

## INTRODUCTION

The thesis is directed towards looking into the ethical implications of **māyā** hermeneutics in recent Indian thought with special reference to such thinkers as Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindra nath Tagore, and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan.

### I

The thesis is a two-fold study :

- (a) A close examination of the dialectic of tradition and modernity, specially in relation to the concept of **māyā**. There are, other than illusion, six meanings of the term to be found in the writings of the thinkers mentioned above. They are : (i) **māyā** as inexplicable mystery (Tagore); (ii) **māyā** as power of self-becoming (Tagore, Radhakrishnan); (iii) **māyā** as duality of matter and consciousness (Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan, Sri Aurobindo); (iv) **māyā** as primal matter (Radhakrishnan); (v) **māyā** as self-concealment (Tagore, Sri Aurobindo); and (vi) **māyā** as one sided dependence (Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan).

By **hermeneutics** will be meant the interpretation of the spiritual truth of ancient doctrines, terminologies or terms denoting the purpose of human existence. (See Dilthy and Gadamar).

- (b) It is worth one while to take into account the charge brought about by Albert Schweitzer (in his **Development of Indian Thought**)

that the Indian Philosophical attitude is marked by (i) world negation and hence (ii) amorality, and see how, in one way or other, the recent Indian thinkers have on the basis of their **māyā** hermeneutics, argued for both world affirmation and morality.

## II

The suggested view that the aforesaid thinkers have argued for both world affirmation and a life of action will be better appreciated if we take a hurried glance at their dominant philosophical motives :

- A) Swami Vivekananda's London lectures in 1896 have been viewed as his greatest intellectual achievement by Nivedita herself (**The Master as I Saw Him**, p.16). These lectures provide a notable hermeneutics of **māyā**, presently available in the Swami's **Jñāna-Yoga** Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 15, 16 and 17). On the basis of his **māyā** hermeneutics, the Swami proposed a life of action based on the notions of **strength** and **weakness** (See Irina Chelysheva, **Ethical Ideas of Vivekananda, Tilak and Aurobindo**). Action has formed the corner stone of the Swami's positivistic teaching (See **Rolland and Tagore, Visva-Bharati**) as presented in his **Karma-Yoga**.
- B) Beginning with the unfinished tract (1912) entitled "The Life Divine" (different from his **magnum opus**) which Sri Aurobindo intended as a commentary on the **Íśa Upaniṣad**, and later in

the published commentary (1915) one comes across the basic distinction between "Original Vedānta" and "illusionism". The problem of harmonizing God and Nature runs through Sri Aurobindo's metaphysical writings, and finally results in the category of overmind in **The Life Divine** (1949), a remarkable hermeneutics of the concept of **māyā**. The proposed study will focus mostly on Sri Aurobindo's unfinished commentary of 1912, which has hitherto received almost no attention.

- C) Rabindranath Tagore has a fully developed theory of appearance in **Personality** (1907) and later adumbrated in the distinction between **fact** and **truth** in the **Religion of Man** (1929). **Māyā** for Tagore is descriptive of the ontology of the art-object. Art is **māyā**, he says in **Religion of an Artist**. **Māyā**, as one finds in **Sādhanā**, is also employed to indicate disvalue, it creeps in when the self or ego usurps the domain of the soul. An ethics of love of Tagore's type must restore the imbalance.
- D) Radhakrishnan has admitted that he was greatly influenced in his understanding of **māyā** by Tagore (See V. Ferm, ed. **Religion in Transition**). Like Sri Aurobindo he also says that the illusional implication of **māyā** does not form a part of the "original Vedānta", and his hermeneutics of the concept challenges the traditional **Advaita Vedānta** view of **māyā** by rejecting exegetical analysis of the term. In his **Eastern Religion and Western Thought**, there

is an extensive refutation of the charges of world negation and amorality, and his translation of the **Gītā** is an attempt to found ethics on a **māyā** hermeneutics.

From 1923 to 1952 Radhakrishnan has summarized the concept of **māyā** five times : **Indian Philosophy I**, 546-7; **Indian Philosophy II**, 573-4; **The Bhāgavadgītā** 42-3; **History of Philosophy Eastern and Western**, I 279; "Reply to Critics" in **The Philosophy of S. Radhakrishnan**, 800-2.

### III

To put summarily we have tried to show in the thesis that all the four thinkers have interpreted **māyā** so as to save the world and give to it a real meaning. Consequently this sort of world-view resulted in all these thinkers in a life-oriented ethical aim, to be realised in this very world of practice.