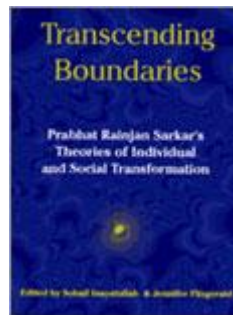



TRANSCENDING BOUNDARIES

Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar's Theories of Individual and
Social Transformation



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Transcending the Knowledge Base of Humanity An Introduction to Sarkar's Contributions to Humanity

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This compilation of essays explores the theoretical contributions of Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar. While written from a diversity of perspectives, these essays provide a unity of discourse, a coherent and cohesive argument as to Sarkar's role in the creation of new knowledge of the natural, social and transcendental worlds, including how he problematizes these divisions themselves. Through these selected essays, our quest has been to determine:

- Sarkar's specific contributions to the field in question.
- Whether conventional categories, that is, the paradigm that frames the field, make sense to Sarkar? Or has he transformed the field itself?
- Sarkar's specific contributions to the doxa – accepted parameters – of the field.

Of course, we have not lost sight of the centre piece in Sarkar's work: the balance between the spiritual and the social, and even more fundamental, that of the spiritual.

The essence of our argument is that Sarkar, even as he contributes to recognized knowledge fields, does so in ways that change contemporary knowledge maps.

Sarkar's work has the potential to transform a range of diverse fields including: sociology, historiography, biology, linguistics, chemistry, archaeology, economics, cognitive science, the humanities, physiological psychology, ethics, human settlement planning, religious studies, music, constitutional law, pharmacology, education, ecology, and yogic science. Sarkar gives humanity a profusion of paradigms to its knowledge base.

But more than specific additions to current doxas, Sarkar gives us a new map in which to frame self, society, other, nature and the transcendental. One way to think about this is to imagine Sarkar's scheme as if it was a library. Instead of floors on government documents, the humanities, social sciences and science (as in conventional libraries), he redesigns the real around the following orderings of knowledge, floors if you will: Tantra (Intuition Science); Brahmachakra (cosmology, the evolutionary link between matter and mind); Biopsychology (the individual body and mind); Prout (specifically, the social cycle, economic growth and just/rational distribution, and the sadvipra, or spiritual leadership); Coordinated Cooperation (gender in history and the future); Neo-Humanism; and, Microvita (the new sciences and health). Certainly a library as constituted by Sarkar's categories would be dramatically different from current libraries. Thus it is not only that Sarkar adds specific data, information, and knowledge to current fields of discourse, but his wisdom gives us a new rendering of what constitutes reality. Appreciating Sarkar then is not merely a

technical concern of asking what are Sarkar's specific additions to contemporary discourse but asking what are the categories Sarkar himself uses to see the world. Issues of validity thus must be seen in a dialogical framework, using current categories to understand Sarkar's truth claims but understanding as well how Sarkar transcends the current knowledge of humanity and gives rise to a new ordering of knowledge.

We are thus not merely interested in a listing of Sarkar's various accomplishments or contributions, in presenting a hagiography, a presentation of untextualized facts to demonstrate his brilliance. We do not seek to be efficient, that is, once again introduce Sarkar's work, rather our effort has been to problematize knowledge paradigms, to show how Sarkar solves classic dilemmas in the knowledge area in question. For example, in philosophy, between the universal and the particular; in evolutionary theory, between materialistic and idealistic theories; in social theory, between linear and cyclical theories; in ethics, between absolutist and relativistic positions; in health science, between empiricist and consciousness therapies, to mention a few dilemmas.

Our concern then is to uncover Sarkar's theories of individual and social transformation in a comparative and theoretical context. In social theory, for example, economist Ravi Batra compares Sarkar's theory of the social cycle to Karl Marx's theory of historical and dialectical materialism and Arnold Toynbee's theory of civilizational challenge and response. In macrohistory, peace researcher Johan Galtung compares Sarkar to a range of other grand thinkers such as Ibn Khaldun, Oswald Spengler, Adam Smith, Max Weber and Herbert Spencer, asking how each theory can enhance the other. But writers in this volume do not engage in simple comparison either. For example, agronomist and editor, Roar Bjonnes, examines Sarkar's new vision, guiding mythology of the future, from the context of not only futures studies but myth creation in general. He brings in the works of Joseph Campbell and Carl Jung to elucidate Sarkar's own theoretical frame. Medical practitioner, Jitendra Singh, articulates Sarkar's theories of health and illness in the context of other prevailing psychological theories, conventional and unconventional. Psychological theories such as Freud's as well as radical ideational-biological theories by Rupert Sheldrake are also examined. Marcus Bussey examines Sarkar's theory of art through a review of Western art history. Sarkar thus is revealed through the perspectives of other theories and thinkers.

Essays thus exhibit a tension between the representations of a particular field, modern and new physics for example, as in Richard Gauthier's chapter, and Sarkar's own languaging of that field, in this case through the theory of *Brahmacakra* and *microvita*. There is thus a dialogue between the field's own representations and Sarkar's own theoretical categories. As this is an introductory reader, authors explain the basics of their own field of specialization as well as Sarkar's language.

We hope that this dialogue between Sarkar's categories and conventional discourses satisfactorily deals with the problem of intelligibility. Using only Sarkar's framework would make the project often difficult to comprehend since Sarkar seeks to change current discourses; he desires not to be captured by the understandings of the present. Using only conventional categories would be a violation of authenticity and would not allow readers to penetrate the mind of Sarkar.

Thus we have sought essays that straddle current issues in theories of social change, world government, art history, women's liberation, global ethics, postmodernism as well as Sarkar's own discursive categories such as Tantra, Microvita, and Bio-psychology.

Prior to presenting an overall conceptual framework inferred from the essays as well as summaries of the essays themselves, we offer to the reader new to Sarkar and his social movements the following historical summary to his life and his general mission.

Introducing Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar

Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar was born in May of 1921 in Bihar, India of an old and respected family that had its roots in regional leadership and in ancient spiritual traditions. Sarkar's early life was dominated by fantastic events, spiritual miracles and brushes with death. He was nearly killed in his early years by a religious sect who believed that Sarkar was destined to destroy their religion (as astrologers had predicted about Sarkar). Surviving this event and many other similar ones, by the 1950s – while pursuing a career in the railways – he had become a spiritualist with many followers. In 1955, at the request of his disciples, he founded the socio-spiritual organization Ananda Marga. Soon after, he articulated a new political-economic theory and social movement called the Progressive Utilization Theory or Prout.

Ananda Marga and Prout grew quickly in the 1960s and managed to attract opposition from numerous Indian nationalistic groups, they believing Sarkar to be an iconoclast because of his opposition to caste (jhat) and his criticism of orthodox schools of Indian philosophy. He was also attacked by communist leaders fearing that his unique blend of the spiritual and the social would take away potential cadres. By the late 1960s his followers were in key positions in the Indian civil service and were actively challenging the inefficiency and corruption of the Indian state. The government argued, however, that Ananda Marga was a politically subversive revolutionary organization and banned civil servants from joining it.¹ In a climate of severe repression, Sarkar was accused of conspiring and abetting in the deaths of six former members of Ananda Marga and subsequently jailed. In 1975, with the onset of the Indian emergency, his organization was banned and his trial conducted in an atmosphere where defence witnesses were jailed if they spoke for Sarkar. Notwithstanding reports by the International Commission of Jurists and other associations of the partial judicial conditions making it impossible for Sarkar to receive a fair trial, Sarkar was convicted.² When the Gandhi government was removed, his case was appealed and reversed, his innocence declared. During those difficult years, Sarkar fasted in protest of the trial and the numerous tortures committed by the police and intelligence agencies on his organizational workers and on him. Before Sarkar's eyes his movement was decimated and unjustly labelled as a terrorist organization. However, by the 1980s his movement grew again expanding to nearly 120 nations.

Until his death on October 21, 1990, Sarkar remained active in Calcutta composing over 000 songs called Prabhat Samgiit (songs of the new dawn), giving talks on spiritual life, lecturing in over 120 languages on spiritual and social theory, providing leadership and managing his organizations, and teaching meditation to his numerous disciples, especially his senior monks and nuns, avadhutas and avadhutikas. His most recent project was the creation of self-reliant ecological communities. As agriculturalist Steve Diver discusses in his chapter, 'Farming the Future', these communities have been designed with Prout principles in mind: ecologically sensitive, spiritually vibrant, socially progressive, service-oriented and embedded in the local culture of the area.

Sarkar's larger civilizational project

While the above gives a brief glimpse of Sarkar's life, the purpose of *Transcending Boundaries* is not a history of Sarkar's life or the social movements he founded but an assessment of his thought and its potential contribution to the knowledge base of humanity.

Sarkar's intent was and is (his organizations continue his work) to create a global spiritual socialist/cooperative revolution, a new renaissance in thought, language, music, art, economics and culture. His goal was, and still is, to infuse individuals with a spiritual presence, the necessary first step in changing the way that we know and order our world. Unlike the socialists of the past who merely sought to capture state power – forgetting that the economy was global and thus in the long run strengthening the world capitalist system; or utopian idealists who merely wished for perfect moral places that could not practically exist; or spiritualists who only sought individual transformation at the expense of the collective, of humanity, Sarkar has a far more comprehensive view of transformation. His model of change is spiritual yet concerned with issues of economic growth; global yet committed to local and regional diversity; and, socialistic yet based on cooperative economic democracy.

Theories of Transformation

Sarkar's strategies of transformation include individual transformation through the Tantric process of meditation; the enhancement of individual health through yoga practices that balance one's hormonal system; moral transformation through social service and care for the most vulnerable; economic transformation through the theory of Prout and samaj or people's movements, as well as through self-reliant master units or ecological centres; political transformation through the articulation of the concept of the sadvipra, the spiritual-moral leader, and the creation of such leaders through struggle with the materialistic capitalistic system and immoral national/local leaders; cultural transformation through the creation of new holidays and celebrations that contest traditional nationalistic sacred time-space places (such as childrens' day) and through the recovery of the world's spiritual cultures as well as through the establishment of Third World social movements that contest the organizational hegemony of Western organizations; language transformation through the elucidation of a new encyclopedia of the Bengali language and through working for linguistic rights for the world's minorities; religious transformation through upholding the spiritual reality that unites us all while contesting patriarchal and dogmatic dimensions of the world's religions; scientific transformation by rethinking science as noetic science as well as laying bare the materialistic and instrumentalist prejudices of conventional science; and temporal transformation by envisioning long range futures and designing strategies for centuries and future generations to come.

Obviously such a broad range of transformative strategies must be both deep and shallow. As writer Roar Bjonnes argues, such a transformation must offer a new story of who we are and who we can be that is more satisfying than conventional institutionalized religions or the ideologies of capitalism and communism offer. But a new mythology must also tell us about the details of living day to day. Sarkar does this through his practice of 'sixteen points' that address issues of cleanliness, inner balance, spiritual direction and service to others.

But while Sarkar's movements challenge the modern project of humanism and scientific rationality, his re-enchantment of the world does not place us anchorless in a world of unbridled diversity. As Maori activist Ramana Williams argues, Sarkar remains ever situated in the rational; however, he redefines the rational as that which reduces human suffering not the rational qua instrumentality. Even as Sarkar expands our communicative community by including microvita, the divine, animals, plants as well as those outside the imperiums of power – that is he unleashes diversity – he does not create a totally horizontal world where there are no levels or dimensions. There is a hierarchy of consciousness in Sarkar's thought, the layers of mind or *kosas*. Thus, as ethicist Jennifer Fitzgerald argues, Sarkar is not a postmodernist. Sarkar has an ethical base, the yogic principles of *yama* and *niyama*. These principles of morality provide the base for Sarkar's worldview. They include such principles as non-stealing, non-violence, seeing the divine in everything, truth for benevolence, simple/modest living, inner contentment, service to others, study of spiritual texts for the deeper meaning of the real, and moving towards the supreme. These principles help purify one's action so that spiritual practice is possible.

In addition to the ethical as his base, Sarkar gives us the following concepts that are essential to his alternative paradigm: Tantra, Neo-Humanism, Prout, Coordinated Cooperation, and Microvita. Of course, there are other important concepts which we focus on in *Transcending Boundaries*. In addition, while all these categories are developed in this book, the political-economy dimension of Prout is touched on only in passing, mostly in Krtashivananda Avadhuta's essay on the political theory of Prout and Steve Diver's essay on farming. Both Batra's and Sohail Inayatullah's various efforts have focused on this. We will now touch upon some of his paradigmatic concepts.

Tantra

Tantra is the ontological position that Sarkar takes. It is the spiritual foundation underneath his social and political theory. Based on India's indigenous culture, Tantra means to liberate oneself from crudeness. Unlike other spiritual approaches, Tantra involves individual and social struggle – it is not a passive spirituality. In addition, Tantra stresses the practical experience of inner transformation as opposed to the religious textualism associated with the Vedas, India's other spiritual tradition.

Tantra in this book, as expressed in Ramana Williams' chapter 'Tantra and Technology', becomes the vehicle through which Sarkar can argue for a noetic or spiritual technology. Williams argues that Sarkar's theory of the *kosas* allows Sarkar to move out of simplistic either/or philosophical positions and take a more gracious and elegant layers of truth and reality approach. Gauthier uses the Tantric theory of the cosmic cycle of creation, Brahmachakra, as way to frame the role of microvita in linking the physical and spiritual. Dr. Jitendra Singh also draws upon Tantra to develop his holistic approach to the health sciences.

Neo-Humanism

The social expression of the mystical cosmology of Tantra is Neo-Humanism. Sarkar's theory of Neo-Humanism aims to relocate the self from ego (and the pursuit of individual maximization), from family (and the pride of genealogy), from geo-sentiments (attachments to land and nation), from socio-sentiments (attachments to class, race and community),

from humanism (the human being as the centre of the universe) to Neo-Humanism (love and devotion for all, inanimate and animate, beings of the universe). Nicholson calls these windows of compassion 'which determine the set of beings identified as sufficiently similar to self to deserve equal consideration.' The challenge is to expand our window to include all that is.

Paramount here is the construction of self in an ecology of reverence for life not a modern/secular politics of cynicism. Spiritual devotion to the universe is ultimately the greatest treasure that humans have; it is this treasure that must be excavated and shared by all living beings.

From Neo-Humanism, a new universalism can emerge which can challenge the national, religious, class sentiments of history. Essays by attorney Craig Runde and Krtashivananda Avadhuta focus on Sarkar's universalism. Runde overviews varied thrusts for world government from the structural to the idealist. Sarkar, he finds unique, in that in addition to his universalism, he articulated a Neo-Magna Carta of human religious and economic rights (as well as rights for plants and animals). Krtashivananda is more concerned with Sarkar's questioning of the liberal tradition of individual rights, the nation-state and democracy. Even as Sarkar calls for epistemological, cultural and linguistic diversity, he also argues for a universal constitution with power vested in a world government. Without a breakdown in the interstate system of national sovereignty we 'will live under a kind of slavery, in spite of any declared individual freedom.' The world body, argues Krtashivananda, must be empowered to interfere with the internal affairs of a nation. But the prior steps to a world community is the awakening of a social and spiritual consciousness. The first step, then, is liberating the intellect from its own boundaries and placing it in an alternative discourse, in Neo-Humanism.

Prout

The central framework for his Neo-Humanist perspective is his Progressive Utilization Theory. Prout encompasses Sarkar's theory of history and social change, his theory of leadership and the vanguard of the new world he envisions, as well as his alternative political economy. Sarkar's theoretical framework is not only spiritual or only concerned with the material world, rather his perspective argues that the real is physical, mental and spiritual. Concomitantly, the motives for historical change are struggle with the environment (the move from the shudra/worker era to the ksatriya/warrior era), struggle with ideas (the move from the warrior to the vipra/intellectual), struggle with the environment and ideas (the move from the intellectual era to the vaeshya/capitalist eras) and the spiritual attraction of the Great, the call of the infinite. Thus physical, mental and spiritual challenges create change. The structure of historical change is the four stages of history: the shudra era, the ksatriya era, the vipra era, and the vaeshyan era. At the end of the acquisitive era of the vaeshyans, there is a transition to the new shudra era, either by revolution or evolution. Sarkar thus gives a cyclical view of history. However, through the ideal form of leadership, sadvipra leadership – one that is inclusive of the economic (exchange), the cultural (ideas), the warrior, and is populist – the exploitive, degenerating, dimensions of the cycle can be eliminated, thus creating a spiral. Thus Sarkar intends a good society that retains its contradictions not a perfect society wherein diversity is eliminated. Sarkar, as Inayatullah argues, gives us an elegant theory of history and future in which neither the linearity of progress nor the fatalism of history dominate.

Coordinated cooperation

Central to creating such a good society is then the creation of individuals with balanced and complete mind. For Sarkar, crucial to comprehensiveness, of regaining dynamicity, is women regaining their voice. 'How can a bird fly with one wing?' he asks. The process of regaining one's authenticity, however, is not merely social but also hormonal and spiritual. As poet Ananda Gaorii Avadhutika argues, 'Both females and males need to be liberated from the [limits of their gender] in order for there to be true equality between the sexes in society in terms of mutual respect of gender differences, and [an] egalitarian outlook in terms of social roles.' Women's liberation is thus not only about political and economic power but also about transcending the imposed biological gender limitations. The challenge of the future, however, is to work together to create a socially just spiritual society, what Sarkar calls Coordinated Cooperation.

As important as the social, is the personal. For Sarkar, social transformation comes first from adopting a different metaphor of who we are – he suggests the family on a caravan, where members take care of each other and there is clear movement towards a direction. As important is for individuals to change themselves. Sarkar offers meditation and yoga as suggested paths. Bio-psychology, the science of emotions, the glands and the cakras, is Sarkar's theorizing of individuals' physical, emotional and spiritual health. Along with Ananda Gaorii Avadhutika, Jitendra Singh contextualizes and develops this approach in his essay. Singh overviews mechanistic and organismic theories of biology as well as recent genetic theories. All, he argues, contain some truth, but it is Sarkar's theory of Bio-psychology that best articulates a holistic view of science and health that deals with the spiritual, the glandular, and the mental.

While Sarkar gives us social and spiritual theory, the goal of his work is a new universalism, a cosmic universalism. History for Sarkar is partly the attraction of the Great, the move to higher and higher levels of organization. But the move to the universal, to world government as Runde and Krtashivananda develop, does not mean a loss of the local. Indeed, Sarkar intends to localize and democratize economies, allowing as much decentralization as possible. But local cultures and economies often suffer from a fear of the other, especially when they become coopted in national politics. Neighbourhood love becomes violence to the 'other'. Thus for Sarkar, universalism means local bioregional economic zones based on the ideas that we are world citizens. The fear of the other, while unity (indeed, the nation) in the short run is disastrous in the long run for the community in question – as individuals lose their inner balance and as the community loses its spiritual direction – and for the planet as a whole.

Microvita

Microvita is the organizing concept that provides a link between the spiritual and the physical. Gauthier as well as Singh and Diver explore the intricacies of this life form in their essays. Microvita are the software of consciousness just as atoms are the hardware, Diver argues. They are both ideas and the material, what many have called spiritual vibration in colloquial language. Positive microvita enhance one's own health and can create the conditions for a better society. They are related to one's thoughts but are also external, that is, microvita move around the universe shaping ideas and the material world. Microvita are not dead but alive, and can be used for spiritual betterment. Microvita

provide a link between ideational and materialistic worldviews. They help explain the placebo effect in medicine (through attracting positive microvita) as well as psychic healing (the transfer of microvita from one person to another). However, Gauthier is quick to point out that microvita still remain a theory, and even as they advance the goal of scientific understanding, they yet must be empirically verified.

Of course, there are other important concepts in Sarkar's thought as well. Marcus Bussey examines the role of the artist in Sarkar's theory of social transformation, and argues for art outside of capitalism – art for service and blessedness. Ananda Nivedita and Ketana Bardwell are more concerned with Sarkar's theories of pedagogy, asking and working in schools that can best enhance a child's physical, emotional, mental, leadership, moral and spiritual development. For Sarkar, they argue, morality, spirituality, humanity and a blending of extroversial science and introversial philosophy is the very foundation of his system of education.

Even though Sarkar has contributed to nearly every human field of knowledge, it was the spiritual that was central to him; it is the recovery and rearticulation of the spiritual that is Sarkar's greatest contribution to humanity. It is this devotion, the love of self, other, nature, the entire universe and the divine that is the centre of his mission, his project. Ultimately then even as Sarkar gives us new theories of individuals and social transformation so that we can augment the knowledge base of humanity, he seeks to transcend these categories, these boundaries.

Structure of the Book

We now summarize the essays by our contributors. As might be expected, developing discrete categories is nearly impossible. The general outlay is that Inayatullah, Galtung, Batra and Ananda Gaorii present Sarkar's macrohistory, his social cycle. Fitzgerald takes the discussion to ethics. Runde and Krtashivananda bring in a constitutional and political perspective to ethics and justice. Williams combines macro-theory with the role of power and technology thereby developing Sarkar's theory of science and technology. Bjornes' essay addresses issues of science, ecology and consciousness. Bussey examines artistic consciousness and Nivedita and Bardwell look at children's consciousness, at Sarkar's theories of education.

Williams moves the discussion to issues of spiritual consciousness, epistemology, layers of mind, and communication theory and develops a model for silence as communicative action. Gauthier also examines spiritual consciousness but from the perspective of science and cosmology. He introduces microvita. Singh continues this discussion but brings in Bio-psychology. He relates this both to the individual and to cosmology. Nicholson also takes an expanded view of individual health but his concern is more the ethics of vegetarianism. Diver concludes this discussion and this book by taking issues of health, ethics, microvita to the arena of farming. So, while we began with deep theory, with paradigms and macrohistory, we conclude with the most important, food.

Macrohistory

In **Earth in Heaven**, political scientist, Inayatullah, eschews framing Sarkar in the conventional pattern of the mythological figure and great thinker and instead takes a macro-sociological approach focusing on the structure of theory and shape of time. Inayatullah

asks: Is it possible to have a model that combines linear evolution with cyclical history and yet also includes the role of the transcendental? In addition, can such a model find ways to privilege individual agency without succumbing to individualism, that is, a model wherein historical structure (the limits of transformation) and self (humans can create their futures) are embraced? Inayatullah argues that while most social theorists have failed at such an exacting task, Sarkar appears to have succeeded.

Sarkar also has a multiple theory of time: linear time, cyclical time, and spiritual timeless time. Central to this possibility is the notion of *kairos*. That is the right time, the time, the moment in which there is a bifurcation of past and present and the world is made anew – in which individual and history join together to create an alternative future.

In **Toward Eclecticism**, Professor of Peace Studies Johan Galtung is less concerned with Sarkar's particular contributions and more with mapping Sarkar with other grand thinkers. He argues that macro-historians have shaped our entire way of conceiving of ourselves, in History. They have mapped us on trajectories with the most intriguing curve shapes even if the linear and the cyclical tend to dominate. Giants as they are, there is always the temptation to yield to any one of them, like people in the Occident (and not only there) have done to Smith and to Marx. There is the temptation to adopt the biblical approach and see their main work as The Book, as the book.

In his essay, Galtung does not take that approach, rather, he sees that there is much to be learned from all the macro-historians. And even more to be learned by seeing their works, not as the end of the story, but as the beginning of a dialogue between these great thinkers. Here Galtung extends their works by taking us on a journey of juxtaposition – positing what ten great macro-historians might have taught, and learnt from, each other. For, according to Galtung, 'greatness can be shared; there is much room at the top of Mt. Olympus.'

While economist Ravi Batra in **Marx, Sarkar and Toynbee** also believes that greatness can be shared, his concern is more with elaborating Sarkar's particular excellence.

Through a comparative analysis, Ravi Batra places the works of Sarkar alongside those of Toynbee and Marx. He analyzes the theories of social cycle of these three thinkers, characterizing Marx's work as deductive reasoning and Toynbee's as scientific empiricism.

Batra sees that while Marx and Sarkar share common ground in their historical method of social analysis, in their belief in the inevitability of historical patterns, and in their view that capitalism will be brought to an end by some kind of revolution, at the heart of their thinking lie very different premises. For Marx, material forces are the focal point of social movement – they determine human consciousness and institutions at all times. For Sarkar, however, it is the human spirit and mental characteristics which are central to his understanding of the social cycle.

Sarkar and Toynbee, on the other hand, share the view that historical processes are rooted in the human spirit, although Sarkar and Toynbee take very different views of civilizational change. Batra concludes that Sarkar builds where Toynbee and Marx have left off.

Gender, Ethics and Politics

Ananda Gaorii Avadhutika also explores Sarkar's macrohistory but focuses on how the various classes, particularly the vipras have exploited women. In **The Path to Coordinated Cooperation**, Ananda Gaorii writes that Sarkar's views on women and

society are influenced by his assumptions about the trifarious nature of human existence – physical, mental and spiritual. Accordingly, his analysis of women's position within society crosses between the spiritual and the social discourse. Her essay outlines Sarkar's thinking within both of those discourses.

While recognizing and honouring difference between men and women – different psychological approaches, different worldviews – he also finds an essential equality between the sexes. Within the spiritual discourse, he sees the opportunity, through spiritual pursuit, to move beyond the boundaries of social differentiation – gender, race, wealth – to an emancipatory state of self-realization; a state beyond the limitations of biological determinism.

Yet, Sarkar does not deny the social realities of women's oppression. In Sarkar's social discourse, women's subordination stems from the dominance of oppressive collective psychology. Sarkar's historical analysis shows how the dialectical evolution of society is based principally upon the progressive alternation of dominant collective psychologies.

Her essay concludes that radical social transformation is required for the social emancipation of women: strident and organized opposition to exploitation and oppression, as well as a shift in collective psychology, a shift in the psychological maladies at the essence of women's oppression – imperialism and male chauvinism. Sarkar's solution lies in the nurturing of a new kind of relationship between men and women – a relationship of coordinated cooperation.

Not only are new relationships between men and women needed but new philosophical positions in ethics are also critical to creating a new future. Current ethical discourse has tended to offer us two alternatives – ethical absolutism, based in the older, more fundamental ethical codes, and ethical relativism, a by-product of late modernism/post-modernism. Yet, each of these has serious shortcomings. Jennifer Fitzgerald's **Rekindling the Wisdom Tradition** explores the middle ground proposed by Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar. Sarkar proposes an ethical framework which is firmly grounded within the wisdom traditions. A deep and holistic understanding of the human condition – human needs and aspirations; as well as an appreciation of the interconnectedness of all life, underlies Sarkar's ethics. Central to this is Neo-Humanism, a view that all is alive but that there are different layers, dimension of life. Sarkar's ethics provide a ground from which a post-postmodern world can be created, one which undoes modernity without being reduced to the angst of postmodernity.

Craig Runde believes that part of creating a good society, going beyond the fragmentation of the current world affairs is to move – **Beyond Nationalism**. In his essay of that title, Runde argues that Sarkar's advocacy for world government is a natural extension of his commitment to universalism. His essay explores Sarkar's vision of world government – considering both his practical and philosophical contributions to the world government debate. Philosophically, it is Sarkar's spiritual outlook – recognition of deep interconnectedness between all living beings and the Cosmic Ideal – which underpins his commitment to world government; a commitment he shares with other spiritual seekers such as Shrii Aurobindo.

On the practical level, Sarkar has very well-developed views of what a world government should look like – the ways its Constitution and legislature might function, the rights and protections it should contain. For Sarkar, these practicalities are essential tools for the protection and nourishment of all living beings – animals and plants, as well as human beings.

Krtashivananda, in **Politics Beyond Liberalism**, continues Runde's discussion of world government but frames it within political theory. He argues that the current global problems cannot be solved through liberal, socialist, religious or communist ideologies. Focused on the desire for freedom, Krtashivananda reminds us that freedom ultimately is spiritual. At the same time, without a physical, intellectual and moral base to the spiritual, we only privilege the individual at the expense of the society.

Indeed, society is the focus for Sarkar, argues Krtashivananda. Sarkar was less concerned with political structure since it was society that creates the State. What is needed is the creation of a united society without any boundaries of race, religion or nation. This needs to be done ultimately at the world level, creating a global moral, civil and spiritual society. To do so, there need to be dramatic improvements in security (physical and psychological); economic development and distribution; the rights of women; democracy; justice; and, world governance. However, Krtashivananda concludes by pointing out that 'we are not prepared to pay the price for peace,' to renounce empires, to abandon economic nationalism – we are unwilling to sacrifice to create a world community.

Science, Technology and Consciousness

Ramana Williams, in **Tantra and Technology**, is less interested in the power of the State and more in exploring the intersection between cosmology, power and technology. Williams explores how Sarkar's Tantra works to reconceptualize the discourses of technology and its role in human society. This placing of the technology discourse within an alternative cultural-philosophical framework is necessary, Williams argues, in order to approach from a different angle of vision the dominant (Western) discourse, which, he asserts, manifests within itself, numerous tensions, as well as fails to speak meaningfully to the non-West. Reviewing the dominant Western political approaches to technology – Liberal, Marxist, and Cultural-Poststructural – and the tensions that emerge amongst these traditions, Williams goes on to consider a range of issues that arise out of Third World and Indigenous approaches to technology. This provides the backdrop to consider the framework that Sarkar invokes.

What distinguishes Sarkar's model most clearly is his contextualizing of technology within a vast cosmology, wherein technology becomes not only physical, but psychic and ultimately spiritual. Recounting Sarkar's 'five layers of the mind' thesis, Williams suggests that Sarkar identifies technologies that correspond with each of these levels of consciousness. The defining of the technology discourse within the West in almost exclusively materialist and rationalist terms, indicates, somewhat, the predominance of rationalist epistemologies – or, in Sarkar's terms, the lower layers of the mind. To this extent, Williams suggests that as higher, more subtle layers of mind come to be explored and acknowledged within the West, there will come, also, an exploration of the 'subtle technologies' which Sarkar's model identifies. Williams shows how Sarkar accommodates and expands dominant Western approaches to technology and situates them in an overall and unified framework where many more spaces exist, which thus succeeds in accommodating the material and the metaphysical, the political, the critical and transcendental.

Roar Bjonnes takes this broadening effort of Sarkar but instead of locating it in approaches to technology, focuses on mythology, science, ecology and cosmology. In **Creating a Universal Future**, Bjonnes argues that twentieth century science, especially

physics, has gone through several conceptual paradigm shifts that clearly reveal the limitations of the materialistic worldview. Instead of believing that matter is the basis of all existence, a more organic or holistic worldview has evolved. This new worldview has many great similarities to the views held by the mystics and sages of the East.

And in order to explain this new reality, science has had to resort to a new language, often more akin to mythology and philosophy than mathematics. Consequently, NASA scientist James Lovelock, after discovering that the planet is one whole, self-regulating organism, gave his new scientific model the mythological name Gaia.

Bjonnes reminds us that Sarkar did not have a traditional background in science. However, he moved with ease into the intellectual territory of scholars and developed original socio-economic and scientific theories. Sarkar believed that consciousness, not matter, is the fundamental substance which plants, trees, earth, and humans are made of. Through his theory of creation, he advanced novel explanations for many perennial questions: Where do we come from? Where are we going? How is mind created? He also gave us a new worldview, a universal vision in which science, ecology, mythology, and spirituality are fused together to form a holistic understanding of the universe in which we live. Bjonnes' essay explores these ideas and questions in the context of the thought of Jung, Campbell and many contemporary thinkers' views of the emerging 'story of the universe.'

Self-expression in art and education

Marcus Bussey shifts the focus of the book to the role of the artist in history. However as with all the essays he brings in Sarkar's theory of social cycle and his concern for a spiritual and moral ethics.

In **The Healing Eye**, Bussey argues that Sarkar has developed a new ethic for creative action. He shifts the emphasis from the modernist preoccupation with acts of individual expression to an integrative vision in which the artist/creator is situated in a world made meaningful by the activity of creative insight.

Rather than disempowering the artist or devaluing their work, such a repositioning greatly expands the artist's potential not only to create, but also to work upon their worlds as ones possessed of a deep reverence. In acknowledging this aspect of the creative act, Sarkar returns to ancient beliefs in the mystic, almost divine, power resident in all creativity. This shamanic role, set as it is in a world that has been reinvented and simultaneously shattered through technological and scientific progress, places upon all creative people the duty to use their gifts to heal the torn fabric of consciousness. Creative power is thus forever linked to a responsibility to use it wisely. Artists become doctors of the soul, following an ethic built on the axiom of 'Art for Service and Blessedness'.

In **Expanding the Child's Mind**, educationalists Ananda Nivedita Avadhutika and Ketana Bardwell introduce Sarkar's contributions to early childhood education theory. Essentially they argue that through Neo-Humanist education a child's potential can be best expressed. Education for Sarkar is the integration of the physical, mental and spiritual for benevolence and compassion. While certainly young children are unable to engage in spiritual practices that expand the mind, Ananda Nivedita and Bardwell believe that 'they can learn to begin to keep a quiet time and turn their thoughts inwards. They may do simple visualization and centring games that can lead to spiritual development.

In addition, the authors explore Sarkar's theories in the context of other thinkers such as Freud, Erikson, Piaget and human development theorists such as Maslow, but at the centre are Sarkar's own suggestions for helping the young child awaken. Like others, Sarkar believes that childhood is the most formative period of life. However, Sarkar also alerts us to extra-cerebral memory, or memory of previous lives.

To enhance cognitive development, Sarkar emphasized the need to arouse the thirst for knowledge; that instruction should be broad and not infected by racism, sexism or nationalism (as almost all curricula are); as well as the importance of sensory-motory exploration. As with other dimensions of his cosmology, Sarkar accentuated morality as developed through adults' loving behaviour and good role modelling.

At the centre of pedagogy are issues of who gets to speak, who learns, and what cultural forms of communication are legitimate. In **Silence and the Communicative Community**, Ramana Williams explores the importance of silence to non-Western communicative communities. He does this in the context of Sarkar's theory of Neo-Humanism, which he argues is an elegant attempt to expand the communicative community.

Sarkar does this by redefining communication and placing it within the integrated and unified worldview of Tantra. Williams seeks to place Sarkar within the alternative discourse of the Other, alongside Eastern, Western and Indigenous approaches. Williams suggests that Sarkar's contribution to human communication falls broadly within two domains. Firstly, in contrast to Western communication models, Sarkar, in keeping with Eastern accounts, accords a far greater significance to silence. Here, silence becomes the medium for the transmission of subtle knowledge, knowledge that falls beyond the domain of sense-based communication. Hence, there is a culture that pertains to the myriad forms of sense-based communication, and an equally real culture that exists at the level of non-sense-based communication.

The second contribution Sarkar makes to communication theory, Williams suggests, is his expansion of the communicative community – with whom it is legitimate to communicate. Within the socio-ethical system of Neo-Humanism, Sarkar gives existence rights to all beings, animate, inanimate and non-physical, who now become participants within the expanded communicative community. In this model, the communicative community is not fixed or static, rather, it is proportionate to the expansiveness of human consciousness. Where human consciousness is limited – ethnocentric and materialist – the communicative community will end up being constituted in terms which reflect these orientations. Conversely, as human consciousness expands – ultimately to the state of Neo-humanism – so too, expands the communicative community. Williams finds, again, considerable common ground between Sarkar's conception of the communicative community and that of indigenous cultures.

Science, microvita, health and food

Scientist Richard Gauthier also uses Sarkar's Tantra to explore the inadequacies of current theories of physics. In **The Cosmic Cycle of Creation and Microvita**, Gauthier begins his analysis by using Sarkar's own concepts to build a model of the universe. They provide the overview from which Gauthier investigates empirical science. He favours Sarkar's model as it is a much broader and more comprehensive philosophical and scientific framework concerned with the meaning and purpose of life without 'sacrificing rationality or

empiricism, two approaches which . . . are the foundation stones of modern scientific thought and method.' What is important with Sarkar's theory of the cosmic cycle of life is that it finds place both for ideational and materialistic perspectives, that is, from consciousness, mind emerges which then crudifies into matter. Matter then evolves into mind which then returns to consciousness. Gauthier's purpose is not so much to locate Sarkar within scientific discourse but to locate scientific discourse within Sarkar's thought.

Gauthier's fundamental position is that Western science – he brings in leading Western scientists to articulate this – is unable to 'account for the origin and nature of the mind and its relationship with the material world.' What is needed is a deeper theory of conscious experience which includes material and non-material levels of awareness. He is hopeful that Sarkar's cosmic cycle of creation and his theory of microvita are that.

Jitendra Singh echoes a similar sentiment in his essay, **Bio-psychology**. He argues that we need a 'science with holographic capabilities to illuminate the obscure dimensions of human existence. We need a science that breaks away from the narrow confines of objectivity and yet remains rational and verifiable by a direct experience.' What is needed then is a science that is culturally and spiritually sensitive but does not stray into simplistic accounts of the real, either overly ideational or overly materialistic.

Singh expands the discussion of microvita to include our health, arguing that positive microvita can cure diseases. But the centre piece of Singh's essay is Sarkar's theory of Bio-psychology. As with Gauthier, he is less concerned with fitting Sarkar into current theories of self, body, and consciousness and more with elucidating Sarkar's own theory of the relationship between *cakras*, emotions, glands, *prana* (vital energy) and *samskaras* (potential reactions). At the heart of Sarkar's theory is the necessity of balance. According to Sarkar, 'the basic mechanisms of all diseases is loss of adjustment between mind, body and *vayus* (airs), that is, caused either by mental constitution (*samskaras*), physical constitution (genetic) or environmental factors (microvita, microbes, poisons, chemicals and lifestyles). Sarkar's theory is truly multifactorial combining the health philosophies of Indian and Western science. Singh concludes with specific suggestions as to how to improve one's physical and emotional health.

Dr. Andrew Nicholson has a similar conclusion as Singh, but instead of taking an approach that only uses Sarkar's categories, he brings in literature from a variety of scientific sources.

In **Food For The Body, Mind and Spirit of All Beings**, Nicholson argues that the food we eat has implications not only for our body, but also for our conscience, for social justice, as well as for our spirit. His essay explores Sarkar's commitment to vegetarianism and finds the justification of his position spans the disciplines of medicine, ethics and spiritual philosophy. Nicholson concludes that central to Sarkar's discourse is his emphasis on 'the priority of spiritual life for humans and all beings as a path to realize our universal relatedness as common manifestations of one Consciousness, and food, as a conveyor of vibration, is integral to the spiritual path.' Nicholson also reviews a range of scientific studies that demonstrate that a vegetarian diet is healthier than meat eating diets.

Vegetarian diet, Nicholson argues, is also healthier for animals and our ecology. As Nicholson writes:

Viewed as commodities in a purely utilitarian fashion, farm animals languish under intolerable conditions. The meat and dairy industry, in turn, wreaks havoc on the

environment through excessive land and water use, deforestation, topsoil erosion, and pollution due to fertilizers, pesticides, and nitrogenous waste.

Nicholson concludes his article with a section on food for the future. In this section, he reminds us that our food will change in the coming years. Humans will stop breeding cattle when they can synthetically produce milk and eventually we might only need a synthetic tablet for meals. In the meantime, we need to ‘rationally analyze . . . and intuitively confirm that our diet-based decisions are for the benefit and happiness of all beings, for the spiritual well-being of all.’

Moving from the heights of grand sociological theory to politics to physics, where else can we conclude but with the most fundamental: what we eat and how we grow food.

In **Farming the Future**, Steve Diver chronicles Sarkar's meticulous attention to plants, fruits, and flowers. As with other writers, Diver locates Sarkar's enthusiasm towards the natural world in Neo-Humanism. He sees them as having a right to live, a right to ‘remain on this earth.’ This concern led Sarkar to create the organization PCAP – Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and Plants. PCAP intends to create a sentiment of love for animals and plants, develop afforestation projects and popularize vegetarian foods.

But Sarkar's concern for plants is also a concern for the catastrophe of urbanization, of the need to decentralize industry and populations and create self-reliant, ecologically sensitive communities. Sarkar points out that current agricultural practices are leading to an impending water crisis, but ever the problem-solver, he offers solutions as well to this global phenomena. Diver also explores how microvita can lead to a qualitative change in crops. In particular, he suggests microvita research in herbal medicines, specialized foliar fertilizers, homoeopathic remedies for farm animals and seed treatments.

As with Sarkar's other contributions, he offers a vast array of knowledge to issues of farming, bringing in the social, the spiritual, the physical and articulating knowledge of a particular subject – a plant or fruit, for example – from a range of disciplines and traditions. Diver believes that future generations of farmers will be able to create an entirely new agriculture based on Sarkar's visionary ideas.

For us, it is not just future farmers who will play a role in subjecting Sarkar's ideas to critique, experimentation, and realization, but sociologists, scientists, health professionals, feminists, yogic practitioners and social change agents. But ultimately, it is the transcendent spiritual that Sarkar will be remembered for – his revitalization of people's individual love for each other and for the divine. Sarkar, indeed, even as he adds to the knowledge base of humanity, transcends it.

Notes

1. Anthony Spaeth quoting T. N. Seshan's *The Degeneration of India* writes that the Emergency Rule of Indira Gandhi was the turning point in the breakdown of the Indian civil service. ‘Civil servants carried out illegal orders, helped Mrs. Gandhi jail her opponents and’, Seshan writes, ‘almost

gleefully' helped gag the press. 'The bureaucracy, for the most part, utterly caved in', he concludes. 'Over the years, the practice of corruption has become so endemic that it has acquired a veneer of almost complete legality'. Anthony Spaeth, 'Heat on Corruption', *Time* (23 September 1996), 44. It should thus not be a surprise that Ananda Marga with its strident anti-corruption campaign was among the hardest hit by Gandhi's brutal repression.

2. See Vimala Schneider, *The Politics of Prejudice*. Denver, Ananda Marga Publications, 1983. Also see, Tim Anderson, *Free Alister, Dunn and Anderson*. Sydney, Wild and Wooley, 1985. Anandamitra Avadhutika, *Tales of Torture*. Hong Kong, Ananda Marga Publications, 1981. Also see, Acarya Manvendrananda Avadhuta, *Ananda Marga: A Brief Summary of History, Philosophy and Activities*. Sydney, Ananda Marga Publications, 1992.

