

A Note on The Hindu Concept of Man

—Sanskrit *mānuṣya*—

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Posing the problem of how a human being was viewed in ancient India seems to be awkward by itself, because such a question is too many-sided to be discussed briefly. Moreover, it is of a nature that would never permit a serious student to deal with comprehensively. This question can be approached from the physiological and embryological view-points,¹⁾ or we can treat the same problem of human being as reflected in Classical Sanskrit literature, or as described in the texts of Hindu dramaturgy.²⁾ Religious texts, Hindu, Buddhist and Jain as well, are full of passages which dogmatize about the human body as transitory and disgusting to the effect that one may lose the attachment to it.³⁾ Again, mediaeval Hindu philosophers are more or less interested in this problem and some are seriously concerned with it.⁴⁾ So intricate is the problem that one may deal with it only superficially in a general context,⁵⁾ or give it up completely. Yet, on the other hand, one can not help posing such stimulating questions as these: Is there a concept in India which is comparable to *homo sapiens*, or *homo spiritualis*?⁶⁾ Was there a philosopher in India, who, like Protagoras, propounds a homo-centric idea that a human being is the measure of all things existant?⁷⁾ Was there ever existed in India an idea equivalent to *roseau pensant*?⁸⁾

Admitting that the problem is too complicated to deal with comprehensively and yet is interesting and also important, the author remains hesitant to undertake the task. It is simply because of his profound respect and personal affection for the great philosopher, Professor T. Imamichi, that a student of Sanskrit literature here takes up this philosophical topic and dedicates his humble contribution to his Felicitation Volume.

However, in order to avoid the danger of becoming too superficial and unscientific, we here limit ourselves to certain aspects of the Hindu view of human being. These aspects here to be dealt with will be as follows:

First, we shall list passages where the adjective *durlabha* (difficult of attainment) is construed with *mānuṣya* (human status, or birth as a human being), and thus ascertain that it was thought of rare fortune by Hindus to be born as a human being in the cycle of transmigration (人身得難). In the course of discussion we shall refer to the simile of blind tortoise (盲龜浮木).

Second, we proceed to discuss the question: admitted it being hard to attain the human status, then how can one attain this? That is to say, what is needed for a living being in the cycle of transmigration to be born as a human being?

Next, we must ask: what is the privilege that human beings have which distinguishes them from non-human beings? This question invites us to ascertain the status of hu-

man being as different not only from animal, but also from divine beings, while dealing with the problem of *karma-bhūmi*.

And then, lastly, we shall ask: what is a human being expected to do, having attained the rare fortune of being born as such? This question naturally leads us to the Hindu ideal of human being and will illuminate the moral aspect of the Hindu view of it.

I

First of all, in Hindu literature, we are often told that birth as a human being (*mānuṣya*) is a matter quite difficult of attainment. Thus, we have a recurring phrase *mānuṣyaṃ durlabham*. We shall quote below a few passages from the Śānti-parvan of the Mahābhārata.

*upabhogair api tyaktaṃ nātmānam avasādayet
caṇḍālatve pi mānuṣyaṃ sarvathā tāta durlabham* (MBh.12.286.31)

“Even when bereft of enjoyments, one must not dispirit oneself. Of all births, the human status is difficult of attainment even if one may be born as a Caṇḍāla.”

*sopāna-bhūtaṃ svargasya mānuṣyaṃ prāpya durlabham
tathātmānam samādadhyād bhraṣyeta na punar yathā* (MBh. 12.309.79)

“Having attained the human status, which is so difficult of attainment and is a stair-case to heaven,⁹⁾ one must compose himself lest he should be deprived of it.”¹⁰⁾

We read here that the human status is dear even if he is born in the lowest caste, because this enables him to attain heaven (*svarga*), if he should be attentive enough to pursue righteousness.

However, it is in the *Subhāṣitaratnakaraṇḍakakathā* attributed to Āryaśūra that we meet this construction most frequently. As a matter of fact, its third chapter is entitled *durlabha-mānuṣya-kathā*, and the first twenty verses of the text are more or less concerned with the significance of human birth.¹¹⁾ However, for brevity's sake, we here introduce only one verse from this text.

*ata evāha bhagavān mānuṣyam atidurlabham
mahārṇava-yuga-cchidra-kūrma-grīvārpaṇopamam* (Subhāṣitaratnakaraṇḍaka-kathā 20)

“Exactly because of this, the Lord said that the human status is extremely difficult of attainment, comparable to (the possibility of) a tortoise pushing his neck through the hole of the yoke in a vast ocean.”¹²⁾

The simile used here requires our special attention, because this never occurs outside Buddhist literature, yet it became so popular among Buddhist circles as to be known even in mediaeval Japanese literature.¹³⁾ We shall give below a brief historical survey of this simile.

In the Pali Buddhist literature we meet occasionally a simile about a blind (literally one-eyed) tortoise (*kaṇa kacchapa*) associated with a floating yoke with one hole (*ekacchigala yuga*), which illustrates an incident of rare occurrence. This blind tortoise is supposed to rise up from the depth of the ocean once in a hundred years, while a yoke with one hole is drifting about on the surface of the ocean at the mercy of the wind. It is an incident of absolute rareness that this blind tortoise would push his neck (*giṇva*) through that one hole in the yoke, when he rises up from the ocean. This simile for absolute rareness is spoken of twice in the Pali Nikāya,¹⁴⁾ that is, in the Majjhima Nikāya¹⁵⁾ and Samyutta Nikāya,¹⁶⁾ in order to illustrate how difficult (*dullabha*) it is for an ignorant man (*bāla*) in animal status (*tiracchāna*) to obtain human birth (*manussatta*).

We notice that this simile of a blind tortoise seems to have early become a part of the stock of Buddhist literature, for the Therīgāthā (500)¹⁷⁾ and a passage of the Milindapañha¹⁸⁾ apparently presuppose our simile to be used for the illustration of human birth being hard to obtain (*manussa-lābhamhi opammam* [Therīgāthā] and *kāṇakacchapopammam . . . manussatta-paṭilābhāya* [Milindapañha]).

The Buddhist Sanskrit literature also inherited this simile of a blind tortoise. Nāgārjuna refers to this in his *Suhṛllekha* (59) in our context of human birth,¹⁹⁾ and Aśvaghoṣa once mentions it in a slightly different context (*kṣaṇa-saṃnipāta*) in his *Saundarananda* (18.27).²⁰⁾ Yet, it is in one of Mātṛceṭa's introductory stanzas of his *Śatapañcāśatka* that the well-known half-verse of this simile (*mahārṇava-yuga-cchidra-kūrma-grivāraṇopama*) seems to have made its first concrete appearance in relation to our topic of human birth (*manuṣyatva*),²¹⁾ which, besides the above mentioned Subhāṣitaratnakaraṇḍakakathā verse, is quoted in *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (25) and in *Prajñākaramatī*'s commentary to the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. The former uses it with a slight variation (*mahārṇava-yuga-cchidra-kūrma-grivā-praveśavat*) to illustrate the rareness of Buddha's appearance (*buddhotpāda*) instead of our topic of human birth,²²⁾ and in the latter the simile appears in the context of *kṣaṇa-saṃpad*.²³⁾

Apart from this simile of a blind tortoise,²⁴⁾ we have another example from the *Dhammapada*,

kiccho manussa-paṭilābho, kicchaṃ maccāna jīvitam
kicchaṃ saddhamma-savaṇam, kiccho buddhānam uppādo (*Dhammapada* 182)²⁵⁾

"Difficult to attain is the human status (*manussa*), for the mortal to lead life, to hear the sublime Law; and for Buddhas to appear in the world."

Here we notice the word for *difficult* is not *durlabha*, but *kiccha*, and the passage is not

accompanied by any sort of simile, yet, the difficulty of attaining human status is here juxtaposed with other concepts in the form of amplification.

Another example of similar constructions is found in verse of the Apadāna,

*udumbaraka-pupphaṃ va candamhi sasakaṃ yathā
vāyasānaṃ yathā khiraṃ dullabhaṃ loka-nāyakam (8)
buddho lokamhi uppanno manussattam pi dullabham
ubhosu vijjamānesu savanaṃ ca sudullabham (9) (Apadāna 479)²⁶⁾*

“Like a flower of the Udumbara tree,²⁷⁾ like a hare in the moon, like the milk of crows, it is difficult to have the leader of people. It is a rare incident, on the one hand, that Buddha appears in the world and that one attains the human status on the other. Granted these two are given, it is still more difficult (for the latter) to hear (the holy Law of the former).”

Here, the difficulty of human birth is associated with two other incidents of absolute rareness, and the word for *difficult* is the usual *durlabha* instead of *kiccha*.

Further in Jaina texts, we are also told that the human status (*māṇusa bhava*, *māṇusa janma*, *māṇussa*, *māṇusattva*) is hard to obtain (*dullaha*). In a discourse to Gotama it is stated,

*dullahe khalu māṇuse bhava cira-kālena vi savva-pāṇiṇam
gādhā ya vivāga kammūṇo samayaṃ goyama mā pamāyae
(Uttarādhyayanasūtra 10.4)²⁸⁾*

“A rare chance, in the long course of time, is (attaining) the human condition for all the living beings. Subtle is the ripening of actions (*kamma*). Be ever attentive, O Gotama!”

A verse quoted by Devendra while commenting upon the Uttarādhyayasūtra 3.1 reads as follows,

*janma-jarā-maraṇa-jale nāṇāviha-vāhi-jalayarāiṇṇe
bhava-sāyare apāre dullabhaṃ khalu māṇusam jammam²⁹⁾*

“In the shoreless oceans of existence, where birth, old age and death are its water, and which is full of fishes in the form of various sorts of diseases, birth as a human being (*māṇusa jamma*) is hard to obtain.”

Two verses from the Candāvejjhaya³⁰⁾ describe two types of people: the one suffers later and the other does not, after being born as a human being.

laddhūṇa vi māṇussam dullahaṃ je puṇo virāhenti

te bhinna-poya-saṃjattigā va pacchā duhi honti (105)
laddhūṇaṃ māṇussaṃ purisā jogehi je na hāyanti
te laddha-poya-saṃjattigā va pacchā na soyanti (Candāvejjhaya 106)

“Those who, even after having attained the human status (*māṇussa*) which is very difficult of attainment (*dullaha*), do wrong (*virāh-*), suffer later like those who sail with a disjoined raft. The man who, having attained the human status, are (attentive and) not devoid of discipline (*joga*),³¹ do not despair later, like those who sail with a solid (*laddha*?) raft.”

In addition to this single statement, we have other passages where human status (*maṇusattva*) appears in a catalogue of similar items of difficult attainment, as we have seen above in Dhammapada 182 and Apadāna.

cattāri paramaṃgāṇi dullahāṇiha jantuṇo
māṇusattaṃ sui saddhā saṃjamammi ya viriyam (Uttarādhyaṇasūtra 3.1)

“Four things of paramount value are difficult of attainment here by a living being: human status, listening (to the sacred Law), belief (in it), and endeavour in self-control.”

Here we notice that human status (*māṇusatta*) is enumerated together with three other items, *sui* (*śruti*), *saddhā* (*śraddhā*) and *virīya* (*vīrya*), each being more difficult of attainment in ascending order.

According to what is said in the succeeding verses of the Uttarādhyaṇasūtra (3. 2–7), the living beings (*pāṇin*) undergo misery in the course of transmigrating in the wombs of non-human beings (*amāṇussāsu jonisu*), some being born in heaven (*deva-loa*), some in hell (*naraa*), some in the state of *asura*, and others in that of insects, all reaping the fruit of their own *karman*. Perchance, however, by the cessation of *karman*, the soul (*jīva*) reaches in due time a pure state (*sohi*) and is born as a human being. The text, thereafter (3. 8–10), proceeds to expound the other three items, *sui*, *saddhā* and *virīya*. There it is said that, even after having attained the human body (*māṇussa viggaha*), it is rare (*dullaha*) for them to have the opportunity to hear of the holy Law (*sui dhammassa*). Yet, still more difficult (*parama-dullaha*) is for them to have faith (*saddhā*) in it, and to follow it strenuously (*virīya*).³²

II

Granted that the human status (*māṇuṣya*) is difficult of attainment (*durlabha*), we then ask what is it that enables a living creature in the cycle of transmigration to attain the human status? Though quite late in its compilation, the answer is given in several passages of the Pretakalpa of the Garuḍa Purāṇa (Sāroddhāra).

It is possible to attain only after one has accumulated a great amount of religious

merit (*puṇya*). A *preta* (departed spirit) in hell laments regretfully as follows,

*mahatā puṇya-yogena mānuṣyaṃ janma labhyate
tat prāpya na kṛto dharmāḥ kiḍṛṣaṃ hi mayā kṛtam* (2. 34)

“Only because of a great (amount of) merit (*puṇya*) does one attain birth as a human being. Though I had attained this, I failed to practise good deeds (*dharma*). What did I do (while I was on the earth)?”³³⁾

Almost the same phrase is repeated in a different context,

*mahā-puṇya-prabhāveṇa mānuṣaṃ janma labhyate
yas tat prāpya cared dharmāṃ sa yāti paramāṃ gatim* (8. 95)

“By virtue of great merit (*puṇya*) birth as a human being is obtained. He who, having gained it, practises good deeds (*dharma*), reaches the highest goal.”

In addition to this great amount of religious merit (*puṇya* or *dharma*), a great length of time is also needed in order to be born as a human being. One has to repeat hundreds of births before he will be born as a human being.

*jāti-śateṣu labhate bhuvi mānuṣatvam
tatrāpi durlabhataraṃ khalu bho dvijatvam* (6. 40ab)

“In the course of hundreds of births, the human status (*mānuṣatva*) is obtained on the earth. There again, still more difficult is (to attain) the status of twice-born (Brahmin)”

Another passage combines this great length of time with a great amount of merit (*puṇya*),

*atra janma-sahasrāṇāṃ sahasrair api koṭibhiḥ
kadā cil labhate jantur mānuṣyaṃ puṇya-saṃcayāt* (16. 14)³⁴⁾

“Through myriads, millions of thousands of births, sometimes a living being (*jantu*) obtains human status (*mānuṣya*) by virtue of the accumulation of religious merit (*puṇya*).”

A passage of Kādambarī also speaks of this,

*atra tāvad aneka-bhava-sukṛta-sahasrādhigamyāṃ mānuṣyam eva
durlabham* (NSP. ed., 1921, p. 582, line 9)

“Here, in the first place, to be born as a human being (*mānuṣya*) itself is difficult of attainment, because it is to be attained by thousands of meritorious acts (*sukṛta*) (which are accumulated) in a number of births (other than that of human being).”

If it is so rare to be born as a human being, the human birth (*mānuṣa janma*, *mānuṣatva*, *mānuṣya*) becomes most coveted by other creatures. All living beings (*sarva-bhūta*) desire to be born as a human being. Thus, Kaśyapa who was about to commit suicide was desuaded by Indra in disguise as follows,

*manuṣya-yoniṃ icchanti sarva-bhūtāni sarvaśaḥ
manuṣyatve ca vipratvaṃ sarva evābhinandati* (MBh. 12.173.8)

“All living beings in their entirety wish (to attain birth in a) human womb (*manuṣya-yoni*). Among human beings, again everybody desires (to be born as a) Brahmin.”

Not only living creatures (*sarva-bhūta*), but also gods desire to be born as a human being regardless of their divinity. A Purāṇic passage depicts the gods’ constant yearning to be born as a human beings.

*devānām api bho viprāḥ sadaivaiṣa manorathah
api mānuṣyam āpsyāmo devatvāt pracyutāḥ kṣitau* (Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa 55. 6)³⁵

“Even gods, o twice-born, constantly cherish this desire: if perchance we could attain human status, falling from the divine status down upon the earth.”

Granted that the human status is difficult of attainment and thus most coveted by non-human beings including gods, then we must ask wherein consists the advantage of being born as a human being? That is to say, what is the privilege peculiar to human being as distinguished from non-human being?

It apparently consists in freedom of choice and in his capacity and responsibility to create his own future. We can testify to this sublime idea of freedom of will by some textual evidence.

It is only in this human status that one could elevate oneself (*ātman*) by means of good deeds. In a well-known dialogue between Parāśara and Janaka we read,

*iyam hi yoniḥ prathamā yāṃ prāpya jagatipate
ātma vai śakyate trātum karmabhiḥ śubha-lakṣaṇaiḥ* (MBh.12.286.32)

“O monarch, foremost indeed is this womb (of human being), having obtained which, the *ātman* can be rescued by means of good actions (*śubhalakṣaṇa karman*).”

Human being is characterized by actions (*karma-lakṣaṇa*),³⁶ which make the higher ideal possible for man, yet the possibility is also open to degeneration. Indeed, he is

granted freedom of choice, but this implies that he is liable to both virtue (*dharma*) and sin (*adharma*). The human privilege of freedom of will is a sort of double-edged sword, which he can use positively as well as negatively. An Epic passage speaks of this as follows,

*mānuṣeṣu mahārāja dharmādharmau pravartataḥ
na tathānyeṣu bhūteṣu manuṣya-rahiteṣv iha* (MBh.12.283.28)

“Virtue and sin prevail, o great king, only among human beings (*mānuṣa*). They are not found among creatures (*bhūta*) other than human beings.”³⁷⁾

However, this sublime idea of freedom of will is not separable in Hinduism from the concept of *Bhārata-varṣa* as *karma-bhūmi*, which is often contrasted with *bhoga-bhūmi*.³⁸⁾ As is pointed out by W. Halbfass, it is often taken for granted that only *Bhārata-varṣa* (the Indian subcontinent in Hindu cosmography) is *karma-bhūmi* (land of action), a region in which actions and decisions have the power of shaping the future, in which *karman* in the past can be neutralized, and in which liberation from the cycle of transmigration will be possible in future.³⁹⁾ The *Bhārata-varṣa* as *karma-bhūmi* is defined by Purāṇic passages as follows,

*uttaram yat samudrasya himādreṣ caiva dakṣiṇam
varṣam tad bhāratam nāma bhāratī yatra saṃtatīḥ. (1)
nava-yojana-sāhasro vistāro 'sya mahāmune
karma-bhūmir iyaṃ svargam apavargam ca gacchatām (2)
ataḥ saṃprāpyate svargo muktim asmāt prayānti vai
tiryaktvaṃ narakaṃ cāpi yānti ataḥ puruṣā dvijāḥ (3)*

“North of the sea and south of Himālaya is situated the continent Bhārata by name, where the offspring of Bharata lives. Its breadth extends 9000 yojana, and it is a place of probation (*karma-bhūmi*) for those who are going to heaven (*svarga*) and final emancipation (*apavarga*). From here heaven is reached and from here people proceed to final emancipation (*mukti*), while, on the other hand, people, even the twice-born, go to the animal status (*tiryaktva*) and to hell (*naraka*) also from here.”

We read here that four destinations, *svarga*, *apavarga* (or *mukti*), *tiryaktva*, and *naraka*,⁴⁰⁾ are open to the free choice of human beings in the *karma-bhūmi*, but these four courses seem to be reduced to two, *śubha* (auspicious goal) and *aśubha* (inauspicious goal). An Epic passage speaks of this,

*karma-bhūmir iyaṃ loka iha kṛtvā śubhāśubham
śubhaiḥ śubham avāpnoti kṛtvāśubham ato 'nyathā* (MBh.12.185.19)

“This is the land of probation where people in the world are doing either good or evil actions. He attains the good by good deeds and by the evil otherwise.”

Out of these two possibilities thus offered to human being, the courses upward (*śubha*: *svarga* and *apavarga*) and downward (*aśubha*: *tiryaktva* and *naraka*), it is preferable for him to choose the former. He is expected to do good (*śubha*), having once entered the *karma-bhūmi* with the view of attaining the higher goal.

*tad etat saṃpradīśyaiva karma-bhūmiṃ praviśya tām
śubhāny ācaritavyāni paralokam abhīpsatā* (MBh. 12.309.89)

“Having realized this, one must perform good deeds (*śubha*), having once entered the land of probation, with the view to attain the other world.”

One must do good (*śubha*) after the model example of gods,

*karma-bhūmiṃ imāṃ prāpya kartavyaṃ karma yac chubham
agnir vāyuś ca somaś ca karmaṇāṃ phala-bhāgiṇaḥ* (Rāmāyaṇa 2.101.28)

“Once obtained this land of probation, one must do good deeds. (The gods such as) Agni, Vāyu and Soma partake of (their divinity as the) fruit of (their good) deeds (while they were once on the *karma-bhūmi*).”

On the contrary, he who is unaware of the importance of his being born in the *karma-bhūmi* is mocked by a cynical poet as follows,

*sthālyāṃ vaidūryamayyāṃ pacati tila-khalaṃ cāndanair indhanaughaiḥ
sauvarṇair lāṅgalāgrair vilikhati vasudhām arka-mūlasya hetoḥ
chittvā karpūra-khaṇḍān vṛtim iha kurute kodravāṇāṃ samantāt
prāpyemāṃ karma-bhūmiṃ na carati manujo yas tapo mandabhāgyaḥ*
(Nītiśataka 96=IS. 7226)

“A wretched human being who, having attained this land of probation (*karma-bhūmi*), does not lead austere way of life (*tapas*) is like a man who cooks the caky sediment of sesame in a pot of lapis lazuli by means of abundant sandal wood for fuel, or a man who digs the earth with the point of golden plough in order to get a root of the Arka-tree, or a man who constructs a hedge of campher pieces around Kodrava.”

A human being deserves to be called alive (*jivat*) simply because he practises righteousness (*dharma*),

jivantaṃ mṛtavan manye dehināṃ dharma-varjitam

mṛto dharmeṇa saṃyukto dirgha-jīvi na saṃśayaḥ (Vṛddha-Cāṇakya 13. 8)⁴¹⁾

“I deem a man as dead even when he is alive, who is destitute of *dharma*. If furnished with *dharma*, he lives long even if dead. There is no doubt about this.”

It is further stated that the significance of human birth (*manuṣya-janmasāphalya*) lies in the pursuit of righteousness (*dharma*).

*avijñāya naro dharmam duḥkham āyāti yāti ca
manuṣya-janma-sāphalyam kevalam dharma-sevanam (Pretakalpa 8. 96)*

“The man who is not aware of righteousness reaches misery repeatedly. The pursuit of righteousness (*dharma*) alone brings the human birth to fruition.”

The good deed (*sukṛta*) is called the essence (*sāra*) of ephemeral existence (*asāra*) in the world of transmigration (*saṃsāra*).⁴²⁾

*tad etenātyasāreṇa sukṛtam yad upārjyate
tad eva sāram saṃsāre kṛta-buddhibhir ucyate (Kathāsaritsāgara 94. 107)*

“The only essence in the cycle of transmigration is the merit (*sukṛta*) which is acquired by this essenceless (body).⁴³⁾ So it is said by the wise men.”

Pursuit of virtue (*dharma, tapas, sukṛta*)⁴⁴⁾ is the privileged choice of a human being who is given the fortune to be born in the land of probation (*karma-bhūmi*),⁴⁵⁾ and this is what brings about the fruition of his birth as a human being.

Now, if a man is expected to do good, having once had the rare fortune of being born as a human being and entered the *karma-bhūmi*, those who are unable to realize this privilege and indulge in sensual pleasure are often termed as “deceived”, or more properly “vainly privileged (*vañcita*).” The following two passages speak of this wretched human being.

*yo durlabhataṛaṃ prāpya mānuṣyam iha vai naraḥ
dharmāvamantā kāmātmā bhavet sa khalu vañcyate (MBh.12. 286.34)*

“A man who, having attained the human status which is so difficult of attainment, disregards virtue (*dharma*) and indulges in sensual pleasure, is certainly deceived.”

*agarhitāṃ jātīm avāpya mānuṣīm anūnabhāvam paṭubhis tathendriyaiḥ
avaśyamṛtyur na karoti yaḥ śubham pramādashākaḥ pratyaham eṣa vañcyate
(Jātakamālā 28. 15)*

“He who, having obtained blameless birth as a human being and being born in the full possession of unimpaired sense-organs, does not practise good actions (*śubha*) even under the necessity of death, (should) be (called) inattentive, and such a man is deceived day by day.”⁴⁶⁾

Such a desperate man is comparable to a heedless man who is unaware of *amṛta* flowing through his hand. The second half of the Pretakalpa 6. 40 reads as follows,

*yas tan na pālayati lālayatindriyāṇi
tasyāmṛtaṃ kṣarati hasta-gataṃ pramādāt* (Pretakalpa 6. 40 cd)

“*Amṛta* in his hand oozes away through carelessness, who does not guard it (viz. human status), but fondles his sense-organs.”⁴⁷⁾

Aśvaghoṣa describes such an inattentive man in a more poetical way,

*anabhijño yathā jātyaṃ dahed agaruṃ kāṣṭhavat
anyāyena manuṣyatvaṃ upahanyād idaṃ tathā* (26)
*tyaktvā ratnaṃ yathā loṣṭaṃ ratna-dvipāc ca saṃharet
tyaktvā naiḥśreyasaṃ dharmaṃ cintayed aśubhaṃ tathā* (27)
*himavantaṃ yathā gatvā viṣaṃ bhuñjita nauṣadham
manuṣyatvaṃ tathā prāpya pāpaṃ seveta na śubhaṃ* (Saundarananda 15. 28)

“Just as an ignorant man would burn costly aloe wood like ordinary fuel, so by not following the right way one would waste one’s birth here as a human being (*manuṣyatva*).

The man who, passing over the right conduct (*dharma*) that leads to final beatitude, should cultivate evil thoughts (*aśubha*) is like the man who should pass over the jewels and take away lumps of earth from a jewel-land.

The man who, having obtained the human status (*manuṣyatva*), should follow evil (*pāpa*) instead of good (*śubha*) is like a man who should go to the Himālaya and eat poison instead of health-giving herbs.”⁴⁸⁾

Such a man is not only called heedless (*pramāda-bhāk*) and deceived (*vañcita*), but is termed as senseless or insentient (*acetana*). Yama, the Lord of the dead, says as follows, while blessing the blessed souls,

*mānuṣaṃ durlabhaṃ prāpya nityaṃ yas tu na sādhayet
sa yāti narakaṃ ghoram ko ’nyas tasmād acetanaḥ* (79)
*asthiraṇa śariraṇa yo ’sthiraś ca dhanādibhiḥ
saṃcinoti sthiraṃ dharmaṃ sa eko buddhimān naraḥ* (Pretakalpa 14. 80)

“He who, having attained the human status difficult of attainment, fails to attain

his object, goes to a dreadful hell. Who else is more insentient (*acetana*) than this. (On the contrary) he who accumulates the ever-lasting religious merit (*dharma*) by means of his perishable body and of impermanent things like wealth, is alone (entitled to be called) a man who is endowed with intelligence (*buddhimat*).⁴⁹

Such a man is not only slighted intellectually as ignorant, but also morally forsaken as ignoble and sinful (*pāpa*),

*sopāna-bhūtaṃ mokṣasya mānuṣyaṃ prāpya durlabham*⁵⁰
yas tārayati nātmānaṃ tasmāt pāpataro 'tra kaḥ (15)
naraḥ prāpyottamaṃ janma labdhvā cendriya-sauṣṭhavam
na vetty ātma-hitaṃ yas tu sa bhaved brahmaghātakah (Pretakalpa 16.16)

“He who, having attained the human status (*mānuṣya*) difficult of attainment, a step to the final emancipation, does not help himself over, who else in this world is more sinful than this (*pāpatara*)? He who, having obtained the highest birth (as a human being) with his sense-organs unimpaired, fails to realize that benefits the soul (*ātma-hita*), would be (as sinful as) a Brahmin-murderer.”⁵¹

III

All of the above discussion leads us to the following conclusion: In the Hindu view of the world, it is considered as an incident of rare fortune (*durlabha*) for all living creatures to be born as a human being (*mānuṣya*) in the cycle of transmigration. It is obtained once in thousands of births as a result of virtuous deeds (*puṇya*) in the past. Once being born as a human being on the earth, particularly in India as the land of probation (*karmabhūmi*), he is endowed with freedom of will, a privilege granted only to human beings. Here he finds himself liable both to elevate and degenerate himself (*svarga* and *naraka*, *śubha* and *aśubha*). In view of the rare fortune and special privilege mentioned above, man in the Indian subcontinent (*karmabhūmi*) is recommended to pursue righteousness (*dharma*) in order to accumulate religious merit (*puṇya*).

NOTES

This is an article which I wrote originally for the Festschrift Professor Tomonobu Imamichi in 1980. Since there is little possibility for it to be published in accordance with the original plan, I withdraw my contribution and wish to publish it independently. I thank Professor Imamichi who gave me the permission to withdraw it and also Professor Fujita who invited me to publish it in this Journal. During the past six years, several important works have been published on this subject, and thus I put them together in the form of addenda.

The abbreviations used here in this article are as follows,

- ASS. : *Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series* (Poona)
 IA. : *Indian Antiquary*
 IS. : *Indische Sprüche*, by O. Boethlingk (St Petersburg, 1870-73)
 JA. : *Journal Asiatique* (Paris)

- JPTS. : *Journal of the Pali Text Society* (London)
 JRAS. : *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*.
 MBh. : *Mahābhārata* (Poona Critical Edition)
 MS. : *Manusmṛti*
 NSP. : Nirvana Sagar Press (Bombay)
 PTS. : Pali Text Society (London)
 R. : *Rāmāyaṇa* (Baroda Critical Edition)
 WZKM. : *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* (Wien)
 WZKS. : *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd-Asiens* (Wien)
- 1) Cf. Reinhold F. G. Müller, "Altindische Embryologie," *Nova Acta Leopoldina Neue Folge* 17 (Leipzig, 1955) pp. 5–52. For a further reference, cf. M. Hara, "A Note on the Buddha's Birth Story," *Indianisme et Bouddhisme, Mélanges offerts à E. Lamotte* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1980), pp. 146 ff.
 - 2) I refer to the classification of *nāyaka* and *nāyikā* as described in S. Lévi, *Le Théâtre Indien* (Paris, 2ème tirage 1963), pp. 62–86, R. Schmidt, *Beiträge zur indischen Erotik* (Leipzig, 1902), pp. 136–338, George C. O. Haas, *The Daśarūpa* (New York, 1912), pp. 40 ff., and S. Lienhard, "Typen der nāyikā im indischen Kāvya," *WZKM.* 52, 1955, pp. 386–398.
 - 3) I refer here particularly to the concept *aśubha-smṛti* (Pali *asubbhānupassanā*) discussed in Visuddhimagga (PTS, text), pp. 178 ff. Cf. also Theragāthā 1150–4, Maitri Upaniṣad 1. 3 ff., etc.
 - 4) Cf. W. Halbfass, *Zur Theorie der Kastenordnung in der indischen Philosophie* (Göttingen, 1976) and "Anthropological Problem in Classical Indian Philosophy," *Beiträge zur Indienforschung*, E. Waldschmidt zum 80 Geburtstag gewidmet (Berlin 1977), pp. 225 ff.
 - 5) As has been remarked by W. Halbfass, one may be surprised to find that few serious studies have been done on this subject in the past (Halbfass 1977, p. 266 note 4, *The studies on this subject are rather vague, general, and at times speculative.*)
 - 6) One may quote passages from the Aitareya Āraṇyaka 2.3.2, where human beings are said to be endowed with intelligence (*prajñāna*), and with the ability to speak and see what they have understood (*viññātaṃ vadati, viññātaṃ paśyati*). They not only know the tomorrow (*śvastana*), but also the world and the non-world (*lokāloka*). Also, by the mortal, they desire the immortal (*martyen-āmṛtam ipsaty . . .*). Cf. W. Halbfass, *op. cit.* (1977) p. 227, note 12.
 - 7) Cf. R. N. Dandekar, "Man in Hindu Thought," *Insights into Hinduism* (Delhi 1979) pp. 47 ff. One may also refer to MBh. 5.6.1 (*buddhimatsu naraḥ śreṣṭha . . .* = MS. 1. 96), 6.5.11 (*jarāyujānām pravara mānavāḥ paśavaś ca ye*), 6.5.16 (*grāmyāṇām puruṣaḥ śreṣṭhaḥ . . .*), 6.116.32 (*manuṣya jagati śreṣṭhāḥ . . .*), 12.207. 2 (*sarveṣāṃ eva bhūtānām puruṣaḥ śreṣṭha ucyaṭe*), 12.288.15 (*amānuṣān mānuṣo vai viśiṣṭaḥ*), 12.288.20 (*na mānuṣāc chreṣṭhataraṃ hi kiṃcit*), and Jātakamālā 31. 51 (*jāty-ucchrita hi puruṣa . . .*). We meet an Epic passage which speaks that everything existant is for the living of human beings (*tān attī puruṣaḥ sarvān paśya dharmo yathā-gataḥ prāṇasyānnam idaṃ sarvaṃ jaṅgamaṃ sthāvaraṃ ca yat*, MBh. 12.15.22). Cf. also MS. 5. 28–29.
 - 8) Human being, though fragile (*kṣaṇa-bhaṅga*), is compared to a gem and called a mine of all virtue and an ornament of the earth.
srjati tāvad aśeṣa-guṇākaraṃ puruṣa-ratnam alaṃkaraṇaṃ bhuvah tad api tat kṣaṇa-bhaṅgi karoti ced ahaḥ kaṣṭam apaṇḍitatā vidheḥ (Bhartṛhari, Nītiśataka 86 = IS. 7163)
 - 9) The Garuḍa Purāṇa (Sāroddhāra) 16, 15 has *mokṣasya for svargasya*. The text used here is based upon that published in the *Sacred Books of Hindus* 9 (Allahabad 1911). Cf. also E. Abegg, *Der Pretakalpa des Garuḍa Purāṇa, Eine Darstellung des hinduistischen Totenkultes und Jenseitsglaubens* (Berlin, 1921) p. 215.
 - 10) Cf. MBh. 12.286.34,
yo durlabhataṃ prāpya mānuṣyam iha vai naraḥ dharmāvamantā kāmātmā bhavet sa khalu vañcyate
 Jātakamālā 30. 15,
svarga-mokṣa-sukha-prāpti-samarthaṃ janma mānuṣam durlabhaṃ ca tad eteṣaṃ maivaṃ vilayaṃ agamat
 - 11) Amongst these twenty verses, verse Nos. 2 and 9 have a construction of *mānuṣya* with *durlabha*. The text used here is based upon that edited by H. Zimmermann (*Die Subhāṣita-ratna-karaṇḍaka-kathā*, Wiesbaden, 1975)
 - 12) H. Zimmermann, *op. cit.*, pp. 50–51 and M. Hahn's Besprechungsaufsatz in *WZKS* 22, 1978,

- p. 53. Cf. also F. W. Thomas, "Mātriceṭa and the Maharajakanikalekha," *IA* 32 (1903), pp. 349–450. We also meet the same simile in completely different diction in the same text verse 8 (*jalanidhi-kūrmakarāṭha-yuga-randhra-praveśanavat*).
- 13) Cf. *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten* vol. 19, p. 241d (Tokyo, 1976).
- 14) Cf. Mrs. Rhys Davids, "Similes in the Nikāyas" *JPTS.*, 1906–7, p. 73.
- 15) Majjhima Nikāya (PTS. text), vol. 3, p. 169, lines 9 ff.
khippataraṃ kho so, bhikkhave, kaṇo kacchapo amukasmim̐ eka-cchiggaḷe yuge givaṃ paveseyya, ato dullabhatarāham, bhikkhave, manussattaṃ vadāmi sakim̐ vinipāta-gatena bālena. Cf. *Taisho* vol. 1, p. 761 bc.
- 16) Samyutta Nikāya (PTS. text), vol. 5, pp. 455–456.
khippataraṃ kho so, bhikkhave, kaṇo kacchapo vassa-satassa vassa-satassa accayena sakim̐ sakim̐ ummajjanto amusmim̐ eka-cchiggaḷe yuge givaṃ paveseyya, na tv̐ evāham, bhikkhave, sakim̐ vinipāta-gatena bālena manussattaṃ vadāmi. Cf. *Taisho* vol. 2, p. 108 c.
 Comparing these two Pali passages, we notice in the second instance of the comparative *khippataram* . . . *na tv̐*, as comparable to *varaṃ* . . . *na* in Classical Sanskrit. Cf. J. S. Speijer, *Sanskrit Syntax* (Leyden 1886), pp. 189–190.
- 17) *sara kaṇa-kacchapam̐ pubbe samudde parato ca yuga-cchiddam̐ siram̐ tassa ca paṭimukkam̐ manussalābhamhi opammam̐*
 For an explanation of this verse, one may refer to K. R. Norman, *The Elder's Verses II* (London 1971), p. 49, and pp. 174–5.
- 18) Milindapañha (PTS. text), p. 204, lines 11–14,
yam̐ pan etaṃ mahārāja bhagavatā kāṇa-kacchapopamaṃ upadassitaṃ manussatta-patilābhāya, tathūpamaṃ mahārāja imesaṃ samāgamaṃ dhārehi
- 19) Cf. also H. Wenzel, Nāgārjuna's "Friendly Epistle," *JPTS.*, 1886, p. 18.
- 20) Saundarananda 18. 27,
diṣṭyā durāpaḥ kṣaṇa-saṃnipāto nāyam̐ kṛto moha-vaśena moghaḥ udeti duḥkhena gato hy adhasat̐ kūrmō yuga-cchidra ivārṇavasthaḥ
 Text ed., by E. H. Johnston, London, 1928. Cf. his note *ad loc.* (p. 162)
- 21) *so haṃ prāpya manuṣyatvaṃ sasaddharma-mahotsavam̐ mahārṇava-yuga-cchidra-kūrma-grivārpaṇopamam̐*
 The text edited by D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *The Śatapathaśatka of Mātrceṭa* (Cambridge 1951), p. 35. Cf. also pp. 12–13 and 153.
- 22) *durlabho hy amba tāta buddhotpāda udumbara-puṣpa-sadr̥śo mahārṇava-yuga-cchidra-kūrma-griva-praveśavat.* The text edited by H. Kern and B. Nanjo *Bibliotheca Buddhica* X, p. 463, line 4. Notice here another simile of the *Udumbara*-flower.
- 23) Cf. *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, ed., by P. L. Vaidya (Darbhanga 1960), p. 4, line 27 (*mahārṇava-yuga-cchidra-kūrma-grivārpaṇopamā* . . .). Cf. also p. 125, line 11 (*mahārṇava-yuga-cchidra-kūrma-grivārpaṇavat*).
- 24) For further references to this simile of a blind tortoise as associated with a floating yoke, cf. *Sūtrālaṃkāra* 6 (*Taisho*, vol. 4, p. 291 bc), Ed. Huber, *Aśvaghoṣa, Sūtrālaṃkāra, traduit en français sur la version chinoise* (Paris, 1908), pp. 180–181, H. Lüders, *Bruchstücke der Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā des Kumāralāta* (Wiesbaden, 2nd ed., 1979), p. 156, S. Lévi, "Note sur les Indo-scythes," *JA* 1896, p. 455 note 1, F. W. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 350, M. Winternitz, "Beiträge zur buddhistischen Sanskrit Literatur," *WZKM.* 27, 1913, pp. 43–47. Cf. also G. A. Jacob, "A Sanskrit Simile," *JRAS.* 1909, pp. 1120–21 and P. Mus, *La lumière sur les six voies* (Paris 1939), p. 6.
- 25) As regards parallel passages to this, cf. K. Mizudo, *Hokkukyō no Kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1981), pp. 158–9. Cf. also Dhammapada 193 (*dullabho purisājaṇṇo na so sabbattha jāyati*)
- 26) *PTS.* text, p. 419.
- 27) For this simile of the *Udumbara*-flower, cf. E. Lamotte, *Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse* (Louvain, 1949), p. 304, note 2 and p. 541.
- 28) Text edited by J. Charpentier, *The Uttarādhyāyanasūtra* (Indian reprint, New Delhi 1980).
- 29) Cf. J. Charpentier, *op. cit.*, p. 291.
- 30) Text edited by C. Caillat, *Candāvejyaya, Introduction, édition critique, traduction, commentaire* (Paris 1971).
- 31) This portion is translated by C. Caillat as "Les hommes qui, ayant obtenu la condition humaine, s'exercent de manière à n'en pas déchoir." (*op. cit.*, p. 90).
- 32) With these four items, one may also compare *Uttarādhyāyanasūtra* 10. 16–20 (*mānuṣattaṇa*,

- āriatta, ahina-paṃcendriyatta, uttama-dhamma-sui, saddahaṇā, phāsaṇā), and Candāvejjhaya 105–108 (māṇussa, bohi, sāmaṇṇa, nāṇābhigama, caritta-sohi). Cf. Caillat, *op. cit.*, pp. 128–9.
- 33) Cf. also Padma Purāṇa 6.229.47 (ASS. text, vol. 4, 1894, p. 1715), where the word *puṇya* is replaced by *sukṛta* (nāsmabhiḥ sukṛtaṃ kiṃcit kṛtaṃ tatra mahitale).
- 34) Cf. also W. Kirfel, *Das Purāṇa vom Weltgebäude* (Bonn, 1954), p. 19 (Bhuvanavinyāsa 3. 18).
- 35) Cf. W. Kirfel, *op. cit.*, pp. 19–20 (3. 19) and his *Bhāratavarṣa* (Stuttgart 1931), pp. 49 and 63 (55. 7: manuṣyaḥ kurute yat tu tan na śakyaṃ surāsuraiḥ). Cf. also Bhāgavata Purāṇa 5.13.21 (aho nṛ-janmākhila-janma-śobhanaṃ kiṃ janmabhis tv aparair apy amuṣmin).
- 36) Cf. MBh. 14.43.20 and 12.161.10,
prakāśa-lakṣaṇā devā manuṣyāḥ karma-lakṣaṇāḥ
śabda-lakṣaṇam ākāśaṃ vāyus tu sparśa-lakṣaṇaḥ (MBh.14.43.20)
karma-bhūmir iyaṃ rājann iha vārttā praśasyate
kṛṣi-vāṇijya-gorakṣyaṃ śilpāni vīvidhāni ca (MBh.12.161.10)
- 37) For this verse, cf. E. W. Hopkins, *Ethics of India* (New Haven, 1924) p. 80 and A. Hildebeitel, *The Ritual of Battle* (Ithaca and London, 1976), p. 47.
- 38) The latter is also called *phala-bhūmi* or *upabhoga-sthāna*. Cf.
iha yat kriyate karma tat paratropabhuṣyate
karma-bhūmir iyaṃ brahman phala-bhūmir asau matā (MBh. 3.247.35)
tatrāpi bhāratam eva varṣaṃ karma-kṣetram anyāny aṣṭa varṣāni
svargiṇāṃ puṇya-śeṣopabhoga-sthānāni (Bhāgavata Purāṇa 5.17.11)
- 39) Cf. W. Kirfel, *Die Kosmographie der Inder* (Bonn/Leipzig, 1920), p. 58, W. Halbfass, *op. cit.* (1977), p. 229 and *Indien und Europa* (Basel/Stuttgart 1981) p. 197, and R. F. Young, *Resistant Hinduism* (Vienna 1981), p. 152.
- 40) The latter two are also called as *madhya* and *anta*. Cf. W. Kirfel, *Bhāratavarṣa* (Stuttgart, 1931), p. 21.
- 41) Cf. IS. 2430 and L. Sternbach, *Cāṇakya-Nīti-Text-Tradition* (Hoshiarpur 1963) vol.1, Part one, *Vṛddha-Cāṇakya, Textus Ornator Version*, p. 77.
- 42) For this alliterative construction (*sāra, asāra, saṃsāra*), cf. IS. 777–779, L. Sternbach, *Mahā-subhāṣita-saṃgraha* II (Hoshiarpur 1976), 3736–3737. As for *saṃsāre sāra*, see IS. 6639–6640, and for *saṃsāre asminn asāre*, IS. 6641–6642 and Pretakalpa 16. 2, and Prabodhacandrodaya 5. 28 c (*asāre saṃsāre*). Further, for *sāra . . . asāra*, cf. Dhammapada 11–12, Jātakamālā 24.12, Śikṣāsamuccaya 20. 1, 23. 13, 26. 2, Divyāvadāna 384. 6, 482.6 (see Shakleton Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 153 6c), Kathāsaritsāgara 90.111. Furthermore, for *niḥsāra . . . saṃsāra*, cf. Buddhacarita 14. 6 and *niḥsāra . . . sāra*, cf. Jātakamālā 2. 50 and Yājñavalkya smṛti 3. 8. In the above examples, we notice that *asāra* and *niḥsāra* modify mostly *kāya* or *deha* (body) and *dhana* (wealth).
- 43) The body is called a means of accomplishing merit: *śarīram ādyaṃ khalu dharmasādhanaṃ* (Kumārasambhava 5.33).
- 44) For the semantic field common to these concepts, see M. Hara, “dharma, puṇya, tapas = sukṛta,” *A. Hirakawa's Volume* (Tokyo, 1975), pp. 507–544, and J. Filliozat, “Sur le domaine émantique de puṇya,” *Indianisme et Bouddhisme* (Louvain, 1980) pp. 101–116.
- 45) For other references to *karma-bhūmi*, cf. also Kādambarī, p. 541–542 (*karmabhūmibhūte 'smīn bhārate varṣe . . .*), MBh. 12.161.10, 12.185.19, 12.309.13, 12.309.89, 14.17.32, 3.181.31, 3.247.35., Harivaṃśa 41.24 (Poona ed., 1969), Kūrma Purāṇa 1.45.21 (Ramnagar, 1972). As for *karma-kṣetra*, cf. Bhāgavata Purāṇa 5.14.4, 5.17.11 etc.
- 46) Cf. also Bodhicaryāvatāra 4. 23 (*vañcanā*),
nātaḥ parā vañcanāsti na ca moho 'sty ataḥ paraḥ
yad idṛśaṃ kṣaṇaṃ prāpya nābhyastaṃ kuśalaṃ mayā
Subhāṣita-ratna-karaṇḍaka-kathā 18 reads *māyā* for *vañcanā*.
- 47) Cf. also Garuḍa Purāṇa Uttarakhaṇḍa 9. 22 (Calcutta 1890, p. 632),
jāti-śatena labhate kila mānuṣatvam
tatrāpi durlabhataraṃ khaga bho dvijatvam
yas tatra pālayati lālayat indriyāṇi
tasyāmṛtaṃ kṣarati hasta-gataṃ pramādāt
- 48) Cf. Suhṛllekha 60 (H. Wenzel, *op. cit.*, p. 18), Nītiśataka 96 quoted above and Subhāṣita-ratna-karaṇḍaka-kathā 16 (*ratna-dvīpād vaṇiḥ iva gataḥ svam grhaṃ śūnya-hastaḥ*).
- 49) Such a man is also called senseless (*vicetas*). Cf. MBh. 12.309.13,
adya-kālikayā buddhyā dūre śva iti nirbhayāḥ

sarva-bhakṣā na paśyanti karma-bhūmiṃ vicetasāḥ

50) Cf. MBh. 12.309.79, which has *svargasya* for *mokṣasya*. Cf. note 9 above.

51) Such a man is called deluded (*mūḍha*) and sinful (*pāpa*),

evaṃ yo viśayasaktyā naratvam atidurlabham

vrthā nāśayate mūḍhas tasmāt pāpataro hi kaḥ (Pretakalpa 6. 39)

He is also called virtueless (*nirguṇa*) and stupid (*durbuddhi*), and further an enemy of *ātman*,

tasmād guṇeṣu rajyetha mā doṣeṣu kadā cana

nirguṇo yo hi durbuddhir ātmanaḥ so 'rir ucyate (MBh.12.283.27)

Addenda

Note 12. M. Hahn, *Die Subhāṣitaratnakaraṇḍakakathā, Ein spātbuddhistischer Text zur Verdienstlehre* (Göttingen 1983) p. 23.

Notes 19 S. Dietz, *Die Buddhistische Briefliteratur Indiens* (Wiesbaden 1984) and 48. pp. 444–447. Lozang Jamspal, etc., *Nāgārjuna's letter to King Gautamīputra* (Delhi 1978), p. 36.

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