does not deny the reality of the world and its ways but contextualises it against the larger and deeper reality of brahma, which is

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1072 See e.g. Klostermaier, Survey, pp. 279-283; and Teun Goudriaan, ‘Introduction’, in Hindu Tantrism, pp. 3-12. Examples of Śākta Tantras include the Vāmākeśvara Tantra, Rudrayāmala, Tripurā Rahasya and Mahānirvāṇa Tantra. Goudriaan says: 'The texts themselves ... are not unanimous about the number of Tantras, but the number 64 is most frequent among them' (p. 11). He continues: 'The Śākta Tantras are usually presented as dialogues, or rather interviews, between this divine couple [Śiva, the Highest Being, and Devī, the Great Goddess], although in a small minority of texts ... Devī is the proclaimer' (p. 13).
simultaneously the material substance of the world, its first cause, and its final goal. In this light, moral behaviour reflects the integral understanding that a conventionally real world demands conventionally appropriate action, though such action is entirely ego-less and ultimately immersed in the sea of the divine. Sarkar does, however, acknowledge that for those who are unable to control their basic instincts, the private practice of the five makāras with an attitude of sacredness and with brahma as the ultimate goal can be a stepping-stone to higher and subtler practices of AM. Thus, while Sarkar’s Tantra does not include antinomian practices traditionally associated with the Śākta-Tantric tradition, it does not condemn them outright as long as they are practised in the correct spirit.

Within the Śākta-Tantric tradition, concepts of yantra, mantra, kundalinī-śakti, and the psychophysiology of nādiś and cakras feature prominently in its modes of worship and meditation. The yantra is a graphic and geometric symbol of the Goddess used specifically for worship and meditation, of which the Śrīyantra is perhaps the best known example. It usually comprises letters of the alphabet, representing the mantra-body of the Goddess, arranged in special geometric patterns in conjunction with two (or more) interlocking triangles, one upward-pointing (symbolising Śiva) and one downward-pointing (symbolising Śakti). Concentric wheels, upon which are inscribed letters of the alphabet and bija-mantras (‘seed spells’) representing aspects of divinity, encircle the triangles. Four walls bound the entire pattern, each wall with a gate facing one of the four cardinal directions, representing a door through which the devotee may enter the divine sanctuary by means of meditative worship. In such worship, the devotee’s attention is progressively shifted from the periphery to the innermost centre of the yantra, wherein he or she finally identifies with the central reality of the Goddess. In common with the Śākta-Tantrikas, Sarkar has designed a specific yantra for his AM, which he calls the pratīka. Here, he parts company with the Śāktas, for instead of being a symbol for female divinity, the pratīka is meant to symbolically encapsulate the entire ideology of AM. The pratīka sums up the AM’s mission statement, which is ‘self realisation and service to the entire creation’. It serves as a contemplative device that reminds followers of the message that a balanced practice of inner realisation and outer action will lead to all-round progress and finally to spiritual victory. In designing the pratīka, Sarkar reinterprets the purpose of yantra as a ‘pictorial mission statement’, an aid to contemplation on, and affirmation of, one’s beliefs and values rather than as a symbol for divine worship.

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1074 See Klostermaier, Survey, pp. 286–289. The Tantric theory of cakra, nādi, and kundalinī is described in two comparatively late works (16th century C.E. ?), the Satcakramirūpaṇa and Pādukāpāṇcaka, both of which have been translated by Sir John Woodroffe under the pen-name of Arthur Avalon; see Arthur Avalon, The Serpent Power: The Secrets of Tantric and Shaktic Yoga (New York: Dover Publications, 1974).
1075 For a more detailed discussion on the symbolism of Śrīyantra, see Dirk Jan Hoens, ‘Mantra and Other Constituents of Tantric Practice’, in Hindu Tantrism, pp. 114–115.
1076 In practice, it is commonly accepted by AM practitioners that the pratīka does have a subtle liberative effect on the mind as a result of the special vibrations it emanates, and that wearing the pratīka as a pendant around the neck ‘defeats any occult avidyā practices and guarantees one protection of the guru at all times’ (see AMSSP, p. 32).
In Śakti worship, the use of yantra often goes together with mantra and the enactment of mudrās (hand gestures with specific religious meanings). One central idea is that of the physical body being the seat of divinity: the macrocosm of the divine universe is reflected in every detail in the microcosm of the body. The letters of the alphabet are thought to form the body of the Goddess and of the devotee as well. A Śākta-Tantric practice known as nyāsa involves placing each letter of the alphabet upon a different part of the body and consequently transforming each part into its divine form. The body of the worshipper is thus ritually and systematically divinised through the use of letters of the alphabet, which are believed to possess divine potency much as mantras do. In contrast, Sarkar does not advocate a practice such as nyāsa, nor does he subscribe to the idea that each letter of the alphabet constitutes the physical body of the devotee. Instead, in his theory of biopsychology, the fifty letters of the Sanskrit alphabet correspond to the acoustic properties of the fifty vyrtīs or propensities of the human mind, distributed in a systematic manner throughout the first six cakras of the body. In his view, each cakra contains a specific acoustic pattern constituted by the various acoustic roots (and hence propensities) that are associated with that cakra. While Sarkar’s theory of letters differs considerably from the Śākta-Tantric view, it is nevertheless reminiscent of the peculiarly Tantric style of correlating and coalescing language, linguistics, psychology, physiology, and metaphysics into one holistic framework. Sarkar and the Śāktas differ in the details of how such a correlation and convergence of ideas should take place. For Sarkar letters, or more precisely their acoustic roots, are intimately linked to the psychophysiology of the body, which reinterprets the traditional notion of cakras as nerve plexuses and associated glands. It can be argued that in Sarkar’s rewriting of Tantric ideas, an attempt has been made to adapt some of the terminology to the epistemic structures and knowledge base of modernity, rendering it more palatable to modern readers.

The concepts of kuṇḍalinī-śakti and cakras are probably the best known aspects of the Śākta-Tantric tradition, and indeed feature prominently in its soteriology. Śakti is thought to be coiled up like a snake at the base of the spine where it lies dormant until awakened through Tantric worship. When as a result of Tantric worship, the kuṇḍalinī-śakti awakes and rises up the spinal cord through the six cakras, finally reaching the ‘thousand-petalled lotus’ at the crown of the head, the blissful union of Śiva and Śakti takes place. This represents, for the devotee, a state of liberation and highest happiness. In Śākta-Tantric philosophy, the cakras are depicted geometrically and pictorially, with a certain geometric shape and a specific number of lotus petals corresponding to each cakra. Klostermaier (1994) summarises:

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1077 See Dirk Jan Hoens, ‘Mantra …’, pp. 115-117.
1078 Hoens distinguishes two forms of nyāsa: mantranyāsa (placing of mantra) and mātrikanyāsa (placing of whole alphabet); see Dirk Jan Hoens, ‘Mantra …’, pp. 109-110.
1079 For an account of Śākta-Tantric spiritual praxis, see Sanjukta Gupta, ‘Tantric Śādhanā: Yoga’, in Hindu Tantrism, pp. 163-185. Gupta says: ‘The two disciplines which are characteristically Tantric, and which are indeed always present in Tantra yoga, are meditation on mystic syllables (Mantra yoga) and a scheme of meditation, known as Laya yoga or Kuṇḍalinī yoga, which concerns an elaborate mystical physiology [italics mine]’ (p. 163).
Thus mūlādhāra, the first of the cakras, lying at the base of the spine, the root of susūmṇā and the resting place of Kuṇḍalinī, is depicted as a triangle encircled by an orb with four lotus petals, on which the syllables vam, śam, sam, saṃ are written. In the centre of the lotus lies the śyaṁbhu linga of a rust-brown colour … The next cakra is svādhiṣṭhāna, a six-petalled lotus at the base of the sexual organ; above it is mani-pura, the jewel-city, a ten-petalled golden lotus in the navel. In the region of the heart is anāhata cakra, a deep-red lotus with twelve petals; above it, at the base of the throat, is viṣuddha cakra, the dwelling place of the god of speech, a lotus with sixteen petals. Between the eyebrows we have ājñā cakra, a two-petalled lotus … the place of the bija-mantra Om and the dwelling place of the three main gunas. Here dwell Para-Śiva in the form of a swan and Kālī-Śakti.

The above depiction of the cakras contrasts with Sarkar’s understanding of them. In his depiction, the lotuses with their petals are symbolic of glands with their sub-glands; there is no talk of deities such as the ‘god of speech’, ‘Para-Śiva’, and ‘Kālī-Śakti’ at certain cakras. Not surprisingly, the number of glands and sub-glands (and propensities) in Sarkar’s cakra theory corresponds exactly to the number of petals in each cakra in the Śākta-Tantric version. Again, it can be noted that Sarkar's reinterpretation gives a scientific gloss to the traditional notion of cakras and perhaps makes it more acceptable to contemporary minds. Klostermaier (1994) mentions two other cakras additional to the commonly known seven, which are depicted in the Śākta-Tantric tradition:

Above this [ājñā cakra] is the manas cakra and soma cakra, with sixteen petals. These are kṛpā, grace; mṛdutā, sweetness; dhairya, firmness; vairāgya, renunciation; dṛṣṭi, constancy; sampat, wealth; hāsyā, gaiety; romāṅcā, enthusiasm; vinaya, discipline; dhyāna, meditation; susṭhiratā, relaxation; gambhirā, seriousness; udyama, effort; aksobhya, imperturbability; audārya, generosity; and ekāgratā, one-pointedness. Above this cakra is the nīrālambanā purī, the city without support, wherein the yogis behold the radiant Īśvara.

Comparing the ‘sixteen petals’ of the above passage with Ānandamitra’s description of the sixteen attributes found in the fourth layer of the mind, the vijñānamaya kośa, one notes a direct and identical correspondence. While Ānandamitra locates these sixteen attributes in the vijñānamaya kośa, which controls the anāhata cakra, the Śāktas locate them in the manas and soma cakras, which supposedly exist above the ājñā cakra. The exact correspondence between petals and attributes, in number and nature, strongly suggests a borrowing on Ānandamitra’s part from the Śāktas, though a satisfactory explanation for the shift from manas and soma cakras to vijñānamaya kośa would need to be found. It also appears that Sarkar does not recognise the sixteen attributes mentioned by Ānandamitra, suggesting a discrepancy between Sarkar’s original works and the works of his commentators.

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1080 Klostermaier, Survey, p. 288.
1081 Ibid.
1082 Ānandamitra, commenting on Sarkar’s AS in her SPSSA, mentions sixteen attributes of the vijñānamaya kośa (controlling kośa of the anāhata cakra), which Sarkar makes no mention of in his texts. Sarkar enumerates a list of twelve propensities situated in the anāhata cakra, a list which differs in number and content from Ānandamitra’s listing of sixteen attributes.
With regard to the sahasrāra cakra, the Śāktas posit that this topmost cakra houses the supreme deity, Devī, and that each petal of the lotus contains all the letters of the alphabet. Here, all the expressions of the universe exist in unmanifested form. This idea is echoed by Sarkar’s assertion that the sahasrāra cakra contains the unmanifest seed of all the one thousand propensities of the mind. Again, a theory of mythical letters and macrocosmic creation in the Śākta-Tantric tradition is translated by Sarkar into a theory of microcosmic biopsychology.

8.1.2 Śaivism and Sarkarian Tantra

We will now move on to examine the Śaiva-Tantric tradition and its possible connections to Sarkarian Tantra. Both the northern and southern variations of Śaivism will be discussed, though our primary focus will be on the non-dual Śaivism of Kashmir, since Sarkar’s non-dualist metaphysic and Tantric praxis bear closest resemblance to those of Kashmir Śaivism. A comparative critique of Sarkarian Tantra will be undertaken on the basis of that discussion.

The Śaiva tradition is identified with worship of and devotion to Śiva as the supreme deity of the universe. Klostermaier notes that Śiva worship has been traced back to the Indus civilisation, where lingas or phallic symbols, as well as seals interpreted as Śiva Mahāyogi (‘Śiva, the Great Yogi’) and Śiva Paśupati (‘Śiva, Lord of the Beasts’), have been found. He also mentions that Śaivism is historically rooted in the Tamil country, with the figure of Śiva having been formed from a variety of sources including northwest Indian tribal religions, the official Vedic religion, and the indigenous Indus civilisation. Early textual sources of Śaivism can be traced to the Rgveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda, and the relatively later Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad. The epics, Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, also mention several Śiva myths and stories. The main sources of Śaivism are, however, the Śiva Purāṇas and Āgamas, which are regarded as comparatively late compositions possibly containing much ancient material.\(^{1083}\) Klostermaier comments:

In the Purāṇas, Śiva mythology reaches its fullest development and also its exclusivity: Śiva is the Only Lord, Viṣṇu and Brahmā are inferior to him … The Śaiva Āgamas detail the mode of worship that has to be followed in Śaiva temples and homes … From very early times Śaivism has been connected with rigorous asceticism. Yogis are traditionally Śaivas, seeing in Śiva himself the Mahāyogi.\(^{1084}\)

In Sarkar’s Tantra, the semi-historical, semi-mythical figure of Śiva features prominently and assumes an air of real-life historicity. In Sarkar’s view, Śiva was a historical figure who lived in India about seven thousand years ago and who was instrumental in systematising and teaching a primordial form of Tantra. Sarkar sees Śiva as a great community leader and Tantric guru who lived and thrived in a region he calls Rarh, roughly corresponding to the area of north-western Bengal and north-eastern Bihar. In Sarkar’s writings, Śiva is the first manifestation of tāraka brahma, the liberating aspect of

\(^{1083}\) *SPSSA*, pp. 262-267.

\(^{1084}\) *SPSSA*, p. 267.
the cosmic entity, whose sole mission was, and still is, to bring salvation to humanity both individually and collectively. Sarkar gives his ideas on Śiva in one of his major works, Namah Śivāya Śāntāya, which is a collection of talks on Śiva (both as a historical personage and as a philosophical concept) delivered between the months of April and August in 1982. In Sarkar’s historical depiction of him, Śiva was not only a well-loved spiritual guru but also a humanitarian and a pioneer of the arts and sciences, without whom human culture and civilisation would not exist as we know them. Sarkar’s Śiva ‘played a crucial role in propelling human society on a forward path in education, medicine, social code, music, dance, phonetics and of course, intuitional science’. It appears that Sarkar’s historiography, while having some basis in historical evidence, claims far more than can be substantiated by currently available evidence on Śiva. It can, thus, be read as an attempt at mythological contextualisation and perhaps legitimation for Sarkar’s own role as a mass guru and the harbinger of a new civilisational order.

Pāśupata Sect
Śaivism manifests in Northern and Southern Indian varieties, and in several sects and philosophical schools, of which the oldest on record is the Pāśupata sect. The teachings of the Pāśupata sect are largely identical to those of the Śaiva Siddhānta school of South India. The Pāśupata sect, itself subdivided into many sub-sects, stresses the liberation of the self through both individual effort and Śiva’s grace, and sees the person in bondage as ‘... paśu, an ox, whose Lord is Śiva...’. The sect advocates the practice of japa (mantra repetition) and meditation as well as a plethora of odd behaviours such as bathing in ashes, dancing like a madman, snoring, and limping, presumably as signs of divine intoxication. While Sarkar certainly endorses the practice of japa and meditation, and the idea of self-effort in combination with divine grace, his soteriological praxis has no place for ritualistic and eccentric behaviours. These behaviours are perhaps seen by him as superstitious dogmas, contrary to the spirit of rationality which he takes pains to identify with his own ideology. It can be argued that Sarkar’s accentuation of the interior meditative rather than the exterior ritualistic aspects of Śaiva praxis exemplifies his aim of rationalising and reviving the essence of Tantra.

Śaiva Siddhānta
A major sect of Śaivism is Śaiva Siddhānta (‘the Final Truth of Śiva’) or Tamil Śaivism, which is based on the recorded teachings of Tamil saints and mystics known as Nāyanārs and on the twenty-eight recognised Āgama texts. Historically, Śaiva Siddhānta flourished in South India during the period between the seventh and the ninth centuries C.E. This school regarded ultimate reality as śiva, whose essence is sat (‘being’) and cit (‘consciousness’). Unlike the schools of Vedānta, Śaiva

1085 NSS, p. xi.
1086 See e.g. Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, pp. 344-346; and Klostermaier, Survey, pp. 263 and 267-268.
1088 See e.g. Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, pp. 367-370; and Klostermaier, Survey, pp. 268-270.
Siddhānta perceives the world not as an illusion but as a real, albeit limited, expression of śiva. Here, the term śiva is used as a quasi-philosophical, theistic concept, representing both a personal god and an ontological substance of the universe. As such, śiva is regarded as having utmost benevolence for suffering humans; he manifests in bodily form as a guru to save them from bondage and pain:

Dīkṣā, initiation, is the direct cause of liberation; but dīkṣā is not possible without knowledge … There are three different kinds of knowledge: paśu jñāna and pāsa jñāna give only knowledge of the soul, of words and things. Only pati jñāna gives liberation. The way to it leads through the guru’s teaching; it is Śiva who appears in the form of a guru, opens the eyes of the devotee, performs the purificatory rites, and removes the obstacles.\(^{1089}\)

In Śaiva Siddhānta, the spirit of loving devotion to śiva is upheld and devotees are urged to surrender totally to his grace for spiritual emancipation. In contrast to the Pāṣupata sect, the Śaiva Siddhānta privileges śiva’s grace and extols complete devotion to śiva above all else. For Śaiva Siddhāntins, the state of liberation is ‘the state of love’ and ‘devotion as expressed in self-surrender is not a mere method (sādhana), but participation in the final liberation itself.’\(^{1090}\) Spiritual emancipation is conceived as a state of union with Śiva, attained by the devotee while still embodied. The ideal of embodied liberation (jīvan-mukti) features prominently in Śaiva Siddhānta.\(^{1091}\) It is defined as the state of such total identification with Śiva that self, other, and the world all become expressions of the divine. However, such identification does not imply that the individual soul merges into Śiva; the soul remains distinct from the Lord while contemplating its oneness with Śiva.

Śaiva Siddhānta’s ontological concept of śiva as the immanent ground of a real but finite world, its emphasis on loving surrender to the divine, its view of śiva manifesting as the guru, and its relegation of salvational potency solely to śiva’s grace – all these resemble, in many ways, Sarkar’s own ideology and praxis. A significant difference lies in the varying emphasis on embodied liberation (jīvan-mukti) between Śaiva Siddhānta and Sarkar. While Śaiva Siddhānta unambiguously asserts the possibility and desirability of the state of jīvan-mukti, of which at least seven grades are admitted, Sarkar does not explicitly and unequivocally state the possibility of jīvan-mukti. Also, in relation to the guru, Sarkar asserts that the true guru is not the human teacher but brahma, for brahmaiva gururekah nāparah: ‘Brahma alone is guru, no one else’.\(^{1092}\) In this way, Sarkar emphasises divine power behind the human teacher and strives to shift the locus of devotion to the supreme entity itself.

\(^{1089}\) Klosturmaier, Survey, p. 269.
\(^{1091}\) See e.g Chacko Valiaveetil, S. J., ‘Living Liberation in Śaiva Siddhānta’, pp. 223-239. Valiaveetil says: ‘… we cannot speak of a particular moment in the spiritual life of the aspirant (sādhaka) when he or she becomes a jīvanmukta. There are ups and downs in his or her spiritual experience. … It is a continual process that lasts all through one’s life. The jīvanmukta’s life continues as before, but in place of attachment to and union with the fetters (pāsa), now there is intense attachment to and union with Śiva. Total freedom from the bonds is possible only at liberation after death (videhamukti)’ (p. 226). The jīvanmukta thus ‘… freed of egoism and attachment to things … becomes God’s instrument in bringing his or her salvation to the world’ (p. 239).
In contrast to Śaiva Siddhānta, Sarkar names *brahma* rather than *śiva* as the supreme *guru*, though in essence, context and function, they are not substantially different. Finally, it appears that Sarkar goes further than Śaiva Siddhānta in admitting the possibility of ontic oneness of the individual and the divine.

**Vīra-Śaivism or Liṅgāyata Sect**

Another important Śaiva school, is Vīra-Śaivism (‘Heroic Śiva religion’), otherwise known as the Liṅgāyata sect. This school originated with Basava in the twelfth century C.E. though its adherents believe that it has ancient roots and was merely reorganised by Basava. Vīra-Śaivism bases itself on the twenty-eight Āgamas and the Tamil Nāyanārs, as well as later writers. The most distinctive feature of the school is that its adherents worship *śiva* in the form of a phallic symbol (*liṅga*), a miniature stone form of which they wear in a small box attached to a necklace. They practise the *pañcācāra* (‘fivefold worship’), comprising ‘… daily worship of the *liṅga*, moral and decent life and work, amity toward all Liṅgāyats, humility, and active struggle against those who despise Śiva or ill-treat his devotees’; and the *aśṭāvaraṇa* (‘eightfold armour’), comprising ‘… obedience toward the *guru*, wearing a *liṅga*, worship of Śiva ascetics as incarnation of Śiva, sipping water in which the feet of the *guru* have been bathed, offering food to a *guru*, smearing ashes on [their] body, wearing a string of rudrākṣa beads, and reciting the mantra: *śivāya namah*’. For the ordinary adherent, faithful observance of these commandments is deemed sufficient for salvation, while for others, worship and meditation leading to oneness with Śiva are deemed necessary. Sarkar’s spiritual praxis bears little, if any, resemblance to, these commandments and ritual practices, the only exceptions being meditation and *mantra* recitation (albeit using a different *mantra* and possibly different meditative techniques). For Sarkar, rituals play no part in spiritual release, while morality, meditation, devotion, and service are essential.

Greater similarities can be found in theology and ontology, however, as Vīra-Śaivism teaches that the soul is one with *śiva* and that the individual is but a body of *śiva*. In other words, *paramaśiva* (‘supreme śiva’) is seen to be the material and instrumental cause of the universe, while *śakti*, the creative principle, resides eternally in *paramaśiva* and brings forth all things during cosmic creation and absorbs them back into itself during cosmic destruction. The separation between the individual (*jīva*) and the Lord (*śiva*) is due to ignorance, and it is through *bhakti* (devotion) – a part of *śiva’s* *śakti* – that final liberation is possible. Sarkar’s ideas on cosmogony and soteriology resemble their historically older Vīra-Śaiva counterparts to some extent. For Sarkar, the cognitive principle or *śiva* is both the material and chief efficient cause of the universe, and creation takes place as a result of the qualification of *śiva* by *śakti*, its creative principle. Sarkar gives precise information about how creation sprouts forth from one vertex of the triangle of forces set up by *śakti*, a view that is richer in

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1092 *AS*, p. 34.
detail and explanation than, but not unlike, the general cosmogonic proposition of Vīra-Śaivism. One crucial difference lies in their divergent views on the final journey and destination of the universe. Sarkar interprets the process of cosmic return in terms of individual self-realisation through spiritual practice, devotion, and the attractive grace of Śiva as pure consciousness, rather than as dissolution of the universe into the divine matrix at a particular end-point. For Sarkar, ‘thermal death’ of the universe, wherein the universe progressively loses heat and everything dissolves into the oblivion of the Absolute, can never occur. The picture is of a constantly creative and evolving universe wherein new entities are ever being produced from matter, even as a few sufficiently evolved individuals are merging into their divine origin by virtue of their dedicated spiritual practice and a touch of cosmic grace. In this process, matter itself is constantly produced from the limitless parama puruṣa, so the cycle never ends; nor did it ever have a beginning. As in Vīra-Śaivism, Sarkar sees bhakti as the primary means by which one can realise final release, though for him, self-effort in the form of a disciplined and moral life, regular meditative practice, and selfless service to the universe are also essential, though insufficient in themselves, for the realisation of enlightenment.

On the social front, Vīra-Śaivas are ardent social reformers, striving for greater social justice and equality. They champion widow remarriage, late marriage, and abolition of the caste system, and are generally quite progressive in economic and social matters. All these bear resemblance to the ideals of Sarkar’s AM, which challenges the dowry, marriage, and caste systems of traditional India in favour of greater egalitarianism, rationality, and cross-cultural mixing, both in principle and in practice. While not directly related to Sarkar’s spiritual ideas, these similarities in social ideals between Vīra-Śaivism and AM suggest a striking confluence of spirit. While it is not possible to say with any certainty whether Sarkar borrowed from Vīra-Śaivism when constructing his social ideology, it can be suggested that Sarkar’s anti-traditionalism and critical stance toward oppressive power structures are not entirely unprecedented. Such a spirit of radical reform may well be an underlying (and at times openly manifest) current in the stream of Indian spirituality, in which Sarkar is located both historically and culturally.

Kashmir Śaivism

Northern Śaivism, also known as Kashmir Śaivism, will now be the focus of our comparative analysis vis-à-vis Sarkarian Tantra. Like its southern counterpart, Northern Śaivism bases itself on the voluminous Āgama literature, traditionally said to comprise twenty-eight root (mūla) scriptures and 207 secondary scriptures (called Upāgamas). While its adherents claim the Āgamas (as well as the Tantras) as official revelations that merely restate the truths of the Vedas for the current degenerate age (kāli-yuga), mainstream Brahmmins reject this claim and regard these texts as false revelations. There are four main interlinked systems of Kashmir Śaivism, namely the Krama and Trika systems,

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1095 See Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, p. 351.
the Spanda or ‘Vibration’ school, and the Pratyabhijñā or ‘Recognition’ school. In Kashmir Śaivism or Tantrism in general, theoretical concepts of Sāṁkhya, such as the twenty-five tattvas, are incorporated into Tantric cosmology by relegating them to a position inferior to ultimate consciousness (paramaśiva) and the powers (śaktis).\textsuperscript{1097}

The Krama system has two branches of practice; one focussed on the God Śiva and the other on the Goddess Kāli as the divine Absolute. Both branches teach a practical method rather similar to the eight-limbed path of Rāja Yoga, but with yama, niyama, and āsana grouped together as one category and with tarka (reasoning) added as a separate ‘limb’ of practice. Vāmācāra practices such as use of wine, meat, and sex during Tantric rituals are carried out in the Kāli branch of the Krama system.\textsuperscript{1098}

The Trika (‘triadic’) system of Śaivism is derived from the notion of three inseparable and interdependent aspects of the divine: śiva (masculine pole), śakti (feminine pole), and nara (the common person seeking liberation). The Trika Śaiva perspective on nondualism differs from that of Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedanta in that it ‘seeks to encompass the rich diversity of manifestation within the nondual principle at its heart.’\textsuperscript{1099} This nondual ontology of Trika Śaivism is in effect ‘a supreme nondualism (parādvaita) that goes beyond “both dualism and nondualism”’.\textsuperscript{1100} Flood describes Trika Śaivism as basically ‘… a system of initiation and liturgy … which originated in the cult of cremation ground as part of a wider Tantric tradition called the Kaula (‘Familial’) …’.\textsuperscript{1101} The Kaula movement considers itself Śaiva, though it also worships female deities, including Kāli. Trika Śaivism will be compared with Sarkarian Tantra with reference to the ideas of Abhinavagupta and his successors, such as Kṣemarāja.

Regarding the theory of causation, Abhinavagupta is a proponent of satkāryavāda, the doctrine that effects or manifestation pre-exist in the cause, that is, Śiva. Muller-Ortega highlights the observation by Alper that Abhinavagupta’s brand of satkāryavāda is more clearly categorised as a ‘highly qualified parināmavāda’ or ‘abhāsavāda’.\textsuperscript{1102} This is the view that attempts to reconcile parināmavāda – the philosophical position that evolution of the universe is a real transformation of a

\textsuperscript{1097} See Knut A. Jacobsen, ‘The Female Pole of the Godhead in Tantrism and the Prakṛti of Sāṁkhya’, *Numen* 43 (1996): 60. Regrading dualism in Tantra, Jacobsen points out that the ‘sexual polarity of the divine is, however, radically different from the Sāṁkhyan dualism’ (p.60), since Sāṁkhya’s dualism is that of matter versus spirit rather than of male versus female.


\textsuperscript{1100} Elizabeth Chalier-Visuvalingam, ‘Union and Unity …’, p. 197.


single causal reality – and _vivartavāda_ (but without illusionism) – the position that ‘this real process of transformation [from Śiva into the cosmos] represents a progressive decline in level of reality from the, as it were, most real to the least real.’

Muller-Ortega adds that ‘Abhinavagupta’s goal was the extremely tricky task of attempting to be faithful to the fluid and subtly shifting clarities of Yogic perceptions and experiences, relating them to, but never attempting to straightjacket them in, the categories of technical philosophy.’

Comparing with Sarkar, we can see Abhinavagupta’s _ābhāsavāda_ reflected in Sarkar’s _brahmacakra_ theory, where he attempts to posit _parama puruṣa_ as the singular material and efficient cause of a real, not illusory, universe. And like Abhinavagupta, Sarkar states that the universe is relative truth, since it possesses a lower degree of reality compared with the absolute reality of _parama puruṣa_. It is also possible to apply Muller-Ortega’s reading of Abhinavagupta to Sarkar himself, seeing Sarkar as seeking to accomplish, with his Yogic perceptions and experiences, precisely what Abhinavagupta was attempting to do with his. This observation remains speculative at best in the absence of further evidence. Be that as it may, the agreement between Sarkar and Abhinavagupta in terms of causal theory is striking, suggesting an intellectual debt on Sarkar’s part to the theological and philosophical enterprise of earlier Tantric _yogi_-thinkers.

The best-known scriptural sources of Kashmir Śaivism include the Śaiva _Āgamas_, the _Śivasūtra_, the _Vijñāna Bhairava_, the _Spandakārikā_, the _Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā_, the _Parātrīśikāvivaraṇa_, and the _Tantrāloka_.

While the Āgamas tend to portray a dualistic orientation between the devotee and Śiva, the _Śivasūtra_ brings out and emphasises the non-dualist strand of the earlier Āgama doctrines. A major teaching of the _Śivasūtra_, which is one of the source texts of the Spanda tradition, is that of the four methods (upāya) of achieving ultimate union with _śiva_ as pure consciousness. In order of decreasing subtlety and profundity, these methods are: (1) _anupāya_ (no-means), which is the practitioner’s spontaneous and effortless realisation of _śiva_ through the spiritual master’s transmission of the teaching and his consciousness-power; it is ‘the _sāmbhavopāya_ itself, in its highest maturity …’; (2) _sāmbhavopāya_ (divine means), a powerful and direct vision of reality spontaneously flashing forth in the practitioner’s silent mind by means of a subtle exertion (_udyāma_).
of its innate freedom (svātantrya) and reflexive awareness;\textsuperscript{1109} (3) śaktopāya (empowered means), a process of retransmuting thought constructs (vikalpa) back into their essence and source – pure consciousness – by directing attention to pure (śuddha) concepts such as the idea of one’s identity with śiva;\textsuperscript{1110} and (4) ānavopāya (individual means), the least advanced level of practice, which resorts to objective spiritual supports such as mantra recitation, posturing of the body, breath control, sense withdrawal, concentration on a fixed point, and meditation on a specific divine or cosmic form. Also included in this means are all forms of outer ritual that act as gross objects of concentration for the mind.\textsuperscript{1111} A collection of 112 practices belonging to the category of ānavopāya can be found in the Vijñāna Bhairava, a popular scripture probably composed in the seventh century C.E. that also serves as an initiatory manual for aspiring Śaiva yogis.\textsuperscript{1112}

Another source for the practices of ānavopāya can be found in Kṣemarāja’s exposition of the Śivasūtra,\textsuperscript{1113} which according to Dyczkowski (1987) is in turn based on the Netratantra and the Svachchandabhairavatantra. Kṣemarāja’s commentary, written in the tenth century C.E., extols the basic model of the eight-limbed (aṣṭāṅga) yoga taught by Patañjali but with each limb defined in terms of Tantric terminology and praxis. Of particular interest is a preliminary Tantric technique called ‘purification of the elements’ (bhūtasuddhi), ‘through which the body is homologised with the macrocosm and so made a fit vessel for the pure, conscious presence of the Deity within it’.\textsuperscript{1114} Kṣemarāja identifies bhūtasuddhi with a meditation (dhyāna) technique wherein all the forces of the body are visualised to be dissolving away. This is performed in two ways: the first method, ‘contemplation of dissolution’ (layabhāvanā), entails visualising the entire cosmos with its principles, mantras, letters, and syllables arising within one’s body and then moving attention away from grosser to progressively subtler elements and finally right back to the primordial source. The second method, meditation on the ‘Fire of Consciousness’ (dahacintā), involves a reproduction within the yogi’s mind

\textsuperscript{1109} Singh quotes Abhinavagupta: ‘When there is vikalpa, neither accept nor reject, it will retire of itself and you will find yourself to be what you are’ (Singh, Śiva Sūtras, p. xxvi).

\textsuperscript{1110} In Śaktopāya, the transformative power of spiritual praxis comes from mantra sakti, the psychospiritual force embedded in the mantra, which has the capacity to gradually immerse the consciousness of the practitioner in Śiva, divine consciousness. The use of mantra in Śaktopāya thus differs from its use in Ānavopāya. In the case of ānavopāya, mantra repetition is based on a sense of bheda or difference between practitioner and the divine. See Jaideva Singh, Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam: The Secret of Self-Recognition. Fourth Revised Edition (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1982), p. 29.


\textsuperscript{1112} Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, p. 354.

\textsuperscript{1113} See Jaideva Singh, Śiva Sūtras: The Yoga of Supreme Identity (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1979).

\textsuperscript{1114} Dyczkowski, Doctrine, p. 210; cf. the following comments by Agehananda Bharati: ‘The oldest and most tenacious form of tantric identification is the process of bhūtasuddhi, “purification of the elements”; which is … actually a step-by-step dissolution of grosser into subtler elements in the cosmographical hierarchy, and culminates in a visualised merger with whatever supreme being or state the particular tradition postulates. In this rite, which is a congeries of thoroughly standardised mantras and mudrās, a process of gradual involution is thought to take place whereby at first the body is identified with its various elementary sources; …’. Agehananda Bharati, The Tantric Tradition (London: Rider and Company, 1965), p. 112.
of the process of macrocosmic destruction by the Fire of Time (kālāgni). Dyczkowski describes it thus:

At the microcosmic level the yogi reproduces this process by mentally placing the letters of the alphabet, in the prescribed order, on the limbs of his body starting from the left toe to the top of the head. As his attention progresses upwards, he visualises the Fire of Time moving with it in such a way that his bodily consciousness, together with the universe of differentiated perceptions, is gradually burnt away leaving in its place the white ashes of the undivided light of consciousness.\(^{1115}\)

Comparing the above discussion with Sarkar’s description of AM praxis reveals several interesting convergences and divergences. Like Kṣemarāja, Sarkar bases his framework for praxis on the eight-limbed yoga of Patañjali, and again like Kṣemarāja, he redefines some of the factors to fit in with his Tantric worldview. While Sarkar does not divide his path of practice into four levels as does Kashmir Śaivism, examination of his meditative techniques shows striking resemblances, both in structure and emphasis, to the means (upāyas) described in the texts of Kashmir Śaivism. Sarkar’s emphasis on Yogic postures (āsanas), breath control (prānāyāma), concentration (dhāranā), meditation (dhyāna), and mantra recitation (japa)\(^{1116}\) coincides with the methods advocated under ‘individual means’ (āṇavopāya). What is more interesting is that Sarkar operationalises pratyāhāra (in the form of the śuddhis and varṇāgyadāna), prānāyāma, dhāranā, dhyāna, and japa in his set of six meditation lessons (sahaja or rājādhirāja yoga) and ranks some of these lessons as having precedence over others. The practices of prānāyāma (the fourth lesson) and tattva dhāranā (the third lesson) are regarded as supportive aids to the first and sixth lessons (which are dhyāna proper) and thus are meant to lead to the ‘higher’ practice of dhyāna. This concurs with Kṣemarāja’s placing of prānāyāma and dhāranā under the category of āṇavopāya – somewhat limited means that are meant to lead towards more advanced practices of śaktopāya and śāmbhavopāya.

Sarkar’s emphasis on the three śuddhis (purificatory withdrawal from the world, physical body, and mind) as preliminary phases of the first lesson exemplifies his Tantric outlook as well as the idea that these are preparatory means towards the subtler method of mantra repetition and ideation. Sarkar stresses that mantra repetition is meaningless and ineffectual without proper ideation on its special expansive meaning. He asserts that the nature of the mind is to constantly think, and that a

\(^{1115}\) Dyczkowski, Doctrine, p. 211.

\(^{1116}\) Sarkar’s concept of japa refers to mantra utterance without necessarily involving ideation on its meaning, such as when singing the universal mantra ‘bābā nām kevalam’ aloud or during ‘half-meditation’ (silent repetition of one’s īṣṭa mantra while engaged in everyday activities). In this case, the vibrations of the mantra act to naturally effect peace, bliss, and clarity in the mind. Cf. André Padoux, ‘Mantras – What Are They?’, in Harvey P. Alper (ed.), Mantra. First Indian Edition (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1997), pp. 295-318. Padoux comments: ‘In kundalini yoga, phonemes and mantras are associated with the centres (cakras) of the subtle body. Such connections between sounds and cakras look contrived and arbitrary, but we should not reject these notions as immediately absurd. … Scientific investigation has shown that certain sounds (as well as the complete absence of sound) have effects, and the effect produced when the sound is emitted or received seems to be related to certain parts of the body. Some sounds may cause the body to vibrate, may have physiological effects, or may help to awaken certain states of consciousness.’ (p. 314).
skilful way of working with a thinking mind is not to suppress its natural activity but to replace crude ideas with progressively subtler ones. In the first lesson, he advocates the use of the subtlest and purest concept – that of cosmic reflexivity – as the sole object of one’s meditation. In the first lesson, the personal mantra is silently repeated, together with constant ideation on its meaning – the essential oneness of cosmic reflexive awareness with individual reflexive awareness. It is this ideation, together with the vibratory energy of the mantric sounds, which serves as the springboard to higher consciousness for the practitioner.\textsuperscript{1117} This ideational component of the first lesson can be justifiably equated with the level of śaktopāya, wherein the practitioner utilises a pure (śuddha) concept to facilitate the realisation of his or her identity with Śiva. According to Sarkar, the first lesson, when done correctly, leads the practitioner to savikalpa samādhi, a state of universal self-awareness metaphysically equated with merger into saguṇa brahma (qualified pure consciousness):

… after continued spiritual practice the mahattatva, that is, the ‘I’ feeling, gets metamorphosed into the Macrocosmic ‘I’ feeling … the state of all-pervasiveness of the mahat constitutes saguṇāsthitī [the state of transcendentality], or savikalpa samādhi [the state of determinate absorption].\textsuperscript{1118}

The realisation of this state of saguṇāsthitī or savikalpa samādhi as it unfolds within the practitioner’s mind bears close resemblance to the level of sāmbhavopāya, wherein the practitioner ‘ … penetrates directly into the universal egoity of pure consciousness … ’.\textsuperscript{1119} In this level of practice, the yogi’s attention is fixed on the ‘abounding plenitude’ of reality:

The yogi who practises the Divine Means [Śāmbhavopāya] is not concerned with any partial aspect of reality but centers his attention directly on its abounding plenitude … the forms of contemplative absorption, empowered (śakta) and individual (ānava), that are the fruits of the other means to realisation both attain maturity in this state of undifferentiated awareness. This awareness is the pure ego manifest at the initial moment of perception (prāthamikālocana), when the power of the will to perceive is activated.\textsuperscript{1120}

The above statement suggests that the state of undifferentiated awareness experienced at the level of sāmbhavopāya represents the maturity of the fruits of ānavopāya and śaktopāya. The qualifying attributes of ‘universal egoity’ and ‘pure ego’ strongly suggest that śāmbhavopāya and its fruit are

\textsuperscript{1117} Cf. Harvey P. Alper, ‘The Cosmos as Sōiva’s Language-Game: “Mantra” According to Kṣemarāja’s Śivasūtravimarṣinī’, in Harvey P. Alper (ed.), Mantra. First Indian Edition (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1997), pp. 249-294. Alper explains mantric utterance as, amongst other things, a tool of cognition’, a metaphoric recapitulation of the structure of the world, and a disclosive utterance disclosing the dual quiescent-active nature of the self (pp. 268-280). Alper says: ‘Kṣemarāja understands a mantra, in the proper sense of the term, to be a tool of redemptive thought … [which is] grounded in and hence able to lead one back to Śiva-who-is-consciousness’ (p. 269). Sarkar’s concept of mantric ideation having the capacity to lead one back to parama puruṣa echoes Kṣemarāja’s view.

\textsuperscript{1118} AS, pp. 14-15.

\textsuperscript{1119} Dyczkowski, Doctrine, p. 180.

\textsuperscript{1120} Ibid.

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present in the culmination of Sarkar’s first meditative lesson, where the mahat or pure ‘I feeling’ is cosmicised in the state of saṅgūṇāsthitī or savikalpa samādhi.

The highest practice of ‘no-means’ (anupāya) is the direct experience of uninterrupted awareness and bliss synonymous with liberation itself without the mediation of any means. Dyczkowski (1987) distinguishes two levels of anupāya:

At the higher level nothing can be said about it. It is literally the reality which cannot be described in any way or approached by any means. To this level belong those rare, highly spiritual souls who are born fully enlightened and come into the world to show others the way to attain their liberated state … Most yogis, however, have to prepare themselves for this state and when they are ready, achieve instant access to it through the practice of Anupāya as the most subtle means possible (sūkṣmopāya).\textsuperscript{1121}

He goes on to say that at this lower level of anupāya, the role of the spiritual master is paramount:

When the disciple is truly fit to receive the teachings and be liberated, all the Master needs to do is to tell him that he shines by the light of Śiva’s consciousness and that his true nature is the entire universe … When such a disciple sits before his Master, all he has to do is to gaze at him and be aware of his elevated state to feel the fragrance (vāsanā) of the Master’s transcendental consciousness extending spontaneously within him … If the disciple does not possess the strength of awareness to allow the Master to infuse this consciousness into him directly in this way while his eyes are open, he is instructed to close them … The Master then bestows upon him a vision of former perfected yogis (śiddha) while the disciple is in a state of contemplation with his eyes closed. Through the vision of these perfected yogis … he recognises their level of consciousness and so experiences it within himself. The disciple’s consciousness thus suddenly expands within him like the violent and rapid spread of poison through the body … He thus becomes one with his Master in the unifying bliss of universal consciousness … Although it is possible to catch glimpses of the highest reality in advanced states of contemplation before attaining perfect enlightenment, these states, however long they last, are transitory (kadācitka) and when they end the vision of the absolute ceases with them. The highest realisation, however, persists in all states of consciousness. It happens once and need never happen again.\textsuperscript{1122}

The above passage suggests that the dawning of the highest consciousness occurs through either gazing with eyes open at the guru, or for one who is sufficiently prepared and ready, visualising with eyes closed a perfected siddha. In this highest state, the disciple becomes one with the guru in the ‘unifying bliss of universal consciousness’, beyond all concepts and description. Glimpses of this state may occur transiently many times before the final attainment, but when the highest realisation dawns, it occurs once and becomes permanently established.

It is possible to see similarities between Sarkar’s description of the highest attainment of nirguṇāsthitī (nirvikalpa samādhi) and the realisation of anupāya as described above. First, Sarkar’s

\textsuperscript{1121} Dyczkowski, Doctrine, p. 178.

\textsuperscript{1122} Dyczkowski, Doctrine, pp. 178-179.
nirgunāsthiti is described as a ‘state of objectlessness … beyond the orbit of the mind’ \[1123\] and hence is neither mentally apprehensible nor verbally expressible. This resembles, albeit weakly, the first and higher aspect of anupāya, which defies linguistic description. Second, those ‘rare, highly spiritual souls who are born perfectly enlightened’ and who abide in this highest state of anupāya remind us of Sarkar’s concept of a mahākaula – a fully-enlightened master from birth who has no guru and whose sole purpose is to spiritually liberate other beings. A mahākaula is able, at will, to enter and abide in, as well as cause others to enter and abide in, nirgunāsthiti or nirvikalpa samādhi. Third, the absolute bliss of Sarkar’s nirgunāsthiti – resulting from merging the mahat in the cittaśakti (cognitive principle) - echoes anupāya’s ‘unifying bliss of universal consciousness’ achieved through oneness with the guru. Fourth, Sarkar’s sixth meditative lesson, which involves visualisation of the perfect guru and which leads to nirgunāsthiti when performed with total surrender to the guru’s grace, suggests a subtle, near-effortless practice similar to the ‘methodless method’ of anupāya. Also, in both cases, the quintessential act is to gaze upon the physical guru or to visualise a perfect siddha (which, in Sarkar’s case is himself as the sadguru) as the ultimate means for reaching the highest realisation.

The concept of embodied liberation (jīvanmukti) is articulated in such Kashmir Śaiva texts as the Śpadakārikā, the Vijñānabhairava, and the Parātrīśikāvivarana.\[1124\] The state of jīvanmukti involves a profound and permanent shift in one’s identity from a limited being to the unbounded plenitude of Śiva, while simultaneously seeing all things as part of this plenitude.\[1125\] Thus, unlike the ‘Sāmkhya-like introvertive kaivalyā, jīvanmukti in Kashmir Śaivism is ‘an extrovertive and open-eyed samādhi, the nature of which is the pervasiveness of Śiva, the unitary structure of unbounded consciousness.’\[1126\] Sarkar’s description of the ‘third state’ (see Chapter 4, section 5.1), likely to be referring to jīvanmukti, sounds very similar to the Kashmir Śaiva description of jīvanmukti. This is not surprising, considering that both Kashmir Śaiva thinkers and Sarkar share a largely identical

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\[1123\] AS, p. 15.
\[1125\] Cf. Navijvan Rastogi, ‘The Yogic Disciplines of the Monistic Sfreya Tantric Traditions of Kashmir: Threelfold, Fourfold, and Six-Limbed’, in Teun Goudriaan (ed.), Ritual and Speculation in Early Tantrism: Studies in Honour of André Padoux. First Indian Edition (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1993), pp. 247-280. On the state of jīvanmukti in Kashmir Śaivism, Rastogi comments: ‘The dissolution of all the states means emergence of the state of pure awareness in which the universe is ever shining in its totality. Emancipation within life (jīvanmukti) is nothing but one’s establishment in such a trance [ontic state?] on a permanent basis technically described as being “ever-awake” (nityodita) samādhi.’ (p. 253). See also Jaideva Singh, Pratyabhijñāhyādayam: The Secret of Self-Recognition, Fourth Revised Edition (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982), p. 31, who says: ‘… that is perfect samāvēsa [‘immersion into divine consciousness’] in which even after getting up from the contemplative state, it continues, and the world no longer appears as mere “earth, earthy”, but as “apparelled in celestial light”, as an expression, and as play of the Universal Consciousness, and the aspirant feels himself also as nothing but that consciousness. Then the world is no longer something to be shunned, but an eternal delight (jagadānanda).’
cosmological ontology, an ontology that allows for an active and spiritualised engagement with a world that is not illusory but real, albeit relatively.1127

We now shift attention to another important strand of Kashmir Śaivism, namely the Spanda doctrine and system of practice, crystallised in the Špandakārikā and their commentarial literature. The Spanda school can be regarded as a distinct tradition within Kashmir Śaivism whose focus is not on external rituals but on practical Yogic methods for realising ultimate reality.1128 One important commentary on the Špandakārikā is the Spanda-nirṇaya by Kṣemarāja. According to Singh, the Špandakārikā is a collection of verses that serve as commentary on the Śivasūtras and that emphasise the dynamic aspect of divine consciousness.1129 The term spanda means a ‘throb’ and refers to the creative yet motionless pulsation of absolute consciousness underlying all existence. The Spanda doctrine affirms the nature of the ātman as not simply a static witnessing consciousness but an endlessly pulsative field of cognition and activity. Spanda is not a movement in space and time but an instantaneous vibration in the infinite consciousness:

Spanda, therefore, in the case of the Supreme is neither physical motion, nor psychological activity like pain and pleasure, nor prāṇic activity like hunger or thirst. It is the throb of the ecstasy of the Divine I-consciousness (vimarṣa) ... Spanda is, therefore, spiritual dynamism without any movement in itself but serving as the causa sine qua non of all movements ... The Infinite Perfect Divine Consciousness always has vimarṣa or Self-awareness. This Self-awareness is a subtle activity, which is spiritual dynamism, not any physical, psychological, or prāṇic activity.1130

In his exposition of his Tantric cosmology, Sarkar does not directly mention spanda except for a general statement that supreme consciousness radiates his vibrations from a nucleus that is seated in the hearts of sincere devotees who sing his name:1131

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1127 On the Kashmir Śaiva explanation of bondage and liberation of beings, Muller-Ortega says: ‘Bondage is constructed during the primordial, cosmogonic process as part of the self-shadowing, self-concealment, and self-limitation that Śiva operates on Himself. Employing His unlimited power of freedom (svākṣerṣya-sakti), Śiva contrives to limit the great and fundamentally unconstricted light of consciousness so that the worlds of experience and transmigration may arise. ... [Similarly] enlightenment and liberation while still arise solely due to the operation of Śiva’s will, this time manifesting itself in the form of the śaktipāta, the descent of the power of Śiva.’ (p. 199). This view is reflected, in part, in Sarkar’s articulation of his brahmacakra cosmology.

1128 See Jaideva Singh, The Yoga of Vibration and Divine Pulsation: A Translation of the Spanda Kārikās with Kṣemarāja’s Commentary, the Spanda Nirṇaya (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992). Paul E. Muller-Ortega, in his foreword to Singh’s work, points out that the Špandakārikā is ‘intimately linked with the original strata of the development of Kashmir Śaivism as a separate initiatory tradition.’ (p. xvi).

1129 See Jaideva Singh, Yoga of Vibration, pp. xxv-xxv.

1130 Jaideva Singh, Yoga of Vibration, p. xxix.

1131 Cf. Paul E. Murphy, Triadic Mysticism: The Mystical Theology of the SŪaivism of Kashmir (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1986), pp. 79-108, on the place of devotion in Kashmir SŪaiva praxis. Murphy points out that the Špandakārikā speaks of a ‘continuous veneration toward Śiva ...’, but since ‘devotionalism was not systematised in Kashmir during Vasugupta’s scholastic period (ca. 825-50), it is difficult to say with certainty who were the advocates or propagators of this trend within the Triadic schools at that time. However, three significant representatives of devotionalism emerged in Kashmir in the five hundred years between the last half of the ninth and the end of the fourteenth centuries, they were: Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa, Utpaladeva, and Lallī; ... Predominant in all three is the advocacy of a path of love unencumbered by techniques and means.’ (p. 84).
It is true that Nārāyaṇa is everywhere, but the origin (sphūrna), radiation (vīksuraṇa), and sensation (spandana) of His vibration will not be everywhere. He is everywhere, but that vibration originates from that place where His nucleus is. He seats that nucleus at that place where devotees sing His name.\textsuperscript{1132}

Nevertheless, phenomenological comparison shows up a concept similar and possibly related to that of spanda, namely the citiśakti of puṇuṣottama. The terms citiśakti and puṇuṣottama do not originate from Sarkar but are part of the common Indian stock of philosophical terminology, coming primarily from the Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition. Sarkar conceptualises citiśakti as the radiating, pervasive, and activating power of pure consciousness that associates with each and every entity in the universe. In his cosmology, puṇuṣottama is the nucleus of the infinite consciousness that reflects on and associates with his mental objects (macrocosmically expressed as physical entities) by means of his citiśakti, or activating power of consciousness. All the objects of the universe are dynamic expressions of puṇuṣottama himself, who radiates and metamorphoses himself in all places. Sarkar states:

Each and every atom and molecule of the Macrocosm is nothing but Puṇuṣottama. It is He who is omnipresent as the witnessing entity as well. As the sun by its radiation pervades the solar system, so does Puṇuṣottama His system by His Citiśakti. Thus in the Cosmic Mind both the radiated stuff and the witnessing entity are Puṇuṣottama Himself … As witnessing entity Puṇuṣottama connects Himself to His mental object with the help of His Avidyāmāyā and reflects Himself on the object as Citiśakti. This reflection is not like a reflection in a mirror but a reflection involving association like the rays of the sun.\textsuperscript{1133}

This shows that Sarkar’s absolute reality of pure consciousness is not a mere passive and detached witnessing entity, but a highly creative, dynamic awareness that simultaneously manifests and reflexively witnesses itself as objects. These objects collectively form the entire physical universe, which is formed out of the subtler field of cosmic citta (objectivated mind-stuff). Cosmic citta is in turn metamorphosed out of the cosmic aham (active agency), and cosmic aham is but a crucified form of the cosmic mahat (pure ego). Cosmic citta, aham, and mahat together form the cosmic mind or macrocosm, which is self-aware by virtue of the citiśakti of pure consciousness. This idea comes very close to the concept of spanda as the self-awareness (vimāraśa) of absolute consciousness.

One particular strand of Sarkar’s thought closely resembles the idea that absolute consciousness is not a mere passive witness but an active participant. This can be found in his concept of tāraka brahma, the cosmic liberator that stands at the interface between the saguṇa (qualified) and nirguṇa (non-qualified) aspects of brahma, whom Sarkar identifies with krṣṇa and puṇuṣottama:

But Krṣṇa as Puṇuṣottama, Krṣṇa as Tāraka Brahma is a very, very active Entity, never passive … Unlike the Sāṃkhya Puruṣa, Tāraka Brahma calls everyone towards Himself: ‘Come on, come on, come to Me. I have come here for you only. I am

\textsuperscript{1132} AV Part 1, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{1133} LAI, p. 40.
verily yours. Come and surrender to Me without any hesitation, without any reservation. I will take care of your future.”

Another similarity lies in Sarkar’s concept of icchā bīja or ‘seed of desire’, which is the primordial impulse of pure consciousness to create the universe. In Sarkar’s view, it is this pulsation of will and desire within the fabric of consciousness that causes the entire cosmogonic process to occur and to continue. This pulsation is beginningless and endless, and the cycle of creation (brahmacakra), consisting of the extroversial (sañcara) and introversial (pratisañcara) phases, continues indefinitely. This comes very close to the idea of the ‘throb’ or spanda intrinsic to absolute consciousness, which ‘… constantly phenomenalises into finite expression’.

Another tradition of Kashmir Śaivism is found in the Pratyabhijñā or ‘Recognition’ school, founded by Somānanda (ninth century C.E.). The Pratyabhijñā school can be seen as the theological articulation of the Trika and Spanda traditions, which are concerned with initiatory liturgy and practical yoga respectively. The main textual sources include the Īśvarapratyābhijñākārikā written by Utpaladeva, Somānanda’s disciple, and the Tantrāloka, written by Abhinavagupta, a widely noted master and scholar of Kashmir Śaivism. According to Lawrence, Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta conceived the Pratyabhijñā system ‘simultaneously as a philosophical apologetics and an intellectualised “spiritual exercise”’.

Another important source is the Pratyabhijñāhrdayam, a succinct exposition on the tenets of Śiva-recognition written by Kṣemarāja. The Pratyabhijñā school is based on the doctrine that liberation is ‘recognising’ one’s identity not as the finite body-mind but as the infinite consciousness that is śiva. This recognition frees the practitioner from all bondage and illusion, and is arrived at through progressively penetrating layers of illusion created by māyā, the cosmic illusion-making principle. In this process of Yogic practice, the grace of śiva and the guidance of an authentic guru are essential. In terms of cosmology, the Pratyabhijñā school enumerates thirty-six cosmic principles (tattva) beginning with śiva and śakti, which are the ultimate consciousness and its power respectively, and a list of other principles including puruṣa and ātman. Here, puruṣa or ‘Male’ is defined as the individual subject formed through the activity of māyā and differs from the classical Sāṃkhya-Yoga idea of a transcendent self; while ātman or ‘Nature’ is the

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1134 NKS, pp. 52-53.
1135 Dyczkowski, Doctrine, p. 77.
1136 Flood, Body and Cosmology, pp. 11-15.
1138 See Jaideva Singh, Pratyabhijñāhrdayam: The Secret of Self-Recognition, Fourth Revised Edition (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982). This text expounds a cosmogony closely echoed by Sarkar, an example of which can be seen in sūtra 5: ‘Citi (universal consciousness) itself descending from (the stage of) cetanā (the uncontracted conscious stage) becomes citta (individual consciousness) inasmuch as it becomes contracted (sankocini) in conformity with the objects of consciousness (cetyā)’ (p. 59). Also sūtra 4 states: ‘The (individual) experient also, in whom cit or consciousness is contracted has the universe (as his body) in a contracted form’ (p. 55). Singh comments that all objective and subjective entities of the world are but ‘the totality of manifestations’ of Śiva, ‘a solidified form (ātmanatārūpa) of cit-essence’ (p. 55).
‘matrix of all objective aspects of manifestation … [and] every puruṣa has its own prakṛti’. The list ends with the remaining principles of Sāṁkhya philosophy, namely the higher mind (budhī), the ego-creator (ahamkāra), the lower mind (manas), the five cognitive organs (jñānendriya), the five conative organs (karmendriya), the five subtle elements (tanmātra), and the five coarse elements (bhūta). It is worth noting that in Pratyabhijñā Śaivism, Sāṁkhya principles have been appropriated as part of its overall theology but given a lesser status. Pratyabhijñā cosmogony appropriates but adapts the notion of supreme speech (parāvāk) in its account of cosmic manifestation, of which Lawrence says:

Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta [proponents of Pratyabhijñā philosophy] interpret Supreme Speech as Śiva’s very self-recognition (ahampratyavamarśa). … they explain their cosmogonic myth of Śiva emanating the universe through Śakti as His self-recognition. In this process there is a progressive fragmentiation of the Lord’s self-recognition from the unitary condition “I” into the recognitions of apparently separate objects as “This,” or more fully, “This is that,” “This is blue,” and so forth.

Sarkar concurs with the Pratyabhijñā tradition that śīva and śakti integrally constitute the ultimate reality that he calls brahma. In much the same vein as Pratyabhijñā Śaivism, he defines śīva as the cognitive principle and śakti as the operative principle. He also seems to concur with Pratyabhijñā cosmogony, in terms of the gradual fragmentation of the unitary condition of ultimate reality into the expressed multiplicity of the cosmos, through a graded process of divine ‘self-recognition’. Sarkar’s rendering of mahat as the ‘I-am’ principle, aham as the ‘I-do’ principle, and citta as the ‘I-have-done’ principle, suggests an increasingly complex and divided self-cognisance of parama puruṣa as it is progressively (but free-willingly) influenced by its śakti, or prakṛti. While he does not subscribe to the thirty-six principles of Pratyabhijñā in toto, he nevertheless appropriates Sāṁkhya concepts in elucidating the process of brahmacakra or the cosmic cycle of creation. For example, Sarkar makes use of the terms bhūta to refer to the basic elements of matter and tanmātra to refer to sensory inferences or modalities. He also uses terms such as citta, aham, and mahat, derived arguably from the Patañjali Yoga tradition, to elucidate his cosmogonic and evolutionary process.

An interesting resemblance between Sarkar’s cosmic mahat and Pratyabhijñā’s sadāśīva (the third principle after śīva and śakti) can be observed. According to Pratyabhijñā theology, sadāśīva or ‘eternal śīva’ is that aspect of the absolute consciousness that ‘ … encounters itself vaguely as an object’ and translates into the experience of ‘I am This’. This description suggests that sadāśīva is a kind of self-cognisance by the pure consciousness principle, resulting in pure self-identity, one that seems to resemble Sarkar’s idea of cosmic mahat, the pure ‘I am’ feeling – consciousness’s sense of its own self-existence. Also, Sarkar’s conception of all objects – sensory inferences and mental

1139 Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, p. 356.
1140 Ibid.
1141 David Lawrence, ‘Śiva’s Self-Recognition …’, p. 200.
objects such as thought and emotion – as ultimately vibratory waves of pure consciousness in different phases and frequencies bears close resemblance to the Pratyabhijñā notion of objects as finally being cognitions (parāmarśa) of the ultimate, Śiva. Apart from the foregoing observations, it is very difficult to ascertain whether and to what extent Sarkar may have borrowed from Pratyabhijñā Śaivism; the topic requires further historical and textual analysis.

The preceding discussion has shown how Sarkar’s Tantra resembles or differs from the Śaiva tradition in its several major forms. When comparing Sarkar’s cosmology with that of the Śaiva systems, it can be noted that while Sarkar uses the term ‘brahma’ (in its variant forms) extensively throughout his texts, the Śaiva systems do not, but instead (and understandably) lay stress on ‘śiva’ as the ultimate reality. Sarkar, however, takes pains to emphasise that while śiva has primacy over šakti, the two are inseparable aspects of the same ultimate reality, brahma, the infinite cosmic consciousness. Here he seems to synthesise the Śaiva concepts of śiva (pure consciousness) and šakti (creative energy) with the Yoga and Vedānta concepts of sāguna and nirguṇa brahman. However, Sarkar cites the term ‘brahman’ without the final ‘n’ as ‘brahma’ to signify essentially the same idea. It is also evident that Sarkar uses Śāmkhya terminology extensively throughout his texts, effectively equating Śāmkhya terms such as puruṣa and prakṛti with Śaiva terms such as śiva and šakti respectively. This is quite different in style to Śaiva traditions, which generally incorporate Śāmkhya concepts into Śaiva cosmology, but relegate these concepts to a position and status secondary to ostensibly Śaiva ones.

8.1.3 Vaiṣṇavism and Sarkarian Bhakti

Vaiṣṇavism, at least in its contemporary form, is perhaps the largest of all Hindu traditions and the one that has, according to Klostermaier (1994), ‘… developed the most variegated and richest mythology of all schools of Hinduism’. Klostermaier goes on to say:

Contemporary Vaiṣṇavism, the largest among the Hindu traditions, has its sources not only in Vedic religion but also in Dravidian traditions and in tribal and local cults, the earliest of which were the worship of Nārāyaṇa and of Vāsudeva Krṣṇa, as described in

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1142 Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, p. 355.
1144 For a brief sociohistorical account of the bhakti movement in India, see Jayant Lele, ‘The Bhakti movement in India: A Critical Introduction’, Journal of Asian and African Studies XV 1-2 (1980): 1-15. On the possible origins of bhakti, Lele offers the argument that ‘bhakti was explicitly a revolt against this dichotomous view which had upheld the duality of existence of those engaged in debating sterilised abstractions [e.g. the elite group of Śāmkhya and Vedāntic thinkers] and those practising mindless rituals [e.g. lower caste common folk]’ (p. 3).
1145 Klostermaier, Survey, p. 240.
some portions of the Mahābhārata and the Pañcarātra cults of Bhāgavatism, records of which still exist in the early Viṣṇu-Purāṇas and the Vaiṣṇava Samhitās.\textsuperscript{1146} According to Klostermaier, the idea in later Vaiṣṇava speculation that Viṣṇu is the material cause of the universe can be traced back to a hymn in the Ēṛgveda.\textsuperscript{1147} The following discussion will focus on those schools of Vaiṣṇavism deemed most closely related to Sarkar’s Tantra, with attention paid to their theology and practices. A school of later Vaiṣṇavism known as Śrī- Vaiṣṇavism, which centres on worship of the Goddess Śrī – the consort of Viṣṇu – and which is popular in South India, will not be discussed here since it bears relatively little resemblance to Sarkar’s theology.

Among the fundamental tenets of Vaiṣṇavism are the notions that Viṣṇu is immanent in all beings while being simultaneously transcendent, and that Viṣṇu descends in bodily form as avatāras to save the world from evil and destruction. The traditional list of ten avatāras of Viṣṇu is well known, with Kṛṣṇa and Rāma being the most popular and most widespread of the ten. The avatāra yet-to-come, Kalki, is said to be the ‘… eschatological manifestation of Viṣṇu on a white horse …’ and ‘… the final liberator of the world from … strife and … evil influences’.\textsuperscript{1148} As noted in Chapter 3, the best-loved and best-known avatāra is Kṛṣṇa, a semi-legendary, semi-historical figure whose image as sweet child, playful cowherd, and passionate lover in mythology endears him to many as an intimate and personal saviour. At the same time, Kṛṣṇa features prominently as the teacher and saviour par excellence in the highly popular and influential religious classics, the Bhāgavadgītā and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Brājbhūmi, the district of Mathurā, has long been the geographical centre of Kṛṣṇa worship, with places such as Vrindāvan, Govardhana, and Gokula associated with him since ancient times.\textsuperscript{1149}

In Sarkarian Tantra, the figure of Kṛṣṇa takes a philosophical turn, with Sarkar tending towards a more ontological than mythical view of kṛṣṇa. While he does not dispute the common view that Kṛṣṇa existed as a great historical personality, and in fact, attempts to reconcile the young, playful Kṛṣṇa of Brājbhūmi with the adult, serious Kṛṣṇa of the Gītā, he nevertheless emphasises the cosmological and soteriological functions of Kṛṣṇa. In Chapter 3, we noted how Sarkar equates kṛṣṇa with the philosophical concept of puruṣottama, the cosmic witnessing consciousness existing as the supreme nucleus of the universe. To him, kṛṣṇa is that all-attractive entity synonymous with cosmic

\textsuperscript{1146} Klostermaier, Survey, p. 240. Cf. Jan Gonda, Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), pp. 7-8: ‘It seems safe to assume that in the centuries preceding the Bhagavadgītā (probably 2\textsuperscript{nd} century B. C.) various cults and beliefs, presumably tending towards some more or less distinct forms of monothemist, contributed to the rise of this multiform religion. In the ancient works belonging to the Viṣṇite tradition, the Mahā-Nārāyaṇa-Upaṇiṣad (approximately 3\textsuperscript{rd} century B. C.) and the Bhagavadgītā, Viṣṇu himself is only mentioned in passing, in contradistinction to Nārāyaṇa and Kṛṣṇa who in the course of time came to fuse with the Vedic figure who was to give his name to the amalgamation. How the three cults succeeded in combining is for lack of textual evidence largely shrouded in mystery.’

\textsuperscript{1147} Ibïd. The hymn is found in Rgveda 10.90. Commenting on the identification of the Rgvedic Puruṣa with Nārāyaṇa in the Saśāpatha Brāhmana, Gonda says: ‘In the same and other Vedic texts, the Puruṣa and creator god Prajāpati, the lord of creatures (or of his offspring), tend to fuse, and the latter is described as becoming and as imitating, that is identifying himself with, Viṣṇu.’ (p. 8).

\textsuperscript{1148} Klostermaier, p. 244.

\textsuperscript{1149} Klostermaier, p. 245.
consciousness itself, which is the ultimate source and refuge of the entire cosmos. *Kršna* is, in effect, the cosmological nucleus from which the universe emanates, by which it is controlled, and to which all living beings return by the attraction of its centripetal force (*vidyā māyā*). In this soteriological journey, not all beings will move towards *kršna* at the same speed – some will attain liberation (*muktī*) or salvation (*mokṣa*) earlier and some later. Sarkar also identifies *kršna* philosophically with *tāraka brahma*, the interfacing, ‘tangential’ aspect of *brahma* that bridges its *saguṇa* (qualified) and *nirguṇa* (non-qualified) dimensions so as to function as a personal liberator of living beings. Unlike Vaiṣṇavism, AM does not privilege *kršna* as a deity above all others but rather reconceptualizes him as an ontological principle that serves both cosmological and soteriological functions.

The basic theology of Vaiṣṇavism follows that of the *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās*, which are systematically arranged collections of texts or compendia dealing with subjects such as philosophy, theory of *mantras*, theory of *yantras*, māyāyoga, *yoga*, temple-building, image-making, domestic observances, social rules, and festivals. The *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās* accord Viṣṇu supreme status above all other deities including Vedic ones, and make him the central focus of all ritual, worship, and cosmology. Philosophically, Viṣṇu is the supreme creator, and is the efficient, material and instrumental cause of the universe. He is all-pervading and immanent in all things and in time, though essentially he exists free from all limitations of time, space and object. Described as *sat-cit-ānanda* (being, consciousness, and bliss), Viṣṇu is the gentle protector of and loving refuge for all beings. He is chiefly referred to as *bhagavat*, possessing the six divine attributes (*bhaga*) of ‘knowledge/omniscience (*jiñāṇa*); sovereignty (*aṭiśvara*); potency (*śaktī*); indefatigable energy (*bala*); the ability to remain unaffected by any change … (*vīrya*); [and] brilliant and self-sufficient conquering power (*tejas,*). Viṣṇu exists in five different forms: as *para* – the absolute and transcendent form, variously named Parabrahman and Paravasudeva; as *vyāha* – cosmic manifestations of his powers in the four figures of Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradhyumna, and Aniruddha, who exist for the purpose of creation and worship; as *vibhava* – earthly incarnations (full or partial) known as *avatāras* (as discussed previously); as *antaryāmin* – the inner controller that exists in the human heart; and as *ārcāvatāra* – the physical image of God used for ritual and worship.

Sarkar defines *viṣṇu* as the ‘all-pervasive entity’ and equates it with *brahma* or *parama puruṣa*. It appears that he uses the term *viṣṇu* as one of the epithets of cosmic consciousness, which pervades the entire universe through to infinity. In this sense, Sarkar concurs with the Vaiṣṇavas’ conception of Viṣṇu as the immanent and limitless entity that is the efficient, material and instrumental cause of the universe. Closely following Pāñcarātrins, Sarkar uses the term ‘*bhagavān*’ to describe *tāraka brahma*, the liberative aspect of the supreme entity. However, he describes the six *bhagas*

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slightly differently from the Pāṇcarātrins, enumerating them as jñāna (knowledge of the Self),
aśvarya (possessing all occult powers), yaśa (reputation), śrī (charm), vīrya (vigour and power), and
vairāgya (non-attachment).1152 Also, he does not mention the five expressive forms of Viṣṇu (or of
brahma for that matter) and in fact, disapproves of the concept of avatāra and totally eschews the
practice of ritual image (ārca-vatāra) worship.

In terms of soteriology, Pāṇcarātra defines salvation as having two aspects: ‘gnosis, [or]
realisation of one’s unity with god’ and ‘a state of blissful communion with god, an emotional
experience’.1153 The first aspect is achieved through Yogic meditation while the second involves total
emotional surrender (prapatti) to the Lord. Gupta comments that ‘the combination of these two very
disparate views of salvation means that, for the Pāṇcarātrin, prapatti is not just passive; it must make
itself effective by service to god, upāsanā.’1154 Sarkar models after Pāṇcarātrin praxis in two essential
ways: (1) that prapatti or total self-surrender is of the essence; and (2) that meditative unification
(yoga) and devotion (bhakti) both have a role to play in reaching salvation. However, Sarkar
dismisses the need for external rituals, opting instead for selfless social service (sevā) as the sacrifice
of choice.1155

The earliest attempt to systematise Vaiṣṇavism, according to Klostermaier, seems to have
relied on Śaṅkhya philosophical concepts but attributes supreme status to Viṣṇu.1156 In Vaiṣṇava
Śaṅkhya, prakṛti (the creative matrix) and kāivalya (liberation) are thought to be caused by Viṣṇu, the
supreme controller of the universe. Another strand of systematic Vaiṣṇava philosophy can be seen in
the various systems derived from Vedānta, in the writings of Rāmānuja (a Vaiṣṇavīdvaita Vedānta
exponent), Madhva (a Dvaita Vedānta exponent), and Vallabha (exponent of puṣṭimārga, ‘way of
grace’).1157 I have already discussed the ontological views of Rāmānuja and Madhva as Vedāntists in
Chapter 7 and will not repeat that discussion here. Rather, I will focus on the devotional and
conspicuously Vaiṣṇava element in their writings, seeing how these ideas compare with Sarkar’s brand
of devotionalism.

Rāmānuja’s Vaiṣṇavīdvaita Vedāntic Vaiṣṇavism

Rāmānuja equates brahman (a Vedāntic concept) with Viṣṇu, who acts as the redeemer by entering
into samsāra, enduring pain and suffering, and leading human beings to communion with their Lord
through the medium of avatāras and the guru. In Rāmānuja’s cosmology, individual beings or jīvas
are essentially particles of the divine, but through heedlessness they become entangled in worldly

1152 See Chapter 3, subsection 3.2.2.
1154 Ibid. According to Gupta, upāsanā has two components: meditation or internal sacrifice (antaryāga) and
ritual or external sacrifice (bahiryāga) (see pp. 233-234). These two components, together with prapatti,
constitute Pāṇcarātrin spiritual praxis.
1155 While it can be argued that AM practices such as kīrtana and guru přija should be considered rituals, it is
probably more correct to regard them as ancillaries to meditation, involving none of the complex preparatory
acts associated with ritual worship etc.
1156 Klostermaier, Survey, p. 249.
suffering and need divine intervention. Viṣṇu remains as antaryāmin within the hearts of jīvas so as to guide and bless them while allowing them freedom of will to choose either good or evil ways. The main practice for a Viṣṇu devotee is devotion or bhakti, which translates into preparing him- or herself for God’s grace and granting of salvation. Self-surrender or prapatti is the quintessential act for devotees. Two factions of Rāmānuja’s Vaiṣṇavism developed after his death, one of which, the Northern school, likens the process of salvation through bhakti to the activity of a young monkey, which clings to its mother in order to be carried away from danger. The other faction, the Southern school, likens the process of salvation to the activity of a young kitten, which merely lets itself be picked up by its mother and carried away from danger.

In his soteriological praxis, Sarkar highly commends prapatti or total self-surrender (identical to bhakti) not only as the method par excellence for attaining supreme consciousness, but also as the fruit of practising jñāna yoga and karma yoga in combination. Like the Southern school, Sarkar advocates the ‘kitten-like’ surrender of the devotee to the Lord, and in NKS, he speaks of the inner spirit of prapatti as follows:

Thus we should say: “Oh Lord! Thy will be done. I am a machine. Utilise this machine in any way You like. I am nothing but a mere tool in your hands.” This is the spirit of Prapattivāda.1158

He does not, however, dismiss the value of knowledge (jñāna) and action (karma) altogether, and in many instances he stresses the importance of performing selfless, benevolent service and the constant pursuit of deeper intellectuality and intuition along the path of practice.1159 In fact, in his delineation of the stages of Tantric practice, he identifies the Śaiva stage of non-dual knowledge as the culmination of the spiritual quest, following the Vaiṣṇava stage of blissful self-surrender.1160 Comparing with Rāmānuja, one sees that Sarkar’s tāraka brahma, who manifests in the world out of his compassionate resolve by creating a physical body out of the five fundamental factors (pañcabhūtas), exhibits close resemblance to the idea of brahman incarnating as the great Redeemer of beings from samsāra. Although Sarkar claims that the concept of tāraka brahma differs from that of avatāra, it can be argued that in their underlying idea and function, the two appear to be similar, if not the same, varying only in degree of theoretical refinement. While Vaiṣṇavism regards an avatāra as the full or partial incarnation of the Lord, it fails to account for one paradox: since the world itself is the material expression of God, how then is it possible for God to fully incarnate as a saviour? Sarkar argues that according to incarnation theory, it would be more consistent to say that the whole universe is the ‘incarnation’ of God. To overcome this problem, Sarkar proposes the concept of a tri-aspect brahma: the first aspect is nirguṇa brahma – the infinite, attributeless, undefinable consciousness

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1157 Klostermaier, Survey, pp. 251-257.
1158 NKS, p. 28.
1159 See e.g. YP, pp. 44-45.
1160 DOT Vol. 2, pp. 7-9.

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beyond all thought and expression; the second is *saguna brahma* – the localised portion of *nirguna brahma* that becomes qualified by *prakṛti* and metamorphoses into the universe and living beings; and the third is *tāraka brahma* – the tangential consciousness at the silver lining between *saguna* and *nirguna brahma* that takes a physical form to guide and liberate living beings within *saguna brahma*. In this way Sarkar avoids the conundrum faced by the *avatāra* theory, yet retains its essential idea of a world saviour of some sort. He claims that the figure of *tāraka brahma* is a creation of devotional sentiment and perhaps sees its role as one of harnessing and directing the powerful human emotions of love and devotion in the service of ego-transcendence.

*Madhva’s Dvaita Vedāntic Vaiṣṇavism*

Madhva, known for his dualist variant of Vedānta, sees individual beings as images of Viṣṇu, like reflections in a mirror. In his view, the relationship between Viṣṇu and jīva is best described as *bimba-pratibimba* or ‘splendour and reflection’.

In other words, Madhva sees Viṣṇu as the infinite splendour that reflects on the ‘mirror’ of his own body to create multiple but delimited ‘reflections’ of himself in the form of individual beings. In keeping with his dualist metaphysic, Madhva teaches that the reflecting Viṣṇu is ultimately separate and distinct from the reflections of myriad beings. He subscribes to the doctrine of predestination, whereby some persons are destined to be liberated while others are simply never to be liberated and are destined to remain in bondage. Through devotion and practice, a living being is said to be able to achieve eternal communion with the creative Lord of his or her existence, Viṣṇu.

Madhva’s dualist concept of Viṣṇu and jīva directly conflicts with Sarkar’s non-dualist view of the essential identity of śiva and jīva. However, Madhva’s idea of *bimba-pratibimba* is in resonance with Sarkar’s notion of *jīvātman* (unit cognisance) as microcosmic reflection of the unbounded and dynamic process of *paramātman* (supreme cognisance). While the cognitive faculty within each unit entity (jīva) is essentially the reflected luminosity of the infinite cognitive faculty, the body-mind complex of each unit is a truly-existing, condensed form of cognisance itself rather than a mere reflection of Viṣṇu. Ontologically, Sarkar, with his Śaiva-Tantric brand of non-dualist realism, parts company with Madhva and his Vedāntic and essentially dualistic idealism.

*Vallabha’s Puṣṭimārga*

Vallabha, another Vaiṣṇava master, is celebrated for his doctrine of salvation known as *puṣṭimārga*, the way of grace. Vallabha’s *puṣṭimārga* is essentially a ‘revelatory-only’ path that discredits the use of reason for the realisation of *brahman*, as is done in Advaita Vedānta. He upholds family life as the means to earn God’s grace, seeing *sevā* or service as a mode of worship of the Lord that bestows the highest bliss. In other words, the family person’s entire life is divinised by virtue of the performance of *sevā*. In contrast, if renunciation of family ties (*saṃnyāsa*) is undertaken without genuine love for

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the Lord, spiritual harm may result. The quintessential practice is ātma-nivedana or total surrender to the guru of the self and all that belongs to the self. Puṣṭimārga is higher than karmamārga, jñānamārga, and even bhaktimārga of other schools, for:

Puṣṭi is the uncaused grace of God, for which the devotee prepares but cannot direct or influence … On the human side, puṣṭi means doing things out of pure love and not because an action is enjoined by the Vedā, and also not because the intellect recognises the majesty and exalted nature of God. The puṣṭimārga is open to all, also to women and low-caste people, even to the patita, the ‘fallen’, for whom other schools of Hinduism hold out no hope of salvation. It is free from Vedic command and is interested in establishing only a relationship between the soul and its Lord – even if this relationship is one of anger and resentment.¹¹⁶²

An important feature of Vallabha’s soteriology is his conception of the ultimate and most desirable state to be attained by a practitioner of puṣṭimārga. He does not discount the possibility of mokṣa but emphasises the preferability of a state he calls nitya līlā or ‘permanent [divine] play’. In nitya līlā, the devotee does not merge into God but remains in ‘eternal enjoyment of the company of God’, and attains this state purely through the uncaused grace of the Lord. Vallabha says:

He who thinks of God as all and of himself as emanating from him and who serves him with love, is a devotee … the highest devotee leaves everything, his mind filled with Kṛṣṇa alone … he is wholly absorbed in the love of God. No one, however, can take the path of bhakti, except through the grace of God. Karma itself, being of the nature of God’s will, manifests itself as His mercy or anger to the devotee … the law of karma is mysterious … we do not know the manner in which God’s will manifests itself; sometimes, by His grace He may even save a sinner who may not have to take the punishment due to him.¹¹⁶³

The fullness of devotion is achieved in stages starting with the seed of bhakti existing as prema (‘love’) in human hearts, planted there through the grace of God. Prema is gradually nurtured and developed through listening to scriptures, chanting the Lord’s name, performing household duties with a mind fixed on Kṛṣṇa, self-surrender, and sevā (‘service’), here interpreted as worship of the Lord in the form of Śrī Govardhana-nāthajī (a particular physical image of Kṛṣṇa).¹¹⁶⁴

Turning again to Sarkar, we see similarities and also differences between him and Vallabha. First, in agreement with Vallabha, Sarkar highlights the essentiality of devotional self-surrender and the performance of selfless service and familial duties with a mind absorbed in cosmic ideation. He also identifies the human guru as the central soteriological factor and advocates the practice of ātmanivedana. Like Vallabha in relation to his puṣṭimārga, Sarkar sees his path of Ānanda Mārga as open to people of any caste, social and ethnic groups, gender, and even to those who have acted wrongly in the past. This is exemplified in his outspoken opposition to the caste system, widow and gender

¹¹⁶² Klostermaier, pp. 255-256.
¹¹⁶³ Quoted in Klostermaier, p. 256.
oppression, and socio-economic exploitation as actualised in the various departments, and social and spiritual functions of the AM organization. Sarkar’s stand against capital punishment in his social philosophy of PROUT reflects his acceptance of wrongdoers who are willing to reform themselves. Another similarity lies in Sarkar’s elevation of the status of the family person or householder in the domain of spiritual attainment. In line with his Tantric leanings, Sarkar stresses that the family practitioner (grhī) and the renunciate (saṃnyāsin) are on par in terms of spiritual potential and status and are to be equally respected. Unlike Vallabha, however, Sarkar places emphasis on the cultivation of knowledge and advocates a blending of intellect, intuition, devotion, and action as the best way of realising the truth. He does not subscribe to the idea that truth is solely revelatory and that intellectual enquiry has no place. Also, for Sarkar, the ultimate goal is mokṣa – the merging of the individual self into the highest cosmic consciousness; it is not eternal enjoyment in the company of God. To him, the Vaiṣṇava’s nitya-līlā represents a penultimate stage of devotion where dualism still exists, and though blissful, is not the culmination of the spiritual path. Finally, Sarkar does not accept any form of image or idol worship, in contrast to the Vallabha Vaiṣṇavas who worship the Lord in the form of Śrī Govardhana-nāthājī. In the contrast between Sarkar and Vallabha, the opposition between Śaiva-Tantric non-dualism and Vedāntic dualism is highlighted.

In the history of Vaiṣṇavism, perhaps the most illustrious and widely known human figure is Caitanya, often given the appellation ‘Mahāprabhu’ to signify his status as ‘… the Great Lord of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement’.1165 Caitanya lived in sixteenth century Bengal, where he and his disciples initiated a mass devotional movement centred solely on worship of Kṛṣṇa. The tradition that Caitanya and his followers belong to is called Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism; its influence has extended far beyond the boundaries of Bengal largely through their efforts. Caitanya is well known for his highly devotional displays of God-intoxication, manifesting in singing, dancing and chanting God’s name. He popularised the practice of nāma-kīrtana or singing God’s name, encapsulated in the famous universal mantra ‘Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare’. (A more detailed discussion of Caitanya and his possible influence on Sarkar’s thought and praxis will be attempted in the next section when examining Sarkar’s Bengali connection.)

8.2 The Bengali Connection

Sarkar’s connection to the land and culture of Bengal is evident from his familial and ancestral ties to Burdwan, an old township situated in West Bengal close to the border with Bihar. Sarkar is said to have spent much time there, especially during his school vacations, when he and his family would go to Burdwan for holidays and to visit relatives.1166 It is thus probable that Sarkar imbibed elements of the Bengali religious milieu that were to become significant in his later life as he formulated his AM

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1164 Klostemaier, pp. 256-257.
1165 Klostemaier, p. 257.
1166 Dharmavedānanda, Who’s Afraid, p. 425.
ideology. It is also probable that the Bengali religious context exerted a continuing influence on Sarkar’s thinking as AM was highly active in West Bengal, with Calcutta being the site of the organisation’s headquarters since 1981-82.\textsuperscript{1167} I will discuss two main strands of Bengali religion that may had an influence on Sarkar’s teachings, namely Bengali Vaiśṇavism and Bengali Tantrism.

### 8.2.1 Bengali Vaiśṇavism

Vaiśṇavism has been a major religious presence in West Bengal for many centuries, and like Šaivism and Šāktism, may be traced to Mauryan times, certainly to the Gupta and Pāla periods.\textsuperscript{1168} Bengali Vaiśṇavism is a complex product derived from two principal sources: (1) the general history of Vaiśṇavism in India, and (2) the doctrines and practices developed by Caitanya and his followers in 16\textsuperscript{th} century Bengal.\textsuperscript{1169} The central axis of Bengali Vaiśṇavism is devotion (bhakti) to Kṛṣṇa, the most celebrated incarnation of the deity Viṣṇu, and to Kṛṣṇa’s divine lover, Rādhā. The Gītā Govinda of Jayadeva (12\textsuperscript{th} century C.E.), eulogising the love between Kṛṣṇa and his lover, Rādhā, is perhaps ‘the most celebrated Sanskrit poem composed in Bengal’.\textsuperscript{1170} As mentioned in the last section, the best-known Vaiśṇava in Bengali religious history is Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who made significant and essential contributions to Bengali Vaiśṇavism, as we know it today. This section will focus on Jayadeva’s and Caitanya’s contributions to Bengali religion, highlighting some of the essential elements of Bengali Vaiśṇavism in the process. I will then compare these elements of the Vaiśṇava faith with aspects of Sarkar’s ideology and praxis that resemble them.

In Jayadeva’s Gītā Govinda, the passionate love between devotee and his or her Beloved Lord is dramatically portrayed through the erotic love-play between Kṛṣṇa and his favourite gopi (cow-herdess), Rādhā. Kṛṣṇa is given the appellation Govinda, meaning the ‘cow-finder’, a name that describes his occupation as a cowherd in Vṛndāvana. According to Feuerstein, the word ‘go’ means not only ‘cow’ but also ‘wisdom’, so that Govinda means not only a finder of cows, but a finder of wisdom.\textsuperscript{1171} Just as Kṛṣṇa represents the masculine cosmic principle of the Divine, Rādhā represents the Divine feminine. This increased emphasis on the feminine principle of the Divine is echoed in the Šākta-Tantric pre-eminence of the divine Šakti, and signals a new trend in the Vaiśṇava devotionalism of 12\textsuperscript{th} century Bengal. In the Gītā Govinda, Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā are said to be engaged in episodes of erotic love-play, with the intense desire and passion aroused between them vividly described. Feuerstein translates several passages of the Gītā Govinda as follows:\textsuperscript{1172}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[1167] Krpānanda, With My Master, p. 126.
\item[1171] Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, p. 382.
\item[1172] Feuerstein, Yoga Tradition, p. 383.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Secretly at night I went to his home in a concealing thicket where he remained in hiding. Anxiously I glanced in all directions, while he was laughing with an abundant longing for the delight (rati) [of sexual union]: O friend! Make the crusher of [the demon] Keśin love me passionately. I am enamoured, entertaining desires of love! (2.11)

I was shy at our first union. He was kind toward me, [showing] hundreds of ingenious flatteries. I spoke through sweet and gentle smiles, and he unfastened the garment around my hips. (2.12)

He laid me down on a bed of shoots. For a long time, he rested on my breast, while I caressed and kissed him. Embracing me, he drank from my lower lip. (2.13)

I closed my eyes from drowsiness. The hair on his cheeks bristled from my caresses. My whole body was perspiring, and he was quite restless because of his great intoxication with passion. (2.14)

The passages quoted above indicate a dramatic shift away from ascetic and body-denying forms of spirituality to an earthy, embodied spirituality that does not seek to deny physical passion and mental longing. Rather, the amorous love between Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā underscores the idea of harnessing all of one’s desires, in particular sexual passion, toward realisation of union with the Divine. This orientation is reminiscent of the radical and integral spirit of Tantra, where sexual imagery is frequently employed to express the passionate and embodied nature of one’s devotional longing for God. As in Tantra, so also in Bengali Vaiṣṇavism, human emotions that are normally regarded by the more conventional Yogic strand of Indian spirituality to be negative or unwholesome are recast in a positive light by the Vaiṣṇavas, set within the context of ecstatic love for God. Thus, Vaiṣṇava spirituality can be seen as a method of physical and psychological sublimation, a way of cultivating and refining the emotions in the service of a divine ideal.

Sarkar’s approach to devotional praxis appears to be akin to this general Vaiṣṇava practice of harnessing, channelling, and sublimating coarse human emotions in the direction of union with the beloved divine. Like Jayadeva in the Gītā Govinda, Sarkar does not discourage the cultivation of spousal feelings for God, although he does advocate, perhaps more conventionally, the conversion of kāma (sense desire) into prema (love for God) and of preya (attraction for mundane objects) into śreya (attraction for brahma), in the context of devotional practice. For Sarkar, a devotee can legitimately experience a variety of attitudinal feelings towards brahma or kṛṣṇa, reflecting the nature of the relationship between the bhakta (devotee) and bhagavān (the Lord). These relationships are those of parent and child, master and servant, teacher and disciple, friend and friend, and husband and wife (an erotic love relationship). A spousal or lovers’ relationship is one in which the emotions of sexual desire, physical and psychological attraction, and longing for intimacy are consciously channelled towards realisation of brahma. In this sense, Sarkar comes very close to the notion of erotic longing for God idealised in the Gītā Govinda. However, at the final stage of spiritual realisation, all emotions, however sublime, are relinquished in the ineffable silence of nirguṇa brahma, where nothing short of total surrender is called for.
Caitanya was born a brahmin by the name of Viśvambhara Miśra. The earliest available biography of Caitanya appears to be the Sanskrit Srī-Kṛṣṇacaitanya-Caritāmṛta, attributed to Murāri-Gupta. The more popular biography is the Bengali work by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja known as the Caitanya-Caritāmṛta. Long before Caitanya, the Padavaliś of Jayadeva in Sanskrit and the songs of Čandīdāsa in Bengali had already popularised the cult of Kṛṣṇa -Rādhā. Caitanya contributed to this devotional cult by advocating private meditation on Kṛṣṇa and public chanting (saṅkīrtana) of God’s names. He was regarded by his early followers (the Gosvāmins of Vrndāvan) as an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā combined, but in later Bengali Vaiśṇavism became a powerful exemplification of bhakti beliefs and doctrines, and not as divinity per se. According to De, Caitanya attracted others by his charisma and the powerful appeal of his devotional sentiment, rather than by his organisational abilities as founder of a movement. Caitanya left behind eight verses of devotion and instruction to his disciples in a composition known as the Śiṣṭa Aṣṭaka, and was an ecstatic promulgator of the idea that God can be found in this world through pure devotion and love.

The doctrines and beliefs of Bengali Vaiśṇavism, as exemplified by Caitanya and his followers, are centred on the divinity of Kṛṣṇa. For the early Gosvāmins, Caitanya appears to have been identified with Kṛṣṇa himself and was thus their focus of worship and devotion. For later Bengali Vaiśṇavas, however, Kṛṣṇa emerges as the highest and exclusive divinity, who is simultaneously brahman, paramātman, and bhagavat, the three-in-one divinity. The essential form (svarūpa) of Kṛṣṇa is said to have three aspects: (1) svayam rūpa or ‘self existent nature’; (2) tadekātma rūpa or ‘hypostatic manifestation’, which is identical in essence and existence with svayam rūpa but different in appearance or attributes; and (3) āveṣa or ‘possessed forms’ of inspired men and prophets appearing in the world. These inspired personages are partial manifestations (avatāras) of the supreme being – real and not illusory, supernatural (dīva), and eternally existent (nītya) forms of the deity whose purpose is to do good in the world. Avatāras descend into the world and appear to the faithful as expressions of Kṛṣṇa’s grace (prasāda), brought about by the inherent śakti of Kṛṣṇa. They serve as saviours rather than as role models or ideals for humanity’s spiritual evolution; their existence is thus unique and liberative, and does not exemplify a common human developmental goal.

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1173 De, Early History, p. 53.
1174 De, Early History, pp. 1-2.
1175 De, Early History, p. 225.
1176 See De, Early History, pp. 67-110, for biographical details regarding Caitanya’s life.
1177 See also Klaus K. Klostermaier, ‘Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavism: The Education of Human Emotion’, Journal of Asian and African Studies, 34.1 (1999): pp. 127-135. (http://web7.infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/…). On Caitanya’s religious vision, Klostermaier says: ‘In a culture that identified religion uniquely with renunciation, and which condemned all forms of enjoyment as entanglement in samsāra, Caitanya announced the message that God was Love, God was joy, and God was Life. A world in which this God was present in bodily form could not be all bad, illusion or entrapment. For him, it was more important to find God in the world than to leave the world in order to find liberation.’ Sarkar’s vision is remarkably similar to Caitanya’s.
1178 De, Early History, pp. 225-229.
1179 De, Early History, pp. 250-251.
Sarkar's AM has much in common with Bengali Vaiśnavism, especially in relation to the
doctrine of bhakti and the practice of samkīrtana. Like Caitanya and his followers, Sarkar extols the
virtue and supremacy of bhakti as the means to salvation, privileging it over jñāna and karma. Sarkar
defines kṛṣṇa philosophically as the witnessing nucleus of the cosmos, regarding this cosmic nucleus
as a personal entity that showers love and affection on all entities. He also sees kṛṣṇa attracting all
entities towards himself by his centripetal force, which can be construed as the cosmic love that leads
all beings to salvation through union with himself. Sarkar and Caitanya agree on devotional love as
the means to salvation, but differ as to the nature of this salvation. For Sarkar, salvation is non-dual
merger into nirguna brahma, whose nucleus is kṛṣṇa, wherein no separation between devotee and the
object of devotion persists. For Caitanya and his followers, salvation is framed in the dualist
metaphysic of Madhva, wherein the devotee eternally enjoys the freedom and bliss of his or her Lord
Kṛṣṇa while remaining existentially separate.

Sarkar’s doctrine of tri-aspect brahma displays a certain similarity to the doctrine of the three-
in-one supreme being in later Bengali Vaiśnavism. Sarkar’s nirguna brahma, the eternally existing
and attributeless consciousness, invites comparison with the Vaiṣṇava notion of brahman or svayam
rūpa, the self existent entity. Similarly, Sarkar’s saguna brahma, the manifested and qualified
consciousness that remains one in essence with but different in form from pure consciousness, is
analogous to the Vaiṣṇava paramātmā or tadekātma rupa, the hypostatised manifestation of
brahman. Finally, Sarkar’s tāraka brahma, the liberator who is paradoxically in both saguna
(qualified, with attributes) and nirguna (unqualified, without attributes) realms at the same time, is
analogous to the Vaiṣṇava bhagavat or āveśa, the personified embodiment of the supreme being that
brings good to the world. For Sarkar, tāraka brahma is also bhagavān, the Lord who is the complete
manifestation (purṇāvatāra) of supreme consciousness and who possesses the capacity to bring
salvation to individuals and upliftment of human society. This is unlike the Vaiṣṇava bhagavat, who
is regarded as a partial rather than complete manifestation of the divine. Like the Vaiṣṇava bhagavat,
however, Sarkar’s tāraka brahma is regarded not as a developmental goal of spiritual practice but as a
soteriological and devotional character that is unique in function and occurrence (although tāraka
brahma can appear from age to age depending on prevailing need). In a sense, the Vaiṣṇava bhagavat
is echoed in Sarkar’s conception of partial but still powerful manifestations of consciousness (e.g.
kalāvatāra; see Chapter 5) that are capable of helping the world.

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1180 Sarkar’s religious vision and praxis resonate, at least partially, with those of the prominent Bengali author,
poet, and thinker Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore ‘made no distinction between his aesthetic vision and his
spiritual realisation … [he] sings of an infinite supreme Being underlying the whole cosmic process of finite
creation. The world process is an eternal process of self-realisation through self-manifestation of that supreme
Being … This conception of religion propagated by Tagore … [is] fundamentally based on the teachings of the
Upaniṣads, … [and on] the Upaniṣadic canvas the Vaiṣṇava love poets and the mystic Bāuls of Bengal and other
mystic poets of upper and northern India, vis., Kabir, Dīdū, Rajjab and others, have supplied colour and tone of
different shades.’ Shashibhusan Das Gupta, Obusc Religious Cults (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay,
In light of the above discussion, it is evident that Sarkar’s AM contains key elements that strongly resonate with the existing Vaiṣṇava tradition of Bengal. Such elements shared by AM and Bengali Vaiṣṇavism suggest that Sarkar’s ideology is in many ways a product of the cultural milieu and religious context of his ethnic homeland. This commonality also adds weight to the argument that Sarkar, while outside the orthodoxy of disciplic lineage and tradition, is nevertheless an authentic Indian exponent of Tantra, albeit an innovative and idiosyncratic one, caught in the wave of Hindu post-colonial revivalism and industrial modernisation.

8.2.2 Bengali Tantrism

Several strains of Tantrism are popular in Bengal, namely those of the Śākta and the Sahajiyā varieties. Śākta Tantrism is especially common in West Bengal, as evidenced by the prominence of goddesses in the region. Many of these goddesses, including Durgā, Kālī, Caṇḍī, Pārvatī, Sarasvatī, and Rādhā, are worshipped by the Bengalis, with public religious festivals dedicated to some of these goddesses a common occurrence in Bengal. While prominent at the popular level among the masses, Śaktism, as a complex system of religious beliefs and rituals, does not appear to be a likely influence on Sarkar’s thinking and praxis.

However, Śaktism, existing in hybridisation with the Buddhist, Nath, Śaiva, and Vaiṣṇava traditions, in the simplified variant of Tantrism known as the Sahaja or Sahajiyā (‘natural, born together’), may well have been an influence on Sarkar. This observation is corroborated by the fact that Sahajiyā Tantrism is ‘an indigenous kind of Yogic discipline specialising in symbolic interpretation and transformation of bodily substances.’\(^{1181}\) Also, Sahajiyā Tantrism is said to selectively adapt from other religious systems ‘ … elements of imagery, doctrine, and practice so as to forge hybrid systems of spiritual discipline (sādhanā).’\(^{1182}\) Sarkar’s AM is, in many ways, a product of hybridisation comprising elements from (1) the earliest Vedic corpus, (2) the classical philosophy-praxis of Śāṁkhya, Yoga, and Vedānta, (3) early Buddhism, (4) Śaivism, (5) Śaktism, and (6) Vaiṣṇavism. This synthetic spirit underlying Sarkar’s AM may well reflect a Sahajiyā outlook on spirituality, an outlook that endorses and advocates a creative blending of ideas and practices into a specific sādhanā; AM can be seen as an example of such a type of sādhanā. Sil (1988) supports this view by arguing that the thinking behind Sarkar’s AM is very much in keeping, at least in part, with that of the Bengali Sahajiyā movement:

Sarkar’s preachings in this respect strongly resemble those of the Sahajiyā (Naturalist) Tantrics of Bengal who believe that ‘the truth … can never be known by the scholars, – for what comes within the scope of our mind, can never be the absolute truth.’\(^{1183}\) …

\(^{1182}\) Ibid.
Sarkar combines the two principal divisions of tantrism – Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva or Śākta – the former in its typical Bengali Vaiṣṇava-Sahajiyā variety with its peculiar erotic mysticism and the latter with its esoteric spiritual exercises with a generous dose of the Tantric metaphysical concept of a cosmic entity …

We will now examine briefly the basic ideas and practices of Sahajiyā Tantrism, which contains Śākta, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and other elements, and compare them with those of AM in order to highlight specific similarities and differences. Through such comparison, I hope to further test the claim that Sarkar reflects the Sahajiyā philosophical and practical outlook in his synthetic ideology of AM.

The term sahaja (‘together born’) denotes the following: ‘natural’, ‘innate’, ‘spontaneous’, or ‘inborn’; it points to the truism that the ‘Self is not other than the individual who is seeking it … ’, but ‘ … is natural, innate, not external but part of one’s inner nature.’ According to Feuerstein, the term sahaja refers to the ‘essential identity between the finite and the infinite, the phenomenal and the noumenal reality.’ He points out two textual references to the notion of sahaja, the first in a Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā text, the Ratnasāra, and the second in a Kaula text (belonging to the Śaiva Tantric tradition), the Akulavīra Tantra. In the first case, beings are said to be ‘born out of sahaja, live in sahaja, and again vanish into sahaja.’ In the second case, sahaja is said to be a ‘state of being characterised by omniscience, omnipresence, and goodness’, wherein the mind is totally silenced and all duality and suffering completely terminated.

The Sahajiyā movement, which straddled both Buddhism and Hinduism from around the eighth century C.E. onwards, and which flourished in Bengal in the form of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā tradition from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth, is based essentially on this central notion of sahaja. The inclusive and integral perspective of the Sahajiyās is expressed in literary compositions of rich metaphorical, poetic, and inspirational content. The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā, in particular, is effusive in its embrace of the emotional and erotic dimensions of spiritual life, in contradistinction to the stoic ideal of renunciation found in other soteriological paths (e.g. Yoga). To this day, there are small, marginal groups of wandering singers and musicians (e.g. Bāuls, Śains, Kartābhajās) who continue the Sahajiyā tradition of spontaneous devotional expression. They wander the countryside, sing initiatory songs, and gather periodically with members of the same group for religious-musical festivals (mela). The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, in common with the general Sahajiyā movement in north-eastern India, exhibit several salient characteristics: (1) a spirit of protest against

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1186 Feuerstein, Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy, p. 45.
1187 Ibid.
1188 Feuerstein, Tantra, p. 46.
and criticism of world-renouncing attitudes and ascetic practices of traditional religion; (2) devaluation of scholarship and intellectual abstraction; (3) scathing criticism of religious formalities, rituals, and the caste system. Unlike the Buddhist Sahajiyās, who conceive the highest state of sahaja as a state of mahāsukha or great bliss, the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās conceive this state as one of supreme love, a love that is also the primordial substance underlying the entire world-process.

The emotional effusiveness of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās can be seen in the ritual enactment of divine union through maithuna (sexual intercourse), wherein the male Sahajiyās identify themselves with Kṛṣṇa while the females see themselves as Rādhā. They regard the practice of sacred sexual union as a way of returning to the state of spontaneity (sahaja) through enjoyment (sambhoga). Similarly, ecstatic, prolonged dancing and chanting of divine names of Kṛṣṇa (kīrtana), and ritual playacting by devotees (with Kṛṣṇa as lover courted by a shepherdess or with Rādhā as the beloved courted by a cowherd), are regarded as means to sahaja, here conceived as the essence of devotion.

Another means to sahaja is the production of a subtle essential fluid or rasa through the technique of ‘Tantric reversal’ during sexual intercourse. This reversal consists in preventing the ejaculation of semen and in ‘channelling’ the seminal energy upwards (ūrdhvaretas) so as to transmute it into rasa. The careful preservation of rasa is said to result in immortality in the form of the true or innate person (sahaja mānuṣa) in the heart. In other words, attaining the fullness of the alchemical fluid, rasa, results in the attainment of the cosmic substance (vastu) that forms the divine body. It appears that some kind of ‘embodied’ or ‘physical’ enlightenment is referred to here.

An important difference exists between the conception of devotional love in the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās and in the Bāuls, a fringe order of religious singers that flourished in the villages of Bengal and is still extant. Das Gupta says:

The love of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās exists between individual beings as Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, but not between the individual and the Absolute; it is love between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa that ultimately leads to the realisation of the Absolute. The love of the Bāuls is, on the contrary, the love directly between the Sahaja as the ultimate reality on the one hand and the individual on the other. To conform to the emotional approach of the Bāuls the Sahaja has gradually transformed itself into a Personal God, or the Supreme Being with whom it may be possible to have personal relations.

1191 Das Gupta, Obscure, pp. 51-61.
1192 Das Gupta, Obscure, p. 121.
1193 Feuerstein, Tantra, p. 234.
1194 Feuerstein, Tantra, pp. 234-236. On the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās’ method of maithuna, Goudriaan says: ‘… its most important characteristic [is] the theory, and sometimes the ritual practice, of divine love exemplified in its most pure form in the feelings towards another’s wife (parakīyā); for their particular method of sexual yoga they were indebted to the early medieval Siddhas of the Buddhist Sahajayāna, which in some respects differ from the ordinary Tantric method’ (see Goudriaan, ‘Introduction, History and Philosophy’, p. 27).
1195 Feuerstein, Tantra, p. 237.
1196 Das Gupta, Obscure, p. 175.
Like the Vaishnava Sahajiyas, however, the Bauls conceive of divine love as the ultimate source and ground of the cosmos. The Bauls account for creation by invoking the image of the Absolute who, out of loneliness and need for expression, commences the process of creation:

… it is said that the Absolute was alone in the beginning; but it could not realise the infinite potency of love that was in it without a dual; in love therefore it created a dual out of its own self, … The whole universe thus proceeds from the Love of God. Love is the underlying principle of the cosmic process as a whole.\(^{1197}\)

Sarkar’s devotional emphasis and his biopsychological approach to spiritual practice reflect a typical Sahajiyā outlook, an outlook characterised by intense devotional sentiment and a concern for physiological transmutation. Furthermore, Sarkar’s conception of divine love as the primordial driving force and essence of all things – an idea encapsulated in his mahāmantra ‘Bābā Nām Kevalam’ – echoes the Vaishnava Sahajiyā and Baul notion of supreme love as both the cosmic substratum and the reason for creation. More importantly, Sarkar’s concept of the personal ūdraka brahma and the intimate love and salvific devotion possible between the AM practitioner and his or her beloved brahma, are clearly identical to the Baul conception of love and the divine. This convergence of ideas and attitudes between Sarkar and the Bauls is interesting, underscoring Sarkar’s intellectual debt to earlier currents of Indian, and in particular Bengali, thought.

Sarkar’s usage of the term sahaja in naming his set of six meditative lessons also reminds of the Sahajiyā focus on the goal of sahaja. Sarkar equates the supreme state of attainment with the spontaneous state of sahajāvasthā,\(^{1198}\) strongly suggesting that he sees the goal of sādhanā as a return to one’s original and innate state of being, which is parama puruṣa. While he does not advocate the practice of Tantric reversal during sexual intercourse, he does encourage sexual moderation (for family practitioners) and celibacy (for monastics). In line with the Sahajiyā emphasis on physiological transmutation, he advocates a graduated sublimation of physical energy into psychic energy, psychic energy into spiritual energy, and finally spiritual energy into pure consciousness through a system of practice called the Sixteen Points. Dietary injunctions, fasting, Yogic postures, and special breathing exercises are examples of practices aimed at transmutation of energy into subtler forms and finally into consciousness. Finally, Sarkar stresses the central role of kīrtana in the process of spiritual practice, using it as the primary means of devotional praxis and an enactment of total self-surrender. Like the Sahajiyās, Sarkar does not advocate emotional, poetic, or aesthetic suppression, promoting instead an open acceptance and outward expression of all kinds of devotional feelings with respect to parama puruṣa. The AM mahāmantra ‘Bābā Nām Kevalam’ expresses just such an outpouring of love and

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\(^{1197}\) Das Gupta, Obscure, pp. 177-178. Of the unique creed of the Bauls, Das Gupta observes: ‘The fact seems to be that the popular composite religious consciousness which was formed by an unconscious admixture of Upaniṣadic mysticism and the devotional fervour of the Vaiṣṇavas was further modified by the kindred thoughts of Sufism where the spirit of the Upaniṣads and that of later Vaiṣṇavism are found combined together.’ (pp. 176-177). It would seem that Sarkar’s religious vision, especially with regard to the notion of ‘love is all there is’, contains an element of Sufi devotionalism, a research topic that falls outside the scope of this study.
devotion for *parama puruṣa*, the beloved friend, spouse, master, father, child, or *guru* of the devotee in the personalised aspect of *tāraka brahma* (*= kṛṣṇa = puruṣottama*). For AM devotees, mass singing of the *mahāmantra* is often an occasion for profound collective inspiration and spontaneous outbursts of devotional fervour, quite in keeping with the style and mood of the Sahajiyās. However, unlike the Sahajiyās, Sarkar teaches neither the practice of *maithuna* nor the ritual playacting of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in the quest for realisation of *sahaja*. It appears that he adopts the essential Sahajiyā spirit of devotional spontaneity and practical synthesis but adapts its methods in a way that is more in keeping with the traditional Yogic approach. Sarkar also departs from the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā conception of liberative devotion, one that is obtained between devotees as Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa; rather he follows the Bāuls in emphasising the love relationship between devotees and the divine absolute as paramount and ultimately liberative.

The critical and comparative discussion of Sarkar’s AM in juxtaposition with ancient and classical Indian systems is now completed. It appears that Sarkar’s AM contains practical and theoretical elements from the Śāktā, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, and Sahajiyā (in particular the Bāul) Tantric systems, fulfilling Mishra’s twofold criteria for authenticity mentioned in section 8.1 of this chapter. Sil supports the view that Sarkar’s AM is a synthetic mixture of Śāktā Tantrism and Vaiṣṇavism, commenting that the confusion generated in the Bengali consciousness stemming from this blending of two traditionally separate spiritual pathways is one reason for AM’s failure to enlist the support of the middle and upper classes in West Bengal. While this confusion might be true for West Bengal and India in general, the synthesis of pathways probably had little detrimental effect on AM’s reception in countries outside India, especially in the West where exposure to these systems is likely to be minimal or absent. Sil, while admitting that Sarkar teaches an innovative and socially conscious form of Tantra, nevertheless criticises Sarkar’s AM as ‘neither authentic nor easily comprehensible’. He speculates that Sarkar’s devaluation of the status of the Goddess in favour of male Gods such as Śiva and Kṛṣṇa is prompted by his ambition to propagate his new religion of AM. He further argues that Sarkar, by doing so, distances himself from the traditional Tantric ‘awe for the

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1199 Sil, ‘Anatomy of the Ānanda Mārga’, p. 11: ‘… even though the basic spiritual tenets of Tantrism and Vaiṣṇavism have long coalesced with each other in Bengal since the sixteenth century, the amalgamation of Śāktā ācāra and Vaiṣṇava ācāra prove confusing for the average Bengali who has traditionally held a clear distinction between the two modes of spirituality.’ From the results of the present study, I would add Śaiva and Sahajiyā (as well as indirectly, Yoga, Sāmkhya, and Vedānta) elements into Sarkar’s constructive synthesis of AM. Sil observes the social context of AM’s emergence thus: ‘In [the] Indian context, especially, the objective of Sarkar’s sect is quite in keeping with the tradition of Hindu revivalism of the late nineteenth century. Hindu revivalists such as Śwami Vivekānanda, Balgangadhar Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh, Bipin Chandra Pal, or Swaminārayān (Sahanānanda Swami) had attempted “to blend religious with socio-economic values to foster a revived sense of community and ultimately to espouse nationalism”’ (p. 2). I agree with Sil on AM’s alignment with the spirit of revivalism but disagree on its supposed espousal of nationalism. In all of Sarkar’s writings, especially those on socio-economic theory, the consistent message is one of universalism, not nationalism.

1200 Sil, p. 11. In the same paragraph, he says: ‘His innovative Tantrism without due reference and deference to Śakti and his liberal concern for elevating the status of women in society at once reveal his essentially Tantric emphasis on the equality of the sexes and his anxiety to dissociate his new spirituality from traditional Tantric affiliation.’
female as the seat of reproduction, the source of all life\textsuperscript{1201} and is thus incongruous with authentic Tantrism.

In the final chapter, I will synthesise all the findings of this study and argue, in disagreement with Sil, that Sarkar’s AM is not beyond the scope of authentic Tantrism. I will argue the thesis that Prabhāt Raṇjan Sarkar, in spite of his non-allegiance to any existing Tantric lineage and his lack of total conformity to traditional formulations, nonetheless echoes deeply the Tantric vision and its doctrines in his AM ideology. This is especially so since Tantra, as we have seen from this study, is far more than the cult of Šakti alone and includes the Šaiva and Vaiṣṇava elements as well. In drawing my conclusion, I re-affirm my dialogue hermeneutic that seeks to privilege neither the reader nor the texts, but carefully weighs the evidence carried in the intellectual history of Indian religious thought as ideas weave, replicate, and develop across tradition and time. This weighing of evidence is not separate from my historically effective consciousness, ‘thrown’ as it were into this time and place, which identifies, selects, and works with data that speak most cogently to me. In doing so, I argue that my conclusions, as indeed the conclusions of any study, are necessarily a product of the fusion of horizons that is inextricable from every act of human understanding in our quest for what is true.

\textsuperscript{1201} Sil, ‘Anatomy of the Ānanda Mārga’, p. 11.
Chapter 9

P. R. Sarkar: A Tantric Guru

Sarkar claims to have drawn his ideology from the ancient Indian episteme of Tantra, modifying and adapting it to the needs of the modern age. We began our investigation into Sarkar’s ideology (in Chapter 3) from the perspective of his cosmology, namely the brahmacakra theory. Embedded within this theory is Sarkar’s understanding of the central concept of brahma, a tri-aspect ontological and theological entity that is composed of puruṣa or śiva (consciousness), and prakṛti or śakti (energy). Through the spontaneous will and desire of brahma, the universe is created via a progressive transformation of pure consciousness, first into universal mind, and later into the five fundamental elements that comprise all matter. In his brahmacakra theory, Sarkar attempts to reconcile the theories of creation and evolution by positing that matter emerges from mind (in this case, the cosmic mind) and subsequently develops in complexity to such an extent that it becomes possible for mind (in this case, the unit mind) to in turn emerge from matter. This unit mind then undergoes further evolution, finally enabling consciousness, the subtlest witnessing capacity (or reflexivity) of mind, to arise. Through spiritual practices, each unit consciousness is able to gradually develop and expand its boundary to the point where it finally dissolves into the infinite consciousness from which it had come. For Sarkar, the cosmogonic (saṅcara) and evolutionary (pratisaṅcara) processes of brahmacakra are facilitated by minute emanations of consciousness that he calls microvita, of which there are a total of fourteen types (Chapters 3 and 6 presented separate discussions on Sarkar’s microvita theory).

As mentioned in Chapter 8, Tantra draws its material historically from a wide variety of sources. One such source is Śaṅkhyā philosophy, whose terminology permeates the treatises of a branch of medieval Tantra known as Kashmir Śaivism. Upon examining Sarkar’s texts, the prevalence of Śaṅkhyān terminology is evident. Śaṅkhyā is an ancient Indian philosophical system that teaches the existence of multiple puruṣas and a singular prakṛti as the basic original substances of the universe. The AM redefinition of puruṣa and prakṛti as twin aspects of one singular reality indicates a critical re-appropriation of Indian tradition on Sarkar’s part. Such re-appropriation may qualify Sarkar as a neo-Śaṅkhya thinker in so far as his basic cosmology is based on a renewed definition of Śaṅkhya’s core concepts.1202

Sarkar’s ‘neo-Śaṅkhya’ philosophy, while ontologically monistic, is at the same time clearly theistic, a conceptual innovation made possible by the introduction of a tri-aspect brahma, the supreme consciousness. By adopting the definition of brahma as having nirguṇa (unqualified, non-attributional, transcendent) and saguṇa (qualified, attributional, immanent) aspects, Sarkar creates the possibility for and necessity of a link that bridges the gap between the manifest and the unmanifest. He cleverly uses the metaphor of the tangent to describe the locus and function of tāraka brahma, the
personalised, liberative aspect of *brahma* linking the ‘nirgunic’ and ‘sagunic’ realms. These three ontological aspects of the same reality point to three distinct but integrated styles of soteriological praxis that lead to them (which we will discuss later).

No contemporary exposition of Tantra would be complete without a theory of mind and subtle physiology, the hallmark of classical Tantric speculations. In Chapter 4, we explored Sarkar’s multi-modelled theory of mind, which intricately links psychology to human anatomy and physiology – glands (*granthi*), nerves (*nāḍī*), and plexuses (*cakra*). He calls this part-modern, part-classical theory the ‘new science’ of biopsychology. In keeping with the Tantric emphasis on the body as a divinised receptacle of the spirit, a receptacle that is essentially and substantially one with divine reality, Sarkar pays great attention to the cultivation of the body by such means as Yogic postures (*āsana*), sentient diet (*sāttvika āhāra*), systematic half-bath (*vyapaka śauca*), periodic fasting (*upavāsa*), and moderation in sex (for family practitioners). These biopsychological practices are included under Sarkar’s Sixteen Points, a set of strict guidelines for total development of the individual AM practitioner. (The Sixteen Points have been discussed in Chapter 5.)

Admittedly, such practices are more Yogic than Tantric, and appear to advocate a denial of the gross body in favour of the sublime spirit by thwarting ordinary biological drives. Sarkar, however, promotes these practices as means of sublithising and transmuting the body by harnessing its innate energy, without unhealthily repressing natural drives. He appears to be trying to steer a course between extreme self-indulgence and extreme self-mortification, advocating a style of spirituality that includes, rather than excludes, the body as a pathway to divinity. For Sarkar, a sort of ‘bodily enlightenment’ is an important pre-requisite for ‘spiritual enlightenment’, based on the notion that the powerful surge of the *kundalini* requires a strong and pure body as a base. Sarkar’s reading of Tantric practice points to a discarding of a purely physical interpretation of Tantric ‘enjoyment’ (*bhoga*), eschewing public or private rituals of sacralized sex. Instead, he appears to have read *bhoga* as sublimated bliss experienced by the mind and body through ascribing divinity to all phenomena (*madhavidyā*), an attitude of devotional love (*bhakti* and *prema*), and a system of Yogic-meditative practices (*asṭāṅga yoga* and *sahaja yoga*). Thus, Sarkar’s AM praxis embraces both enjoyment (*bhoga*) and salvation (*mokṣa*), both the ‘pleasant’ (*preya*) and the ‘good’ (*śreya*), and both spiritual knowing (*parāvidyā*) and mundane knowing (*aparāvidyā*) in a dialectical process of transformation into that which is beyond all duality, all mental fabrication. It is in this sense that we can speak of Sarkarian Tantra as displaying the quality of integrating seemingly diametrically opposed values that is so characteristic of classical Tantra.

As mentioned earlier, Sarkar teaches three integrated styles of practice corresponding loosely to realisation of the three integral aspects of *brahma* – *saguna*, *nirguna*, and *tāraka*. The path of *śaktācāra*, involving fearless, vigorous, and selfless action (*karma yoga*), is one of constant struggle against inner and outer obstacles, leading ultimately to the bliss of merger with *saguna brahma*. This

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1202 I am indebted to Shaman Hatley for use of the term ‘neo-Sāṃkhya’.  
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state of merger is termed savikalpa samādhi and is effected mainly by the practice of īśvara pranidhāna, the first meditative lesson of sahaja yoga. The path of vaisṇavācāra, involving sweet surrender and devotional love (bhakti yoga), is one of blissfully letting go of one’s entire being to the personal liberator, tāraka brahma, in the form of the sadguru. This moment-to-moment surrender of self-will to the cosmic will allows the practitioner to cross the ‘bridge’ linking saγuṇa and nirguṇa brahma, resulting in the final stage of śaivācāra – the path of pristine knowledge and non-dual wisdom (jñāna yoga). This culminating phase of śaivācāra is none other than the realisation of nirvikalpa samādhi, union with the unconditioned nirguṇa brahma. This final union is best effected by the sixth meditative lesson, guru dhyāna, since the guru is the human embodiment of tāraka brahma; only he has the capacity to lead the disciple from ‘sagunic’ to ‘nirgunic’ reality. In this way, Sarkar’s ontology, theology, and soteriology are inseparably and integrally linked, demonstrating an overall coherence and comprehensiveness characteristic of Tantra.

Much like the Kashmir Śaiva schools of Tantra, Sarkar appropriates the aṣṭānga yoga framework of Patañjali in constructing a spiritual praxis for his followers (see Chapter 5). He redefines some aspects of aṣṭānga yoga and adds the practice of śodhana (purification) to it, incorporating śodhana as the fifth lesson in his meditative system of sahaja yoga. He also operationalises the practice of aṣṭānga yoga in his meditative system and links the effects of such practice with the arousal and elevation of the kuṇḍalini through the susumṇā nāḍī of the AM practitioner. In other words, the processes of aṣṭānga yoga (such as pratyāhāra, dhāranā, and dhyāna) are operationalised using the Tantric tools of mantra, cakra and nāḍī visualisation, and guru contemplation. Through such Tantric meditation, the AM practitioner arouses kuṇḍalini without deliberately manipulating it, and raises it naturally from the mūlādhāra cakra to the sahasrāra cakra. In this way, Sarkar ties a traditionally Yogic praxis to a Tantric metaphysic and soteriology (see Chapter 6). This highlights the finding that Sarkar’s AM praxis is pragmatically Yogic but essentially and cosmologically Tantric, especially Śaiva Tantric.

As part of his constructive synthesis, Sarkar blends in the Buddhist framework of the noble eightfold path (aryāṣṭāṇga mārga), a move that seems out of keeping with his generally Yogic and Tantric approach (see Chapter 5). This anomaly is resolved somewhat by Sarkar’s renumbering and reinterpretation of the steps of the eightfold path in terms of his cosmotheistic worldview and soteriology. He does not, however, place the eightfold path in the centre of his AM praxis, but merely highlights it as a set of worthwhile and useful pointers for anyone walking the AM path. By mentioning the eightfold path, Sarkar appears to be legitimising his own praxis by means of another spiritual path, a path that is perhaps better known and respected amongst spiritual practitioners. Be that as it may, early Buddhism and AM may share common Yogic, ascetic elements in their soteriologies, especially in relation to purported meditative stages and realisations. This commonality may well point to an inner dynamic within early Buddhism and Classical Yoga, a dynamic that would later give rise to Buddhist and Hindu Tantra. Sarkar’s Tantra may represent one of the latest and most contemporary expressions of the dynamic inherent within Indian spirituality in general – the
imperative to periodically revitalise and rebalance itself when introvertive, repressive, and socially-isolating tendencies become unacceptably excessive.

In keeping with the Tantric tradition’s emphasis on the soteriological centrality of the guru, Sarkar portrays himself as the medium through which intuitional practices for brahma-realisation are transmitted to his disciples. As a self-proclaimed Tantric guru, Sarkar taught his initiated disciples a number of esoteric meditative practices, the most fundamental of which is a set of six meditative lessons known as sahaja yoga (see Chapter 6). Designed to lead the disciple to the twin goals of mukti and mokṣa, the six lessons embody the traditional Yogic approaches of jñāna yoga, karma yoga, and bhakti yoga and utilise the form and content of Tantric methods such as puraścāraṇa (mantra-empowerment by the guru), mantra ghāt (awakening the mantra), mantra dīpāni (illuminating the mantra), and mantra Caitanya (immersing in consciousness of the mantra). (Subsection 6.1.5 presented detailed discussion on these methods.) Meditation is supplemented by the important devotional practice of kīrtana. Although he does not claim to be tāraka brahma, the personal liberator of suffering humanity, Sarkar does act and function as such. He proclaims the disciple’s absolute reliance on the guru’s kṛpa (grace), bestowed by the guru through positive microvita, in the realisation of mokṣa, the ultimate spiritual attainment. This mokṣa-realisation normally occurs through a progression of six levels of spiritual attainment, beginning with sālokya and ending with kaivalya (identical to mokṣa). The terms used to describe these levels of realisation are common to Śaṅkhya (e.g. the term ‘kaivalya’) and Vaiṣṇavism (e.g. the terms ‘sālokya’ and ‘sāyujya’). In short, Sarkar appears to have used elements derived from Yoga and Tantra (in its Śaiva, Śākta, and Vaiṣṇava forms) in constructing his AM practice and stages of attainment (see Chapters 7 and 8).

Insofar as he claims to be teaching Tantra, albeit stripped of all ritualistic and superstitious elements, it is of interest to examine to what extent Sarkar is an authentic Tantric guru. Through philosophical and practical comparisons of Sarkar’s AM with other Indian traditions (Chapters 7 and 8), we observe that AM’s core practices – e.g. mantra meditation, guru devotion, kundalini awakening, and kīrtana – and AM’s key concepts – e.g. śiva-śakti integrality, dynamism of citiśakti, non-dual realism (i.e. the world as a real, not illusory, expression of pure consciousness), and the mystical power of śabda (sound) – indicate a heavy debt on Sarkar’s part to the Tantric legacy. In other words, Sarkar appears to have met both of Mishra’s criteria:1203 (1) the practices that Sarkar taught are consistent with the Tantric philosophy of integralism and mysticism, and (2) the key terms and concepts he used are mostly identical to older ideas found in classical Tantric texts. At the same time, certain antinomian practices such as sacralised sex rituals, commonly practised in the ‘left-handed path’ (vāmanārgha) of medieval Tantra, are absent from Sarkar’s AM. Also, the emotionally effusive and erotic approach of Bengali Vaiśnava Sahajiyā (a syncretic tradition of Vaiṣṇava Tantra), involving dramatic, sexual role-playing of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, is abandoned in favour of an inner and service-oriented devotion to parama puruṣa. The devotee mentally directs such devotional sentiment

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1203 See text reference to Mishra’s criteria in section 8.1.
to supreme consciousness (in the form of the *guru* or otherwise), and expresses that devotion in outward service to all creatures.

All this indicates that what Sarkar presents as Tantra can be considered a sanitised form of an older, more flamboyant tradition of Tantra, one that outwardly challenges the orthodoxy and orthopraxy of mainstream Vedic religion. However, insofar as he upsets the Vedic and Indian status quo through (1) his blatant disavowal of caste, female dowry, and religious exhibitionism, and (2) his socio-political challenge to capitalism and communism via PROUT, Sarkar can be seen as a modern Tantric master, one who is not afraid to challenge what he perceives as the hypocrisy of mainstream religion and polity. In this regard, and also in terms of his deep, ideological harmony with the essential spirit, philosophy, and practices of Tantra, Sarkar can thus be regarded as an authentic Tantric guru. He can be said to offer a modernised yet spiritually legitimate form of Tantra that has contemporary appeal.

This thesis began with three major questions:

4. What is the nature and content of the spiritual philosophy that Sarkar propounded?
5. What are the spiritual practices Sarkar initiated his followers into, and how do the theory and practice of AM spirituality relate to each other?
6. How has Sarkar re-invented the Indian spiritual tradition of Tantra, a claim that he obliquely makes?

To the first question, we can now answer that Sarkar propounds an essentially Sahajiyā style (of the Baul variant) of Tantric philosophy, one that synthesises elements from a wide variety of classical Indian systems, in particular: Sāṃkhya metaphysics, Yoga praxis, Vedānta theology, Śaiva ontology and cosmology, Vaiṣṇava emotional culture, and Śākta psycho-physiology and cosmo-linguistics.

To the second question, we can answer that Sarkar initiated his followers into a complex set of Yogic-Tantric practices based upon a framework derived from Patañjali, but modified and expanded to include elements such as *mantra* initiation and contemplation from the Śaiva-Śākta tradition, and devotional practices from the Vaiṣṇava tradition. The underlying spirit of AM praxis is one of integration of the mundane and the spiritual, and a blending of the personal and the communal. AM praxis espouses a universalism that embraces socio-cultural diversity, non-separation within humanity and between humanity, the material world, and ecology, and a teleology of individual liberation and salvation. Sarkar specifically designs a collection of spiritual practices known as the Sixteen Points, for the expressed purpose of leading AM practitioners towards the soteriological goals of *mukti* and *mokṣa*.

The third question has been answered, at least partially, in the discussion on Tantra in the previous chapter. Suffice to mention here that Sarkar has re-invented Tantra by:

1. removing from it sexual and ritualistic elements characteristic of traditional Tantric praxis;
2. recasting the antinomian spirit of Tantra in terms of challenge to the exploitative and oppressive structures of religion, politics, and society.
(3) redesigning Tantric meditative practices to focus exclusively on the realisation of supreme consciousness through physical, emotional, intellectual, intuitive and mystical culture;

(4) introducing a quasi-scientific explanation of Tantric concepts of mind, cakra, nāḍī, and prāṇa in his theory of biopsychology;

(5) formulating an idealistic and monistic cosmological theory (brahmacakra) built upon a Sāṃkhya-Śaiva worldview, one that integrates the mundane and the transcendent without negating one for the other; a worldview that encourages a socially-conscious, socially-responsible approach to spirituality.

Other questions of academic importance remain unexplored. This study does not examine in any great detail how each of the Indian systems discussed compares with AM. Only brief comparative overviews have been attempted here. Many lines of investigation in comparative soteriology, phenomenology, ontology, epistemology and ethics remain to be pursued with greater historical rigour and depth. A closer and deeper phenomenological comparison of AM and Buddhist accounts of meditative experience, with reference to theories of comparative mysticism, is one such promising area of investigation. A more careful sociological or historical study of Sarkar as a religious leader and of AM as a New Religious Movement (NRM) is another. It is my hope that this study marks the beginning of a continuing process of research into Sarkar’s intellectual and pragmatic legacy, a process that may positively contribute to humanity’s perennial quest for meaning, self-definition, and social and global reconstruction in an age of pluralistic uncertainty, fragmentation, and ethical bewilderment.

Appendix 1
List of Standard versus Ánanda Mārga Transcriptions of Classical Sanskrit

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Appendix 2

Meaning of Acoustic Roots in Ānanda Mārga\textsuperscript{1205}

\(a\) - the acoustic root of creation, or of the idea to create the universe that arises in the mind of \textit{parama puruṣa}. It is also the controller of the seven notes of Indo-Aryan music (the \textit{surasaptaka} or ‘seven notes’) but mainly the first note, \textit{śaḍaja} (syā or khya).

\(ā\) - the acoustic root and direct controller of the second musical note, \textit{ṛṣabha} (re or \(r\)), as well as indirect controller of the third to seventh notes.

\(i\) - the acoustic root and direct controller of the third note, \textit{gāndhāra} (gā), and indirect controller of the fourth to seventh notes.

\(ī\) - the acoustic root and direct controller of the fourth note, \textit{madhyama} (mā), and indirect controller of the fifth to seventh notes.

\(u\) - the acoustic root and direct controller of the fifth note, \textit{pañcama} (pā), and indirect controller of the sixth and seventh notes. It is also the acoustic root of preservation, or of the desire to maintain the created universe that arises in the mind of \textit{parama puruṣa}.

\(ū\) - the acoustic root and direct controller of the sixth note, \textit{dhaivata} (dhā), and indirect controller of the seventh note.

\(r\) - the acoustic root of the seventh note, \textit{niṣāda} (ni).

\(Ī\) - the super-acoustic root of \textit{om}, which is itself a combination of all sounds and the acoustic root of the created universe.

\(Ī\) - the super-acoustic root of \textit{hūm}, which is itself the acoustic root of the struggle of the \textit{kundalinī} to wake and rise up to the topmost \textit{cakra}. Sarkar says that spiritual practitioners sometimes utter the sound ‘\textit{hūm}’ spontaneously when they achieve progress and bliss as a result of elevation of their \textit{kundalinī}.

\(Ī\) - the super-acoustic root of \textit{phaṭ}, which is itself the acoustic root of the action of putting theory into practice; \(Ī\) is also the acoustic root of the sudden arousal of energy with consequent removal of lethargy.
e -  the super-acoustic root of *vausat*, which is itself the acoustic root of mundane knowledge and the thought of mundane welfare.

ai -  the super-acoustic root of *vaṣat*, which is itself the acoustic root of the thought and materialization of subtle or supramundane welfare; *ai* pronounced as *aim* is also the acoustic root of the six stages of vocalization or linguistic expression, as well as the acoustic root of the *guru* (also termed *vāgbhava bija*) through which the *guru* is invoked.

o -  the super-acoustic root of *svāhā*, which is itself the acoustic root of the completion of an action, often associated with a noble or divine purpose, for example, desire for universal welfare.

au -  the super-acoustic root of *namah*, which is itself the acoustic root of ‘surrender to the greatness of another person or entity’, and in the process acquiring greatness for oneself.

am -  the acoustic root of a bitter and repulsive mentality that utters hurtful words.

ah -  the acoustic root of a sweet and pleasant mentality that utters endearing words.

ka -  the acoustic root of *āśā vr̥tti*, the propensity of hope. It is also the acoustic root of *kārya brahma*, or the ‘expressed consciousness’, synonymous with *saguna brahma*.

kha -  the acoustic root of *cintā vr̥tti*, the propensity of worry.

ga -  the acoustic root of *ceṣṭā vr̥tti*, the propensity of arousing one’s dormant potential through effort.

gha -  the acoustic root of *mamatā vr̥tti*, the propensity of love of and attachment to human and non-human beings, but in a limited and conditional way.

ña -  the acoustic root of *dambha vr̥tti*, the propensity of vanity.

cā -  the acoustic root of *viveka*, the propensity for discriminative conscience.

cha -  the acoustic root of *vikalataḥ vr̥tti*, the propensity for nervous breakdown.

ja -  the acoustic root of *ahaṃkāra vr̥tti*, the propensity of egoism.

jha -  the acoustic root of *lobha* and *lolaṭā vr̥tti*, the propensities of greed and avarice respectively.

ṅa -  the acoustic root of *kapaṭatā vr̥tti*, the propensity of hypocrisy.

ṭa -  the acoustic root of *vitarka vr̥tti*, the propensity of bad temper combined with garrulousness.

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Footnote: Summarised from *DOT* Vol. 1, pp. 82-124.
tha - the acoustic root of *anutāpa vṛtti*, the propensity of repentance, as well as of night time, of the moon, of *būvarloka* (‘crude mental world’), and of the *kāmamaya kośa* (the mind’s ‘layer of desire’).

da - the acoustic root of *lajjā vṛtti*, the propensity of shyness.

dha - the acoustic root of *piśunatā vṛtti*, the propensity for senseless sadistic killing.

na - the acoustic root of *īrśā vṛtti*, the propensity of envy.

ta - the acoustic root of *suśupti vṛtti*, the propensity of staticity, intellectual dullness, and spiritual inertness.

tha - the acoustic root of *viśāda vṛtti*, the propensity of melancholia.

da - the acoustic root of *kaśāya vṛtti*, the propensity of peevishness.

dha - the acoustic root of *ṭṛṣṇā vṛtti*, the propensity of thirst for acquisition.

na - the acoustic root of *moha vṛtti*, the propensity of blind attachment or infatuation.

pa - the acoustic root of *ghṛnā vṛtti*, the propensity of hatred or revulsion.

pha - the acoustic root of *bhaya vṛtti*, the propensity of fear.

ba - the acoustic root of *avajñā vṛtti*, the propensity of indifference.

bha - the acoustic root of *mūrcchā vṛtti*, the propensity of lack of common sense.

ma - the acoustic root of *pranāśa vṛtti*, the propensity for destruction, as well as of *praśraya vṛtti*, the propensity of treating others with indulgence.

ya - the acoustic root of *avīśvāsa vṛtti*, the propensity of lack of self-confidence.

ra - the acoustic root of *prāṇaśakti* or vitality. Paradoxically, it is also the acoustic root of *sarvanāśa vṛtti*, the propensity of self-defeatism or thought of nihilism.

la - the acoustic root of *kruratā vṛtti*, or propensity of cruelty.

va - the acoustic root of *dharma vṛtti* or ‘psycho-spiritual longing’ for morality and spirituality. It is also the acoustic root of *jalatattva* or the ‘liquid factor’.

sā - the acoustic root of *rajoguṇa* (‘mutative principle’), as well as of *artha vṛtti* or ‘psychic longing’ (usually for wealth or fame).

ṣa - the acoustic root of *tamoguṇa* (‘static principle’), as well as of *kāma vṛtti* or ‘physical longing’ (usually for sensual pleasure).
sa - the acoustic root of sattvaguna (‘sentient principle’), as well as of mokṣa vyrtti or ‘spiritual longing’ (for salvation or unqualified liberation).

ha - the acoustic root of parāvidyā vyrtti or propensity for spiritual knowledge, as well as of the ethereal factor, of daytime, of the sun, and of svarloka (‘subtle mental world’).

kṣa - the acoustic root of aparāvidyā vyrtti or propensity for mundane knowledge, as well as of material science.
Appendix 3

Photograph of Śrī Prabhāt Rañjan Sarkar
Appendix 4

Diagram of Ānanda Mārga Praṇa

"The pratika represents in a visual way the essence of Ānanda Mārga ideology. The six-pointed star is composed of two equilateral triangles. The triangle pointing upward represents action, or the outward flow of energy through selfless service to humanity. The triangle pointing downward represents knowledge, the inward search for spiritual realisation through meditation. The sun in the centre represents advancement, all-round progress. The goal of the aspirant’s march through life is symbolised by the svāstika, which means spiritual victory." ¹²⁰⁶
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