

atheistic or irreligious stand, his own position seems to be much away from the acceptance of any religious claim either. He is rather close to a non-committal and agnostic position. His attitude towards religious belief can never thus be justifiably characterised as affirmative and positive. But that does not suggest also that his stand is vague and unsettled. Recognizing the religious surmises as the output of 'metaphysical illusions', he clearly seems to have recommended to have an analytical re-look to the claims and assertions of religion and theology.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Vide the report about the conversion of Yousuf Youhana (Pakistan Team's Vice-Captain, the lone Christian) to Islam at Makkah on September 17, 2005, published in the *Hindustan Times*, Chandigarh, September 18, 2005.
2. Anscombe G. E. M. and Rhees (eds.) (1953), *Philosophical Investigations* (PI), (tr.), G.E.M. Anscombe and R. Rhees, Oxford: Blackwell, p.226.
3. Kerr, Fergus (1986), *Theology after Wittgenstein*, Oxford: Blackwell, p.28
4. Rhees, Rush (ed.) (1984), *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, Oxford: O.U.P., p.79
5. Malcolm, (1958), *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, Oxford: O.U.P, p.72.
6. Pears, D.F. and B.F. McGuinness (tr.) (1961), *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (TLP), London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p. 3.
7. *PI*, op. cit., p. 116
8. Vide Kerr, Fergus, op. cit, p. 27
9. Lee, Desmond (ed.) (1980), *Wittgenstein's Lectures Cambridge. 1930-32*, Oxford: Blackwell, p.26
10. Vide Wittgenstein's *Lectures Cambridge 1932-1935*, (ed.), Alice Ambrose, Oxford: Blackwell, 1979, p. 109
11. *PI*, p.119.
12. Ayer, A.J. (1946), *Language, Truth and Logic*, London: Victor Gollancz., second edition, 1946.
13. Magee, Bryan (1971), *Modern British Philosophy*, (Chapter: VII, Conversation with Peter Strawson), New York: St. Martin's Press, p.125.

Śukra: The Defender of Freedom of the Disadvantaged

T.R. SHARMA

The history of pre-vedic India is, more than anything else, a history of intermittent wars between the *Devas* (gods) and the *Asuras* (demons). In these wars the great seer Śukracarya (hereafter Śukra), the descendant of Bhrigu, was the advisor and spiritual master of the *Asuras*.¹ A very significant dimension of the role that he played in these *Asura-Deva* wars during that epoch-making phase of the Indian history in remote antiquity, has neither been properly analyzed, nor fully appreciated, nor has its relevance in the present-day political context been considered. In order to do so two separate but somewhat interrelated questions need to be asked; one, who were the *Asuras*

whose cause he was defending; and two, what precisely was their cause? Conversely, who were the *Devas* and why were they perpetually at war with the *Asuras*? There are, of course, some larger questions involved. For instance, how was this whole *Asura-Deva* conflict finally resolved and with what consequences? Were the *Asuras* the real sinners as they have been made out by their adversaries, the *Devas*, or, were they more sinned against than sinners? To what extent it is appropriate to continue to study the vedic and pre-vedic India from the Aryan perspective only?

In the *Vedas*, *Puranas* and other Indian scriptures of antiquity, there are two major formulations about

the identity of the *Asuras* and the *Devas*—mythological and historical. These two formulations are so closely intertwined as to render it difficult to separate one from the other, even though the *Vedic* accounts are predominantly ritualistic and theological; while the *Puranic* accounts are more legendary and episodal, hence more in the nature of historical narratives. Therefore, for understanding their real import one has to move from narrative to interpretation in such a way that each event is seen not as a discrete one but as intimately interwoven with the others so as to constitute a pattern where individuals and events fall in place and events become episodes

*Fellow, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.

and interrelated episodes become a meta-narrative.²

I

The basic question on which the whole interpretation hinges is to establish the identity of the *Asuras*. While scanning the vedic literature, one discovers that the meaning of the term *Asura* has changed from time to time, as one moves from *vedic* to *Brahmanic* to *Puranic* periods. In some parts of the *Rgveda*, the term *Asura* seems to have had a spiritual and divine connotation (as *Ahura* in Zoroastrianism); while at other places, it is used in the sense of being powerful or strong. However, during the Brahmanic period the term began to be used in a derogatory sense signifying evil angels, imbued with demoniac traits.³ In the *Puranas* it is used as a generic term so as to encompass *Dasas* (slaves), *Dasyus* (pirates), *Danavas*, *Daityas* and *Rakshashas* (as different classes of demons). About the origin of *Asuras* there is a very interesting *Puranic* legend which says that Daksha and Kashyapa were the two earliest *Pradjapatis* (progenitors) of mankind. The former gave several of his daughters in marriage to the latter, three of them being Danu, Diti and Aditi. The sons of Danu began to be called *Danavas* and that of Diti as *Daityas*; while *Rakshashas* were their collaterals. Aditi is said to have mothered all the thirty-three *Devas* and twelve *Adityas*. Thus, *Danavas* and *Daityas* are half-brothers of *Devas* and *Adityas* (because all of them are born of the same father but from different mothers).⁴

These mythological accounts apart, there is some historicity about the *Asura-Deva* wars according to which the terms *Asuras* and *Devas* refer to two (or more than two)

communities of people whose true earthly identity can be comprehended by shedding off the therianthropomorphic, anthropomorphic, morphotheic and anthropolatory cloaks woven around them. There is considerable evidence to show that during the remote antiquity, there lived in the Indian subcontinent two distinct categories of people—the Aryans and the non-Aryans. The two were different from one another almost in every respect. Socio-culturally the Aryans constituted quite a cohesive group; while the non-Aryans consisted of different sub-groups having little in common except their bitter hostility towards the Aryans which arose on account of the latter's aggressive and expansionist designs.⁵ Three such sub-groups were significant both numerically as well as in terms of resistance that they offered to the Aryans: Dravidians (presently inhabiting south India), tribals of central India (including Bhils, Santhals, Nishads and Mundas), and the Mongoloids (living today in the north-east).

While the non-Aryans were pejoratively called the *Asuras*; the term *Devas* was used to refer to the Aryans who rendered themselves famous by their wisdom (real or supposed), their heroic deeds and their austerities, *yajnas* and sacrifices. So the term *Deva* became some sort of an idealized nomenclature or a honorific term, while the term *Asura* came to acquire some abusive import. As such what have been designated as *Deva-Asura* wars in the ancient Indian literature, were actually wars between the Aryans and the non-Aryans. Secondly, it should be borne in mind that the whole *Vedic* and *Puranic* discourse which contains the account of these wars gives us the viewpoint of the Aryans

only. Thirdly, for deeper understanding of the true nature of these wars one need to consider the most crucial question as to who were the Aryans and where did they come from? There are divergent views on this question and there is no unanimity among the scholars. The present note does not propose to address itself to this question at all. In fact, because of the historical distance involved, it is difficult to say with any degree of certainty as to who lived in which region of the country but this much can be safely assumed that movement of people from one place to another either in search of food or because of climatic conditions or because of wars must have been a frequent practice. Therefore, suffice it to say that the Aryans were a people who in the course of their quest for territorial expansion moved from the *saptsindhu* region in north-west India and came into conflict with the native aboriginal non-Aryan inhabitants of the heartland.⁶

It also needs to be borne in mind that Aryans and non-Aryans were people of different ethnic lineages, they spoke different languages, belonged to different racial stocks, they subscribed to different values, beliefs, philosophies of life and followed different ritual practices. The Aryans were fair-complexioned; while the non-Aryans were dark-complexioned; and the former taking advantage of this difference in the colour of their skin projected themselves as the powers of 'light' and painted their adversaries as the powers of 'darkness'. They also ridiculed them for their huge clumsy bodies, their repulsive facial geometry, their nose-less, goat-nosed, flat-nosed, broad-jawed with sound in breath and what not. By doing so they engendered a sense of inequality and inferiority among

them. Further, the Aryans condemned the non-Aryans for their barbarous cultural practices, for having no sacred fires, for performing no *yajnas* and for being phallus worshippers.⁷ All negative attitudinal traits like deceit, falsehood, wildness and bruteness were associated with them. They were not only held guilty of cattle-lifting and women-stealing but were also branded as intellectually bankrupt, morally degraded, hardened criminals, dangerous sorcerers, fiends devouring human flesh, hideously repulsive, savages living in caves and *jungles* (forests). They were also held guilty of ostentations, arrogance, self-conceit, anger, rudeness and ignorance. On the other hand, the Aryans took a lot of pride in being worshippers of various nature gods—*Indra* (the god of rain), *Varuna* (the god of Oceans) and *Surya* (Sun) and *Agni* (fire) (the two gods of light and warmth). In fact, the Aryans ascribed to themselves all the conceivable noble traits—serenity, self-control, austerity, purity, forbearance, uprightness, fountains of knowledge and justice, symbols of heroism, bravery, valour, firmness dexterity and generosity. They boasted of having sacred fires, holding *yajnas* and offering sacrifices. By doing all this the Aryans wanted to demonstrate that their conflict with the non-Aryans was, in essence, a clash between two cultures and two sets of values—non-native and native, modern and traditional, civil and savage, rational and irrational and spiritual and temporal. Thereby, they tried to confine the non-Aryans, to use Frantz Fanon's term, within 'a circle of guilt'.⁸ To establish their cultural superiority they enunciated four-fold goals of life: *Dharma* (righteousness), *Artha*

(material prosperity), *Kama* (enjoyment of worldly pleasures), and *Moksha* (salvation).

This would show that the whole conflict of the Aryans with the non-Aryans was much more than mere struggle for political power and territorial expansion. It was an attempt by them to completely subjugate their adversaries by establishing their cultural hegemony by obliterating all the non-Aryan cultures. If one looks at this Aryan – non-Aryan interface in its totality it would seem that, like the recent theory of 'white-man's burden', the Aryans' attempt was to drive home the point that their whole mission was a 'civilizing mission'. One wonders whether it is some sort of natural justice that several thousand years later these 'fair-complexioned' Aryans had to bear the same humiliating treatment and had to live with the same epithets at the hands of their 'white-skinned' rulers as they had handed out to the less-fortunate non-Aryans during the pre-vedic period. In a manner of speaking, this coercive Aryanization was probably the first flush of imperialism in India and certainly the most effective. The Aryans were the first and arguably the last to have tried to give this continent their own racial name—Aryavarta—the home of the Aryans. There was hardly any attempt by them to synthesize, much less respect, the native cultures. Pushing the vanquished non-Aryan natives into the category of *Asuras* was definitely not the best way to integrate them into the Aryan socio-cultural order, at least not by the present day standards.⁹

To put the Aryan–non-Aryan inter-face in the present day political vocabulary, one can say that the whole Aryan discourse, like the post-

modernist discourse, was rooted in the 'theme of difference' which had very serious implications. Since the Aryans constituted quite a cohesive group both racially and culturally, they could be taken to constitute a 'nation' (or at least an embryonic nation); while different groups of the non-Aryans were only 'fragments' or some sort of rudimentary sub-nationalities because the only commonality among them was that they were all objects of Aryan greed and they all resisted, though in different degrees and in diverse ways, the Aryan attempts to bulldoze them.¹⁰ This whole Aryan approach towards the non-Aryans can be likened to what came to be known after world war I as the 'Versailles Syndrome', i.e. to be too harsh to one's vanquished foes.

II

The Role of Śukra

The broad contours of *Śukranīti* (politics of Śukra) become evident from the role that he played in the Aryan – non-Aryan encounters in his capacity as the preceptor of the latter, particularly as the strategist of Andhaka and the spiritual master of Vali. However, any such attempt has two major limitations which must be kept in mind. First, that in different literary sources of antiquity there are different versions of Śukra's role and it is very difficult (if not impossible) to determine the whole truth and the exact sequence of events. Secondly, it needs to be recognized that the various battles described in these sources must have been actually fought much earlier than the composition of the *Vedas* and the *Puranas* in which these are described. This is so because there is always some time-lag between the occur-

rence of an event and its composition or compilation in prose and verse. Thirdly, one must concede that all such historical accounts of past are bound to have been coloured by the values and norms of the age in which these were compiled. Hence, they all have some amount of interpolation, the exact quantum of which cannot probably be ascertained.

When Śukra became the preceptor of the non-Aryan kings the situation for them was quite dismal. Viṣṇu had killed the non-Aryan king Hiranyaksa in a duel because he had challenged him when the former was trying to capture his territory (earth) for the Aryans. Thereafter, his twin-brother Hiranyakasipu who succeeded him took a vow to kill Viṣṇu and destroy his followers so as to avenge the death of his brother. But in a one to one fight he was also slain by Viṣṇu. Śukra did not have any role in these two fights because these were not battles as such but only individual fights. Thereafter, Hiranakasipu's son Prahlada became the king but during his rule, the relations between Aryans and non-Aryans were most cordial because he himself was a great devotee of Viṣṇu. In fact, his position was quite akin to a vassal. However, on one occasion when he felt cheated by Viṣṇu, he abdicated from kingship and passed on his kingdom to his cousin, Andhaka, son of Hiranyaksa. Andhaka had, unlike his cousin, great enmity towards the Aryans as much because of their expansionist designs as for their having killed his father and uncle. It was here that the real battles between the Aryans and the non-Aryans began and it was here that the role of Sukra became central.

Showing exemplary professionalism, Śukra tried to the best of his

ability to ensure victory of the non-Aryans despite the fact that he himself was an Aryan Brahmin and knew fully well that their fight was against his own racial tribe.¹¹ On numerous occasions when he sensed that the non-Aryans were likely to be defeated by the Aryans because of their superior weapons or their clever machinations, he undertook numerous penances for securing better weapons for them. According to one account he secured for them a strategically crucial weapon, which Rudra had used against Soma in an earlier war that had broken out on the issue of seduction of Tara, wife of Brihaspati (who was the preceptor of the Aryans and hence Śukra's counterpart). But his most stellar contribution lies in procuring *sanjivani vidya* (knowledge of reviving of dead) from Mahadeva along with the boon of invincibility for the non-Aryans. The most severe penance that he undertook for this purpose is without a parallel in human history. In fact, the mighty Aryan king Indra got so terribly worried at the prospect of success of Śukra's mission that he did not hesitate to resort to underhand means to defile his penance. He sent his daughter, Jayanti, to excite Śukra's passion and thereby sabotage his whole mission. But because of his total commitment to the non-Aryan cause, in addition to his strong will and his sound morals, he remained firm in his resolve and successfully completed the mission that he had undertaken.¹² It is a different matter though that his whole effort got somewhat diluted because of Indra's second machination. After achieving his mission of securing *sanjivani vidya* from Mahadeva, Śukra took pity on Jayanti who had wholeheartedly served him during his

penance and accepted her request to marry her. On her insistence he also agreed to stay with her for a period of ten years. In this process, his return to the court of Andhaka got delayed by ten years. Taking advantage of his absence, Indra requested Brihaspati to go to Andhaka's court by assuming the form of Śukra in order to misguide him, to which he readily agreed. When Śukra finally returned to Andhaka's court, after the stipulated stay of ten years with Jayanti, he was surprised to see Brihaspati there in his guise. He told the king that he was the real Śukra and the person who had been staying at his court for the last ten years was an imposter but Brihaspati strongly contested his claim and asserted that he was the real Śukra. Foolish as Andhaka was he refused to believe Śukra's word and pointed out that the one who had been staying at his court for the last ten years was the real Śukra. Feeling insulted at this stubborn attitude of the Asura king, Śukra inflicted a curse of destruction on him and his kingdom. As soon as the curse was inflicted by Śukra, Brihaspati assumed his real form. On seeing this, Andhaka profusely apologized to Śukra for his blunder but by then the dye had been cast and the boon of invincibility which he had obtained was lost. However, being genuinely concerned with the welfare of Andhaka and his subjects, Sukra readily forgave him for his mistake and continued serving at his court with the same devotion as before.

While Śukra was engaged in severe penance for obtaining *sanjivani vidya*, an important event had occurred. Andhaka had entered into war with *Ganas* for obtaining Gauri, the consort of Siva, in which many of his warriors had been killed. As

soon as Śukra was told about it he got down to the business of reviving them with the help of his newly acquired *vidya*. Naturally, the *Ganas* did not like what Śukra was doing so they complained to Mahadeva that Śukra was using the knowledge which he had given to him against them. On hearing this Śiva became very angry and ordered Nandi to produce Śukra before him. When he arrived at Śiva's abode, he imprisoned him. Taking advantage of Śukra's absence, the *Ganas* torched Andhaka till he became a devotee of Siva. In the meanwhile, Śukra during his captivity, pleased Śiva and Gauri so much with his noble conduct that they blessed him and accepted him as their third son. They not only set him free but also allowed him to go wherever he wanted. So, Śukra returned to the court of Andhaka who was succeeded, in due course, by Prahlada's son Virochana. However, Virochana ruled only for a short-while and was succeeded by his son Vali.

Seeing Śukra back at the court of the non-Aryan king, the Aryans realized, and rightly, that so long as he was there with his *sanjivani vidya*, a decisive victory over the non-Aryans was not possible. Therefore, they requested Brihaspati, their preceptor to send his son, Kacha, to Śukra's hermitage to somehow obtain this unique knowledge from him. Due to a series of tricks played on him by some unexpected turn of events, Kacha was able to obtain this knowledge and was all set to return to the Aryan camp but due to a last minute curse inflicted on him by Devayani, daughter of Śukra, for his having refused to marry her, he was divested of it.

Having failed to procure the weapon which could match Śukra's

sanjivani vidya the Aryans' victory over Vali in a battle seemed impossible. Therefore, they started thinking of non-military strategic machinations. There was all the reason to do so because Vali was a great warrior and on the advice of Śukra he had already attacked and vanquished Indra and had captured his whole kingdom. This had made the Aryans highly despondent. After holding consultations among themselves, they evolved a strategy to subjugate Vali and recover Indra's lost kingdom. On the other hand, in order to consolidate the position of Vali, Śukra had advised him to organize a *Visvajit yajna* (world conquering *yajna*) to which Vali had agreed. Vali was a great philanthropist and he announced that during his *visvajit yajna*, he would not refuse the request of any one who came begging to his *yajna*. The Aryans decided to exploit this philanthropist disposition of Vali and accordingly they planned to send Viṣṇu in the guise of a dwarf Brahmin to beg nothing short of his kingdom from Vali. Śukra, being a profound seer and a great strategist was able to see through the Aryans' game-plan. He told Vali that Viṣṇu was coming to his *yajna* in the guise of a dwarf Brahmin to destroy his kingdom. He further warned him not to fall into his trap and not to grant any request of the dwarf Brahmin. But Vali, riding high on popularity, refused to heed his advice. Feeling slighted at Vali's arrogant and defiant attitude Śukra refused to perform the *sankalp* (the ritual of giving) although he was the *hotar* (chief priest) at the *yajna* and finally walked out in a huff. According to a legend, even thereafter, he did make a last-minute attempt to prevent the completion of *sankalp*

ceremony but it did not work. In fact, in the process of doing so he lost one of his eyes.¹³ In this way the huge kingdom of Indra which Śukra had managed to win for Vali was lost. Not only that, in addition Vali also lost his own kingdom. Thus, after battling with four generations of Hiran-yaksa the Aryans finally captured this mighty non-Aryan kingdom. The loss of Vali's kingdom was a turning point in the history of Aryan-non-Aryan struggles and it marked the end of resistance offered by the Hiranayaksa and Hiranyakasipu through Prahlada, Andhaka, Virochana and finally Vali.

However, several other equally powerful non-Aryan kingdoms such as those of Vrishparva, Sambhra and Vritra etc. were still there and Śukra was preceptor of at least one of them—Vrishparva. After his departure from Vali's court, he managed, through a series of his clever moves, to takeover for Vrishparva and his progeny one of the most powerful Aryan kingdoms which was being ruled at that time by a famous king of lunar dynasty, Yayati, who had assumed for himself the title of *Chakravartin* (emperor). This was done by Śukra through a master-stroke of marrying his daughter, Devayani, with Yayati and sending with her, in guise of bridal dowry, Vrishparva's daughter Sarmishtha as her maid, who was subsequently taken by the king as his mistress or co-wife. Yayati got five sons, two from Devayani (Yadu and Turvasa) and three from Sarmishtha (Druhyu, Anu and Puru). Through his clever planning Śukra ensured that the kingdom of Yayati goes to Puru, the youngest son of Sarmishtha.¹⁴ He did so by ordaining that the other four sons of Yayati, who were all elder to Puru, stood disinherited for their not

being obedient. It is a different matter that later on Puru apportioned some share of his kingdom to his two brothers as well as to his two half-brothers. These five tribes are repeatedly mentioned in the *Rgveda*.¹⁵

Conclusion

On the basis of above account one can say that various non-Aryan native Indian communities were quite akin to the present-day ethnic communities or sub-nationalities. Viewed from this perspective Śukra, in his role as their preceptor and as advisor of various non-Aryan kings, would appear as a defender of their identity and as an advocate of their freedom, which was being threatened by the aggressive expansionist designs of the Aryans. He steered the resistance movements of the aboriginals and tribals to prevent their colonization, be it internal or external, by the Aryans. Whether he succeeded or not is besides the point.

On the philosophical plane, the Aryans realized that knowledge was a way to *moksha* (salvation); while on the empirical plane knowledge for them was power.¹⁶ Implicitly, it was this realization which made the role of the preceptor most central both for the Aryans as well as for the non-Aryans because the preceptor was considered to be the locus of knowledge. While it is true that the Aryans prevented the non-Aryans from obtaining the vedic knowledge; it goes to the credit of Śukra that he obtained from Śiva, the most profound knowledge of reviving the dead, a knowledge which was more than a match to any including the vedic knowledge that the Aryans had monopolised. With the help of this knowledge he was able to organize

almost single handedly (rather half-handedly) the whole 'resistance movement'. Thus, he emerged as the lone symbol of non-Aryan 'resisting identity'.

In a broader sense one can call him not only a liberal but even a revolutionary, a champion of freedom and autonomy of each community. More than anything else, he was the bulwark of freedom of the least-advantaged—the *Asuras*, the *dasas* and the *dasyus*. In fact, he favoured peaceful co-existence of the Aryans and non-Aryans and tried for a sort of reconciliation between the two but his efforts found little resonance in the Aryan attitude, either at that time or thereafter.¹⁷ It would be interesting to compare Śukra's whole mission during the remote antiquity of countering the Aryan attempts at colonization of the non-Aryans with the liberation struggles spear-headed by the various nationalist leaders of Asia and Africa during the twentieth century. While the later tried, and quite *successfully*, to liberate their people from colonization after the colonies had been fully milched by the imperial powers; Śukra tried by all means, peaceful as well as non-peaceful, but rather *unsuccessfully*, to resist the influx of the Aryans at the very initial stage when they were trying to over-run the non-Aryan territories. Among scores of ancient sages it was only Śukra who challenged the Aryan greed for territorial expansion and their colonizing mentality. Though his was the lone voice of dissent but it was worth it. In any case, his stance was quite in tune with the later injunction of *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* and the contemporary provisions of international law both of which hold that it is morally right to wage a war in self-defence. In fact, Śukra's whole

political-ideological stance was quite at variance with that of Brihaspati, Vasishtha and other preceptors of the victorious Aryans. No wonder, therefore, that his stance has been denied its due place in *Rgveda* and other literary sources of antiquity which give us the viewpoint of only the invading Aryans and that too in a highly biased Vincent Smithonian style.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The great sage Brihaspati was the preceptor of the *Devas* (gods).
2. This approach is quite in use now. See, for example, Thomas Sizgovich, "Narrative and Community in Islamic late Antiquity", *Past and Present*, No. 185 (November 2004), pp. 24 ff.
3. For an illustrative account see, Rev. H. Heras S.J., "The Devil in Indian Scriptures", *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (new series), Vol. 27, Part I, 1951, pp. 222 ff.
4. According to a *Puranic* legend initially the *Asuras* and *Devas* were both equipped with truth and falsehood but, in due course, the former gave up truth and adopted falsehood; while the later adopted truth and gave up falsehood. However, there is no explanation as to why the two did so but it is sometimes argued that those who fell into the *Asura* order were the ones born under evil stars, inauspicious lunations or at an evil hour.
5. In fact, the *Rgveda* is full of Aryans' aggressive postures bordering sometimes on a sheer war cry. See *Rgveda*, VII. 104.
6. *Rgveda*, X.75.
7. This is rather surprising because, in essence, the practice of *Linga* worship which is so prevalent in India today is not very different from phallus worship.
8. Fanon, Frantz (1965), *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York: Penguin, p. 138.
9. It was probably in the post-Sukra phase that the two great stages—Vasishtha and Vishvamitra—took divergent positions on this issue. While the former struck to the hard-core Aryan theology and politics and was opposed to any dilution of *vedic* injunctions and ordinances to accommodate the non-Aryans; the

- latter advocated a conciliatory stance towards them.
10. The terms 'Nation' and 'fragments' have been used in the sense in which Chatterjee has used them. See Chatterjee, Partha (1994), *The Nation and its Fragments*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.
 11. It is probably for his continuous anti-Aryan stance that he does not find a place among the *Saptris* (seven stages) the mythological great bear.
 12. In sharp contrast to this Brihaspati, the preceptor of the Aryans, was a person of such weak morals that he seduced Mamta, the wife of his brother, Uchathaya, though she protested and pointed out that it was violation of *Dharma* (moral code).
 13. There is a *Puranic* legend that when Vali was performing the *sankalp* (the ritual of giving) by pouring water on Viṣṇu's palm, Śukra assumed a minute form and entered the spout of the pot to prevent water from flowing out. Viṣṇu could see through Śukra's game and pricked the spout with a straw of grass in which process Śukra lost one of his eyes.
 14. The inheritance of Yayati's kingdom by his youngest son, Puru, and disinheritance of all his four elder sons was justified on the plea of their being disobedient. It is a different matter though, that later on Puru apportioned a share of his kingdom to all of them.
 15. *Rgveda*, I, 36.18, 47.7, 54.6, 174.9; IV, 30.17; V, 31.8; VI, 20.12, 45.1; VII, 19.8; VIII, 1.31, 4.7, 7.18, 9.14, 45.27; IX, 61.2; and X, 49.8, 62.10. See particularly I, 108.8 and VII, 10.5.
 16. In recent times this view has been articulated by Michel Foucault in his celebrated work, *Power/knowledge, Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-82* (ed.) Collin Gordon (New York, Pantheon, 1980).
 17. The great sage Vishvamitra was a liberal and pleaded for the acceptance of some of the non-Aryan cultural practices.

Defending Pure Experience

CHANDANA CHAKRAVARTY

This paper is a critical exposition and clarification of William James' concept of pure experience and a statement of the relation of that concept to the larger one of radical empiricism. We will begin by following James' terminology and tactics closely and will only gradually work James into a more modern framework.

James upholds the thesis that 'there is only one primal stuff or material in the world, a stuff of which everything is composed . . .'¹ In itself, this primal stuff, that is, pure experience, is not intrinsically subjective or objective. Pure experience is neither mind nor matter, but is the ultimate ground of both the mental and the physical world. It is devoid of any intrinsic

duality of knower and known, consciousness and content, thought and thing. Experience does not come to us as neatly marked 'physical' and 'mental'. Traditional philosophy has operated with an either/or division in an exclusive sense, namely, that any reality is either physical or mental. James, however, found questions like whether this instant field is physical or mental to be misleading ones insofar as they presuppose an either/or division.

James argues that if the present experience of the reader or the writer be stopped short, it will be found on observation to be innocent of the 'interior' or 'outer' quality. Thought-stuff and thing-stuff are here indistinguishably the same. The

'paper seen' and 'seeing the paper' are only two names for one indivisible fact, which properly named, is the 'datum', 'phenomenon' or 'pure experience'.

In his article on 'The Thing and its Relation', James has referred to pure experience as 'another name for feeling or sensation.'² This 'pure sensation' is not experienced initially as either part of the mental or physical world. All the processes of identification and discrimination come only later in life. In his *Seminary* of 1895-96, James resorted to the metaphor of 'fields', hoping thereby to make more concrete his concept of neutral phenomena. Unfortunately, he did not develop his metaphor adequately, and John McDermott laments this fact:

¹Visiting Scholar, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.