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THE IMPACT OF HINDU-JEWISH STUDIES IN ISRAEL

or The Salience of Spirituality

By Shalva Weil

Introduction

During the Intermediate Days of Passover (*hol hamoed* Pesach) in 2002, my son, then serving as a paratrooper in Israel's Defense Force, volunteered to man the Village of Love and Prayer at the annual Boombamela (named after the Hindu Kumba Mela) festival on Nitzanim beach, near Ashkelon. Due both to the unusually cold weather and the frightening security situation, there was only a "small" turnout of some 20,000 young people seeking spirituality. The previous year, I had carried out observations among an estimated 50,000 Israeli youngsters dressed in extraordinary distortions of Indian garb, many sitting and meditating in lotus-like positions. It transpired that many of them had returned from backpacking trips to India. The pre-army youth and the soldiers, who had not, were dreaming of making the big trip some time in the near future. As my son put it at the 2002 festival, there was more 'love' than prayer and lots of *avodah zara* (idolatry).[1]

Hindu-Jewish Studies versus Popular Conceptions

Paradoxically, Hindu-Jewish studies have never been a legitimate field of study in Israel, although the popular development of Israeli conceptions of Indian spirituality appears to be unbounded in recent years. This Introduction will attempt to explain why there has been slow progress in this academic field in Israel to date, and will point out the subject's recent relative flourishing in non-academic or quasi-academic venues. Before I embark upon this ambitious task, let me delineate the borders of the area we are designating "Hindu-Jewish studies."

Nathan Katz, in a pioneering article on what he describes as the "Hindu-Jewish encounter," [2] focuses on one particular aspect of Hindu-Jewish studies, namely, interreligious dialogue, a subject that Maurice Friedman also deems more important than others in the Hindu-Jewish interface.[3] Katz points out that dialogue itself is rooted in a Christian model, while alternate models, such as the Hindu-Jewish one and others, may be more appropriate.[4] The Christian model tends to focus upon the absolute and its experience, a theological approach that may distort Hinduism as a religion. According to Katz, the "excessive concern with the metaphysical in interreligious dialogue tends to lead to 'conversion by definition,' an attitude which robs the dialogue partner of his/her right to dissent, even to speak, in fact of his/her very identity."[5] Katz maintains that the *sine qua non* characteristics of

Hindu-Jewish dialogue are the primacy of orthopraxy over orthodoxy, and the symmetrical nature of the encounter.[6]

Other aspects of the Hindu-Jewish dialogue go beyond theology and mysticism, to the disciplines of political science, military strategy and cultural studies. In each field, the discourse is different. In the religious arena, spirituality is of the essence. In cultural and literary discussions, and diplomacy or military information exchange, the rhetoric is of a different nature. Discourses of intolerance, minority feelings and stereotypes are invoked in yet another area, ethnic and multicultural networks.

All of these fields belong to the Hindu-Jewish encounter or to the Indo-Judaic dialogue. The dialogues are played out on different stages and in different places. To date, spirituality appears to be a dominant discourse in a discussion of the impact of Hindu-Jewish studies in Israel.

Stagnation of the Field in Israel

The Hindu-Judaic dialogue and specifically Hindu-Jewish studies have been slow to develop in Israel. In recent years, this state of affairs is gradually changing as Hindu-Jewish studies is receiving legitimatization abroad, and consequently beginning to make its mark on the academic cognitive map in Israel.

One possible reason for this stagnation is the resistance, stemming perhaps from unfamiliarity, on behalf of Jews to Hinduism as a religion. Katz quite rightly points out that the major obstacle — in his case to an authentic dialogue between the two religions, which is his major concern — is the Jews' traditional abhorrence of idolatry.[7] I would add that on the Hindu side, resistance to the Jewish religion is less of an issue, but ignorance of the tenets of Judaism is a more authentic cause.

Until ten years ago, Israel did not really have much of a Hindu community. Some individual Hindus reside in Israel and there is a close-knit Jain community of diamond merchants who made Israel their home some 20 years ago. For a real dialogue to take place, Israel needed enough Hindus present to enter into a symmetrical interchange. With the absence of Hindus in the country and with the absence of access to them, that dialogue was not destined to take place.

Conversely, although Israel was known to the Indian public through films such as "Exodus" or newspaper articles, relatively few Indians actually visited Israel. However, a few, such as Ved Bhushan Singh, studied at the Afro-Asian Institute for Co-operation, Development and Labour Studies in Tel-Aviv in the '60s. He recently published a rare view of Israel by an Indian, entitled *A Hodi in Holy Land,* "Hodi" being the Hebrew appellation for Indians in Israel.[8] Its late publication date (35 years after his first visit) mirrors public interest in Israel among Indians today, which is accompanied by an awakening interest on the part of Indians in the more academic development of Hindu-Jewish studies. How can we account for the recent changes?

Factors Contributing to the Growth of Hindu-Jewish Studies in Israel

Without a doubt, the single most important impetus to the growth of the Hindu-Jewish dialogue, and in its wake the progress in Hindu-Jewish studies, was the establishment of diplomatic relations with India in 1992. Today, with Israel becoming a multicultural country, with intense diplomatic exchanges and brisk commerce between the two countries, the Hindu-Jewish encounter is finally taking place.

In June 2002, I was honored in my capacity as the founding chairperson of the Israel-India Cultural Association, the official friendship organization between Israel and India, to be invited to the President of the State of Israel's reception marking a decade of diplomatic relations with India. Most of the major figures in the development of Indo-Israel relations were present. Shimon Peres, at the time Israel's Foreign Minister, paid tribute to Zubin Mehta, the famous impresario, who for years had encouraged unofficial musical dialogues with India. Peres also read extracts from the poetry of the Bene Israel poet Nissim Ezekiel of Mumbai.[9]

Diplomatic relations with India brought several marvelous developments in its wake: an increase in trade, a flourishing of cultural relations, frequent visits of Indian dignitaries, military and political cooperation and the "discovery" of India by thousands of Israeli post-army backpackers, many of whom were seeking spirituality. Importantly, some Israelis, including politicians and academics, met Indian Embassy personnel and transient Hindus with whom they could converse and compare notes. In 1995, the Israel Museum hosted a magnificent exhibition on all three communities of Indian Jews, and published a catalogue on their material culture.[10] The Center for Jewish Art at the Hebrew University included documentation of Indian Jewish synagogues in their global survey.[11] Indian studies, particularly as taught by the illustrious Prof. David Shulman at the Hebrew University, hit an all-time high as backpackers emerged in a later reincarnation as students and philosophers of Hinduism. More Indian academics paid visits to Israel, such as the renowned professor of world civilizations, Ashis Nandy of JNU, New Delhi. Other scholars, such as Margaret Chatterjee, who compared Jewish and Hindu philosophers, stayed in Israel on sabbatical. Israeli academics, for their part, visited India for longer periods of time and more frequently than in the pre-diplomatic relations era. Several universities entered into exchange relations with Indian universities, including Bar-Illan University, whose strategic relations experts participated.

In Israel, the study of Indian Jewry continued at a slightly accelerated, yet still controlled pace, with Indians entering the scholarly arena of Indo-Judaic studies.[12] Das edited a volume on Indian Jews in the *Eastern Anthropologist*;[13] Abrahams published on the Indian Jews in Israel;[14] and a few graduate students, including Sreekala, completed dissertations on Indian Jews in Israel.[15] The journal *Pe'amim*, under the auspices of the Ben-Zvi Institute, published new research in Hebrew on Indian Jews and Indian Jewish texts, and the Institute hosted several seminars during the last decade dedicated to a discussion of Judaising movements in north-east India, Cochin Jews and Indian Jewry, in general. The anthropologist Barbara Johnson and a Cochin Jewish woman, the late Ruby Daniel of Kibbutz Neot Mordechai, co-authored the pioneering book, *Ruby of Cochin* on Ruby's memoirs as one of the "freed slaves" (meshuhearim), her education at a convent and St. Theresa's convent in Ernakulam, her service in the navy and her eventual immigration to Israel.[16] The new volume on *India's Jewish Heritage* contains five chapters written by Indian Jews, including one woman who is an Israeli Cochin Jew.[17] In 2002, Indian Jews themselves took part in recording their own music: at an evening at the Ben-Zvi Institute in Jerusalem devoted to the analysis of Malayalam Jewish women's songs, run by an international research team led by Barbara Johnson and Scaria Zecharia, and at an evening with Bene Israel singers at Beth Hatefutsoth, the Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, to celebrate a new CD entitled *Eliyahoo Hanabee*.[18]

Indo-Judaic research, particularly in the field of comparative religion, was given a deep injection by the publication of Hananya Goodman's edited volume, *Between Jerusalem and Benares: Comparative Studies in Judaism and Hinduism*, a pioneering effort, which brought together a group of scholars to investigate what Goodman calls the "resonances" between the great Judaic and Hindu traditions.[19] Of the 12 contributors to the book, four were Israeli. The publication of the *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* was a milestone. However, of the 22 full-length articles published in the first five volumes of the *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies*, only one was authored by an Israeli.[20] Four articles in the field of political science related to modern Israel,[21] three of which were penned by visiting Indian scholars to Israel and related to modern Israel.[22] In 1995, I was invited to attend the Indian Studies Symposium sponsored by P.M. Narasimha Rao's conference in Kovallam, where I delivered a paper entitled "Coexistence in India; the Case of the Cochin Jews." And, in 1997, editor Sushil Mittal approached me to chair the Hindu-Jewish dialogue in the *International Journal of Hindu Studies*.

The "real" breakthrough, however, appeared less in academia and more in popular expressions of spirituality and religion. In Israel, a new type of "New Age" religion developed, incorporating elements of Hindu practice often acquired in the ashrams of India, which combines meditation with Jewish practice. Sheleg calls this medley of orthodox young people aligned with once-secular Israelis in a type of Carlebach-kabbalistic quest (as at the Boombamela festival), the "new spirituals,"[23] who are influencing hard-line orthodoxy in Israel and shaping the orthopraxy of their parents.[24] Carlebach synagogues and Carlebach-type prayer gatherings are springing up by the month in Jerusalem, particularly in the German Colony, Bakaa and Nahlaot quarters, in Zichron Yaacov and in other cities in Israel. The Hassidic singing, combined with mediation, individual-oriented prayer and expressions of joy, not only has an impact on religious orthodoxy, but also has repercussions in secular circles, where people also are seeking spirituality. Youngsters attend the Boombamela at Passover and the Bereshit (Hebrew: Genesis) festival at Megiddo on the New Year, with their rock bands and Hassidic lilts. Adults attend courses at the Yakar Centre for Jewish learning in Jerusalem, listen attentively to lectures in north Tel Aviv, and participate in yoga-cum-kabbala classes in prestigious locations. New forms of quasi-Hinduism take root at the Nitzanim beach or at the exclusive, yuppie Carmel Forest Spa, where in-house Rabbi Gafni teaches meditation the Jewish way and tells of his exploits in Dharmasala in India — all in one breath!

Conclusion

Hindu-Judaic studies are only in their infancy in Israel. A large discrepancy exists between popular study of Hinduism with its concomitant Israeli attraction to Indian philosophies, and the state of the academic enterprise. The dialogue is just beginning, encouraged by exchanges and visits between members of the two religions. While Israel has produced internationally renowned Hindu specialists, experts in the narrower Hindu-Jewish studies arena are yet to emerge, and hopefully will also come from the Indian Jewish community. There has been no Israeli follow-up to Holdrege's monumental comparison of Tora and Veda, and no attempt to compare interpretations of the two orthopractic religions of Hinduism and Judaism at the community or vernacular level.[25]

Despite this lag in the academic study of Hinduism and Judaism, it does appear, nevertheless, that spirituality is the key to the encounter. An eye-witness account of the closing ceremony of the Boombamela festival conveys the enthusiasm in the unique Indian-Israeli, Hindu-Jewish creation:

> Thousands of people stand around the central fire. From the Village of Love and Prayer, a gigantic procession arrives with drums, guitars, shofars (rams' horns) and Torah scrolls, with people singing, "Our father (Jacob) is still alive, Israel trusts in the Lord." They enter the central circle, dancing while everyone is singing, "And He who kept his promise to our ancestors." They get to the synagogue and continue singing with everyone in unison, "Shema Yisrael" (Hebrew: Hear O! Israel). That was the closing ceremony of the festival of Indian spirituality, trance and Hare Krishna. Nevertheless, all the people of Israel are holy.[26]

The syncretism is obvious, while the sweet irony of the belief in monotheism at a "Hindu" festival in Israel complete with elements of fire, sensual motives and noises is stark. Against such a backdrop and such a sweeping popular interest in

Hinduism and Judaism, Hindu-Jewish studies in Israel will no doubt flourish further in the future. Boombamela and other cultural Hindu-Jewish manifestations will remain as "touchstones of reality," as lasting residues of salient events in the lives of persons, groups and peoples. The "dialogue of touchstones," a phrase coined by Maurice Friedman in his psychotherapeutic work with Westerners and Indians, Hindus and Jews, arises in the sharing of each side's unique touchstones.[27] According to Friedman, this sharing can aid people in a true intercultural dialogue, which is meaningful to both sides. It can also help in the development of a discipline.

Footnotes

1. In the light of the Boombamela and other similar festivals now held regularly in Israel, one begins to question whether Israeli Jews are less abhorrent of idolatory than their diasporic counterparts in the galut (exile).

2. Nathan Katz, "How the Hindu-Jewish Encounter Reconfigures Interreligious Dialogue," *Shofar* 19:1 (1997:31): 28-42.

3. Maurice Friedman, *Intercultural Dialogue and the Human Image*, S. C. Malik and Pat Boni, eds. (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1995).

4. Katz, "How the Hindu-Jewish," p. 31

5. Katz, "How the Hindu-Jewish," p. 32

6. Katz, "How the Hindu-Jewish," pp. 33-34.

7. Katz, "How the Hindu-Jewish," p. 36.

8. Ved Bhushan Singh, *A Hodi in Holy Land* (New Delhi: Alfa, 2002).

9. Nissim Ezekiel, *Collected Poems 1952-1988* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989); R. R. Rao, "The Jewish Background of Nissim Ezekiel's Poetry." *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 5 (2002):7-28.

10. Orpa Slapak, ed., *The Jews of India: A Story of Three Communities* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1995).

11. A. Amar and R. Jacoby, *Ingathering of the Nations: Treasures of Jewish Art: Documenting an Endangered Legacy* (Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Art, The Hebrew University, 1998).

12. Important developments can be traced from the mid-90's and the establishment of the *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* in 1994; the AAR (American Academy of Religion) Comparative Studies in Hinduisms and Judaisms Consultation, founded in 1995, and the AAR Comparative Studies in Hinduisms and Judaisms Group, in existence from 1998.

13. C. R. Das, "Israel's Jews from India," *The Eastern Anthropologist* 49:3 & 4 (1996): 317-348.

14. M. Abrahams, "Ethnicity and Marginality: A Study of Indian Jewish Immigrants in Israel," *South Asia Bulletin* 15:1 (1995):108-123.

15. S. Sreekala, "Israel in the Perception of Indian Jews: A Case Study of Bene Israel" (Thesis submitted to JNU University, New Delhi, 1995).

16. Ruby Daniel and Barbara Johnson, *Ruby of Cochin: An Indian Jewish Woman Remembers* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1995).

17. Shalva Weil, ed., *India's Jewish Heritage* (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2002).

18. S. Manasseh, "The Musical Tradition of the Bene Israel of Bombay," in Y. Shaked, ed., *Eliyahoo Hanabee* (Tel Aviv: Beth Hatefutsoth, The Nahum Goldman Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, 2002), pp.11-18. Shalva Weil, "The Bene Israel of India," in Shaked, ed., *Eliyahoo Hanabee*, pp. 3-10. The song "Eliyahoo Hanabee" is sung at the Seder service on the eve of Passover commemorating the exodus from Egypt.

19. Hananya Goodman, ed., *Between Jerusalem and Benares: Comparative Studies in Judaism and Hinduism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

20. Meir Bar Ilan, "India and the Land of Israel: Between Jews and Indians in Ancient Times," *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 4 (2001):39-78.

21. Gary Jeffrey Jacobsohn, "Hindu Nationalism and the Israeli Experience," *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 1(1998): 33-56.

22. P. R. Kumaraswamy, "India and the Holocaust: Perceptions of the Indian national Congress," *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 3 (2000):117-125. Kumarsawamy, "India, Israel and the Davis Cup Tie," *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 5, (2002):29-39. Dinesh Kumar, "India and Israel: From Conflict to Convergence of Interests," *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 3 (2000):86-116.

23. Y. Sheleg, *The New Religious People* (Jerusalem: Keter, 2001)(Hebrew).

24. M. Zeller, "The Hassidic Story of the Brave Soldier and the Haredi Youth, or Experiences from the Boombamela Festival," *Glilon-Otniel Yeshiva Journal* (2002): 12-14(Hebrew). Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, who died in the 1980s, was known as "the singing Rabbi." He composed many tunes and preached Judaism through song strumming on his guitar. His songs are even more popular today than when he was alive.

24. Barbara Holdrege, *Veda and Torah: Transcending the Textuality of Scripture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.)

26. Mali 2002:13

27. Friedman, "Intercultural Dialogue and the Human Image."

Jewish Experience in India or the Making of an Indian Jewish Novel

A Reading of Esther David's The Walled City

By D. Venkateshwarlu
Osmania University

Before we critique the achievement of Jewish writing in India, it would be profitable to get a perspective on the creative endeavor of Jewish American writing, more specifically, the Jewish American novel. Jews in India lived in comparative peace.

European Jews looked at America as a similar haven for the oppressed. The huge flood of Jewish immigration, especially during the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, is a testament to this belief. Even as immigrant parents were struggling in the sweatshops, their children attended public schools and, in the passage of time, emerged as prophets of American culture as perceived through Jewish vision. This does not mean that these writers necessarily came from Orthodox Judaism or the tradition of normative Judaism, nor does it confirm that they even have a living dialogue with Judaism.

Growing up on the Lower East Side and in the tenements of the Bronx and Brooklyn, these writers were exposed spontaneously to the Jewish sensibility. To be sure, some of these young Jews were desperately rushing to become American and possibly disappear in the "melting pot."[1] Secular behavior was all that they were interested in but unwittingly they were structuring it with essential Jewish concern for the little man and social justice, and with a profound faith in humanistic vision.

Early novels by Abraham Cahan, the editor of the Yiddish newspaper, and by Mary Antin virtually erect a paradigm of Jewish response to America. *The Rise of David Levinsky* by Cahan actually is about the "fall" of the protagonist.[2] In the old country, David Levinsky was a much respected Talmud student. He immigrated to America and pursued the American dream of success with great fervor. He "made it" in America, but then he felt spiritually drained and frequently longed for those long ago days in the Old Country. Mary Antin's *The Promised Land* provides a different picture, unabashedly celebrating the freedom and opportunities of the new world.[3]

The New York ghettos, especially the Bronx, Brooklyn, Harlem and Williamsburg, provided the foundation of the immigrant and socialist backgrounds of at least two or three generations of Jewish-American novelists. The traditional Jewish passion for social justice, communal destiny and concern for the little man, who emerged as a *schlemiel* figure, were nostalgically celebrated in the successful Broadway musical *Fiddler on the Roof*.[4] These themes of nineteenth century Yiddish literature coupled with the complexities of corporate America occupied the attention of Jewish writers. The novelists of the 1920s and the 1930s, such as Meyer Levin, Henry Roth, Edward Dahlberg, Ludwig Lewisohn, Daniel Fuchs, Mike Gold and others, sketch immigrant life and its ambivalences with typical Jewish rage against oppression and exploitation in the sweatshops. For these children of Socialist homes, the Wall Street Crash of 1929 was the proof of capitalist machinations.

The thirties were crucial. The decade saw the rise of Jewish intellectuals around the *Partisan Review*, which became the forum for the rites of passage of social thinkers, writers and cultural commentators. Saul Bellow, the representative of the energy of the Jewish American novel, first published *Seize the Day* in the *Partisan Review*.[5] The Bellow generation declared the impact of Jewish writing on the American scene. Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, Norman Mailer and Joseph Heller followed by E.L. Doctorow, Chaim Potok, Stanley Elkin, Cynthia Ozick, Tillie Olsen, Grace Paley and Herman Wouk made an enduring mark on American culture. Whereas most Jewish writers wrote about the dilemma of being Jewish in America with its attendant anxieties and the temptations of assimilation, both Chaim Potok and Cynthia Ozick explored a profound dialogue with normative Judaism. Their work stands out as a significant testimony to an engaging synthesis between art and the need to negotiate it with unequivocal affirmation of one's tradition. For a change, the characters in their novels are not mere ethnic Jews but are Jews who live by the conduct of Judaism.

Edward Lewis Wallant published *The Pawnbroker*, which addresses the Holocaust.[6] Whereas Jewish novelists addressed the legacy of modernism and the travails of secularization with artistic success, their achievement is eclipsed by their inability to tackle the Holocaust — the most complex chapter in Jewish history. And, although Israel is a spiritual home that defines the aspirations of Diaspora Jewry, creative writers in America also have not explored this theme significantly.

I have sketched briefly some aspects of the Jewish American novel to enable us to view Jewish writing in India from its vantage point, but I must also mention that Jews excelled in other fields of art and culture as well. They contributed significantly to American theater, from David Belasco to contemporary luminaries such as Arthur Miller, Neil Simon, David Mamet and the *avant garde* of the sixties. The Group Theatre with Harold Clurman, Lee Strasberg and Clifford Odets energized the entire theater culture of the 1930s. Their legacy is still perceptible in present day theater movements. At the same time, Charles Reznikoff wrote poetry in which immigrant Jewish culture, tradition and the promise of the American dream are successfully synthesized in a medium that eventually prepared the ground for later poets such as the beat-guru, Allen Ginsberg. Similarly, the climate of intellectual life has been championed by many college professors who benefited from the successful battles waged by the Jewish community against negative quota systems in higher education. Lionel Trilling, Philip Rahv, Daniel Bell, Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz and the forum of the *Partisan Review* immediately come to mind. These descriptions clarify the extent of Jewish achievement in different fields.

Indian Jewish Writing

Let us now turn to Indian Jewish writing. Nissim Ezekiel has been probably the most recognizable Jewish presence in India. During his productive period, he was a free thinker. He was a major voice in the formative period of Indian writing in English along with others such as R. K. Narayan, MulkRaj Anand and Raja Rao. As a poet, he was studied with A. K. Ramanujan, R. Parthasarthi, Arun Kolatkar, Kamala Das and Keki Daruwala, among others. Some Jews played a role in Bollywood.

The novel as a genre could have provided the required freedom to put Jewish life in narrative patterns that adequately account for Indian Jews in history. Although that has not happened thus far, Esther David's first novel is welcome in so far as it actually initiates the Jewish novel in India. Esther David is a sculptor and a writer. She was born in 1944 in a Marathi-speaking Bene-Israel community. She lives in Ahmedabad — the walled city — where she is professionally involved in art, sculpting and creative writing.

Esther David is not a self-hating Jew, although that theme haunted Jewish communities historically and haunts them at the present time. Assimilation into the mainstream culture has always been a great temptation for certain Jews; it definitely was for the first generation of American Jews. Ludwig Lewisohn, who eventually became a Zionist, wrote a play called *Adam* that focuses on assimilation's tragic consequences.[7]

Esther David's *The Walled City* focuses on such themes as assimilation and intermarriage; the overwhelming impact of Indian culture with its unity-in-diversity vision; Judaism as ritual ceremonies; synagogue attendance (even when attendance occasionally is not possible due to the lack of minyan — the required number of Jews for the service); welcoming Sabbath and observing High Holidays; the tremendous appeal of Israel and the experience of discrimination there (Indian Jews find marriage partners among themselves — not among "the other Jews"[8] as Daniel Elazer calls them); the clash of cultures, especially the Hindu-Muslim riots; and the Hindu version of caste discrimination as it has an impact on Jewish life, in terms of "pardes" or white Jews, and brown Jews.

That established, let me briefly comment on Jews and Hindus and how they perceive each other. Hinduism and Judaism are among the most ancient civilizations and both continue to look into their roots to create meaningful interaction.

Both reflect their ancestry in their negotiations with their contemporary situations. A natural affinity and spontaneous warmth has always existed between these two religions. In modern India, because of political and social reasons and their international ramifications, a greater consensus emerged among intellectuals and conservative Hindus that there should be an affirmative interaction between Jews and Hindus. A large number of Bene-Israel Jews living in Israel contribute positively to a genial and constructive relationship with India.

The Walled City, which is a microcosm of India, deals with three generations of Jews. It is a story of the Bene-Israel community, which rediscovered its Judaism with the help of Baghdadi Jews, especially David Rahabi. The Baghdadi Jews, who came with the British purely for commercial reasons and settled in Calcutta, left India when the British did after Indian independence. The Bene-Israel community took the nomenclature of Marathis. By and large, Jews lived in India in peace and security. Benjamin Israel observes in *The Bene-Israel of India, Some Studies*:

> The story of the Jews of India has on the whole been a happy one, unlike that of their co-religionists in many other lands. It is true that now and then in the Diaspora, Jews have, in one land or the other, enjoyed periods of peace and prosperity and even outbursts of creativity, which have brought advancement to the whole of mankind, but these periods have been succeeded by persecution, contumely, and even expulsion...The Jews of India cannot claim to have any extraordinary achievements to their credit but they did maintain their identity over centuries in the midst of an alien civilization and, in their small way, prosper. And unlike other small Jewish communities they *have not allowed themselves to be killed by kindness and (to) get assimilated in the host society* (Italics mine)...The saving factor was a stubborn pride in the Jewish heritage, which enabled the Bene-Israel for instance to resist the blandishments of the Christian minorities, much as they admired them and appreciated what they were able to learn from them.[9]

These remarks are significant in the context of the novel. Jews as an ethnic minority always have to tackle the mainstream society, socially, politically and culturally. The interaction between Jewish life and the mainstream society has been interesting for many reasons. For Jewish writers, it offers an opportunity to evolve and create an artistic space, which is more often than not a battleground for what they find in normative Judaism. They struggle with how Judaism can be of any help in dealing meaningfully with the outside world.

In Europe and North America, Jewish neighborhoods provide an ambience for prospective writers to be grounded sometimes even antithetically in a Jewish context because, as noted Jewish sociologist Marshall Sklare[10] points out, there is *Yiddishkeit* — the Jewish street — which is the source and the spirit that authenticates their creativity. Therefore, even when writers are ostensibly non-believers, their Jewish aspect gets secularized in their artistic and intellectual pursuits. To be sure, the *Yiddishkeit* mentioned might not stem from high Jewish culture, but it gave uniqueness to the works of American Jewish writers. What if the environment of the Jewish street, however tenuous it may be, is not accessible to the Jewish writer? Esther David's debut novel offers perspectives and insights on this question.

Historically the origin of her Bene-Israel sect of India Jews has been part of apocryphal speculations. Some take it back to a shipwreck in the early centuries and the fact that some of the survivors were washed ashore. In any case, they were discovered in this century by their co-religionists and were systematically taught religion, tradition and ritual. They were generally Marathi-speaking Jews and had taken indigenous names as well. Their status in Israel, like that of the *Falashas*, and its eventual resolution is all too familiar to us.

Esther David clearly is aware of the history of the Bene-Israel community. She appreciates Indian cultural diversity, especially the predominant Hinduism with its caste-system, elaborate rituals of idol worship and long tradition of polytheism. She also knows the practice of *Chaturvarna* (four categories that define the caste stratification such as Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras) where untouchables are called *panchamas* — the Dalits. The social dynamic of India with its ambiguities and ironies — and, not the least, its triumphs — become the landscape for her creative imagination. The female narrator's psychology and her consciousness as she responds to the events around her and, especially, to her family, are eloquently expressed throughout the book's time-frame, spanning from her childhood to the age when she became marriageable — although the narrator decides not to marry because she does not want to go through what her female characters face in the book. In one case, at least, Subbadra, a Hindu girl, commits suicide because she is asked to marry someone she does not care for.

The practice of arranged marriages is common enough — even to this day. The narrator comfortably moves back and forth with her story, never sticking to linear narration. In the space of the novel, the narrator goes from childhood to adulthood. Her observant eye recognizes the carnival and color of Hindu rituals, which attract her attention to the point that she entertains the idea of becoming a Hindu —which, needless to add, becomes a source of constant embarrassment to her mother, Naomi. However, her grandfather, Danieldada, whose story is significant in the annals of the Jewish community, is tolerant of Hindus. He keeps a Hindu servant, Mohan, who practically worships him. Danieldada is endearingly portrayed and is aesthetically a strong presence in the novel, emerging as a complex metaphor representing the ambiguities and the quotidian strength of the Indian Jewish community.

A short while ago, I mentioned the natural warmth between these two ancient civilizations. Now let us take a little respite and look at how Hindus figure in Jewish literature. Later, of course, we will get back to family, marriage and other important themes. Representations of Hindus are not uncommon in Jewish writings. Since Hinduism and Judaism are ancient religions, the natural dialogue between them needs only to be acknowledged. Jewish writers have been attracted to the idea of India for years. Louis Fischer, Erik Erikson and Stephen Wolpert have written biographies of political figures in Indian life, such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Filmmaker Woody Allen's fascination with the Orient deserves a mention here. Hindus appear in the works of Saul Bellow, Phillip Roth, Bernard Malamud, Chaim Potok, and Allen Ginsberg, to name just a few. Ginsberg, a noted beat-poet, came to India to study Buddhism. Saul Bellow, arguably the greatest novelist of the post-World War II period, offers Indian characters frequently in his novels. In *Mr. Sammler's Planet*,[11] a novel written as a response to the counter-culture dialectic of the New Left, he actually creates a dialogue between Mr. Govindlal, an Indian scientist, and Mr. Sammler, a refugee burdened with Holocaust memories. Sammler is in the midst of a rigorous reexamination of the intellectual positions he held all of his life, including the legacy of Enlightenment and the virtue of liberal democracies. A great believer in free thinking and the product of what Jews sneeringly call the *Haskala* movement, and therefore an assimilated Jew, he now has the job of reviewing the philosophical trends that dominated the world thus far and radically affected social practice. On the other hand, Mr. Govindlal pursues steadfastly the notion of evicting people from the polluted and the corrupt planet Earth and putting them on a different planet, possibly Mars. Mr. Sammler is polite and tolerant of Mr. Lal's view and is not strong enough to withstand the temptations of these sundry intellectual adventures since he is thoroughly battered by recent history. He does not allow Mr. Lal to divert his perpetual meditation on the foundational energy of Judeo-Christian civilization. Instead, he wants his ethical structure, which is normative Judaism, to work toward the progress of humanity. It seems a little fragile at the moment, but he would press on. Israel Horowitz,[12] another noted playwright, makes an Indian, Mr. Gupta, the metaphor for the victim in a scenario of American urban violence. Two Indian Jewish writers also write about Hindusm but while Ruth Prawer Jhabwala constantly writes about Indian themes, Anita Desai hardly addresses Jewish themes except in *Baumgartner's Bombay.*[13] The book is about a German-Jewish refugee of World War II who gives shelter to a German boy who, however, kills him to steal from him. The Jew never connects with the Indian ethos. Critics argue that it is not a novel of any artistic achievement.

Nissim Ezekiel has always been a freethinker and an agnostic and does not seem to have connected much with his Bene-Israel identity. In his poetry, he hardly writes about his faith. He uses ironic modes and frequently writes about his version of India, which includes Hindus as well with their superstitions, rituals and other peculiarities that seem to attract his satiric bent of mind. As he grew older, he began to focus on issues of a transcendental nature and eternal verities, especially in *Latter-day Psalms*.[14] Even as the similarity between this collection and the psalms of the Bible can be obvious, the God he addresses may not necessarily be the Jewish God.

Let me now turn to the novel which we have used not only as a study of the Bene-Israel Jewish community and their encounter with India, but as a paradigm for understanding various aspects of the *milieu* that influences the community and, in fact, contributes to its achievement. One key element is the family, the center of Jewish life. Alfred Kazin[15] talks about three different aspects of American Jewish life: the kitchen, the synagogue, and "the block and the beyond," which is mainstream America. In the context of this novel, Naomi, the working mother, causes problems partly because among "joint" families in India, at least during the fifties and the sixties, women were not allowed to work. The Sabbath is observed as well as the High Holidays. Intermarriage is a perennial subject for discussion and so is *aliya* to Israel. Since the novel covers post-Independence India, crucial themes such as freedom, movement and communal riots also find a place in it. Uncle Menachem is greatly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and his Satyagraha movement. Danieldada, Leah and Great Grand Uncle Gerard belong to the older generation. Naomi and her husband, Aunt Hannah, Jerusha, Queenie, Uncle Menachem and Emmanuel represent the next generation. Of course, the narrator's generation includes Cousin Samuel, Cousin Malkha and others. These generations are caught up in changes occurring not only in Jewish life but also in India itself — before and after independence.

Naomi and her husband are tackling the problems arising from the changing social dynamic. Naomi is a working mother at a time when her husband is without a job. They are a part of a joint family, a structure which has since almost disappeared as a social system. She refuses to share her money with the others and insists that they should set up a separate family. She also has problems with her father, Danieldada, who provides strength and coherence to the narrative. Naomi's disgruntlement with her father is based on her perception that he was responsible for the death of her mother, Leah. Her father's extramarital relationship with Durga, a Hindu woman, caused grief and anxiety in the family. Leah tried her best to stop him and, as a desperate measure, even went to a Hindu goddess and bought ritual powders to somehow win him back. But it is of no avail. Naomi knows all about it and can never bring herself to forgive him for his transgressions, which stick like a scar on her soul. Although the narrator enjoys her time with her grandfather, Naomi consistently admonishes her not spend time with him.

Here we also see the institution of the joint family cracking up. The family misses the older generation — which is largely responsible for keeping the faith and taking care of rituals in the synagogue and the home, especially marriage, Bar Mitzvah, and High Holidays — because Naomi's generation does not believe in practicing Judaism in the strictest sense, nor are they thoroughly familiar with the rituals. The narrator's generation, of course, has to deal with the temptation of making *aliya* to Israel and with the problem of finding a partner in India amid a forever-dwindling Jewish population.

From what we can gather, Indian Jewry has never been at the forefront of political Zionism, nor did it experience the tremendous religious fervor and renewal that occurred in Europe and North America. The Hasidic movement, the so-called Haskala, the struggle for the establishment of Israel, the early pioneers who actually made the desert bloom and, more importantly, the pogroms and the Holocaust which devastated the European Jewry — all of this never touched Indian Jewish life. For a Jewish writer, the absence of these factors poses insurmountable problems. One finds mere ethnicity in this novel, but something profound is happening in an essentially Jewish way, in the works of American Jewish writers. In this novel, allusions to these events, and knowledge of them, are conspicuous by their absence, nor do we see any Indians publishing any treatises on Judaism. The great theological questions that preoccupied the minds of European Jewry somehow escaped the attention of Indian Jewish writers. It is hard to believe Indian Jews have reflected on the Holocaust, Eretz Israel, Jewish art and culture to any particular consequence. One does not know whether there is any particular group that joined their co-religionists to fight for Israel.

However, the narrator's generation has choices to make. They can immigrate to Israel and start a new life — not because they are persecuted in India, but because of other reasons such as marriage and cultural differences. That said, one should be fair, in the sense that most Indian Jews belong to the middle class and the Bene-Israel community is largely brown in color.

Even as the tale of the generations is told, India is undergoing transformations. The philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, even if there are marginal dissenting voices, is responsible for independence. The partition of India and Pakistan permanently plants the seeds of communalism, thus creating a chapter of riots often spurred by the vested interests. The narrator's father loses his partner in the riots, which later causes him to suffer depression. Hinduism is always plagued by the caste system. Often lower castes are ill-treated and to this day they have not been rehabilitated despite constitutional guarantees and other incentives including general welfare measures. They are called untouchable and the Gandhian term "Harijan" has fallen into disuse. The recent conservative attitudes of caste Hindus gave rise to certain deconstructionist re-appraisals of Hinduism from Dalit and Dalit-Bahujan intellectuals. Kancha Iliah's recent book, *Why I Am Not a Hindu,*[16] became a bestseller, which is unusual for a scholarly, academic book.

The novel's recognition of these unpalatable aspects of India adds strength to its inclusive vision. The narrator's generation is exposed to modernity and to the after-effects of the ideology of the nation-state. In their perception, Jewish tradition is associated with their grandparents. Yet, beyond the fact of their ethnicity, they are familiar with the tradition. After Israel's establishment, youngsters dreamt of going there. The much cherished family is crumbling. Inescapable temptation intrudes from the outside culture. Danieldada and Emmanuel have paramours from outside their ethnic group, which causes discord. Whereas Danieldada's extramarital affair results in pain and in Leah's eventual death, in Emmanuel's case, there is reconciliation. In fact, his Jewish wife, Queenie, goes to the circumcision ceremony of the child born to his gentile wife. The child cannot be called strictly Jewish, because it was not born to a Jewish mother. For whatever reason, this is not an important question to the narrator, Esther David's alter ego. This also reminds us of how casual Jewish life was among the Bene-Israel Jews. In a poem written by Nissim Ezekiel, "Jewish Wedding in Bombay," the whole occasion is described in the following manner:

> There was no brass band outside the synagogue
> but I remember a chanting procession or two, Some rituals,
> lots of skull-caps, felt hats, decorated shawls,
> and grape juice from a common glass for bride and bridegroom.
>
> I remember the breaking of the glass and the congregation
> clapping hands, which signified that we were well and truly
> married according to the Mosaic law.
>
> Well, that's about all.[17]

The narrator's inclusive vision is evident from the beginning of the novel:

> 1940. I was born in the walled city of the fourteen gates. Walls which the black-faced langurs with their long flag-like tails sit like sentinels, daring me to break the line of their grey bodies. Black beady eyes watch me from long bushy Einstein brows just like Uncle Menachem's.[18]

Even as Ahmedabad, the walled city, is emerging as a substantive metaphor of India in its cultural assertion, the mediating consciousness is already at work to find a synthesis between the alien culture and the narrator's Jewish roots. She is constantly encouraged in her interaction with the culture outside her own, although India's diversity does not necessarily alienate her and, in fact, confirms its fundamental vision of unity despite problems, especially in communal relationships. The exuberant festive atmosphere of the Hindu pantheon excites her and she wishes for a moment that she were not Jewish, which speaks of her tenuous Jewish context. The most intense aspect of essential humanity in its complexities is the fact that the people of one culture and religion comfortably move into an alien culture to seek nourishment in relationships, thus driving home the Hindu view that humanity is one large family beyond the narrow confines of caste, creed and religion — "*vasudhaika kutumbham*:"

> Uncle Menachem, large-hearted that he is, lends the backyard to Subhdra's family and the Patels, for weddings and rituals like the naming of the newborn babies. And on some nights, Mehboob Khan or the Syed family or Anwar's cousins hold a feast in our backyard to celebrate a wedding or a circumcision.[19]

Jews here are comfortable with Hindus and Muslims as well. The great Indian dream of "communal harmony" and "unity in diversity" is achieved at least symbolically. Of course, as the narrator comes of age, she achieves clarity and thus is capable of making choices — such as the choice to remain unmarried — as a measure of her defenses against forebodings and tragic circumstances. Asceticism is not Jewish and the Jewish ethos strongly believes in engagement with the contingent world.

Therefore, her conclusion appears ambiguous, to say the least. Since Danieldada is the moving spirit of the revel, capturing its complex vision of pain, sorrow and joy, it is appropriate to discuss his character systematically. Danieldada represents the quintessential social fact of the Bene-Israel community. He is portrayed with tremendous warmth and vigor.

> Danieldada insists on eating with a knife and fork....Words come easily to Grandfather, especially at dinnertime. He dresses for dinner, rubs his favorite Yardley's eau de cologne on his jaws, and sits majestically at the head of the table, a peg of whisky in front of him. He chats with Mohan who always stands to his right, much to Mother's disgust. Father and I listen attentively, but Mother remains aloof.[20]

Although assimilation is a perpetual temptation, Jewish people maintained their ethnic uniqueness. Danieldada, the grandfather, is western-oriented and given to western life. Both father and daughter are reverential toward him, whereas the mother, Naomi, harbors anger against him for his moral transgression and the way he caused the death of her mother. Danieldada once had a Hindu paramour, Durga. He was deferential toward Hindu rituals and allowed Mohun, his servant, to worship Hindu idols in his home. At some point, Danieldada needed to deal with the peculiar psychological changes his wife, Leah, was undergoing. Having given birth to a daughter, who is now growing up, she was not the same person of beauty and attractiveness. She was not able to tackle the stresses of the aging process and her biological transformation. This, in turn, was a problem for Daniel, who suddenly did not know his own wife. At this juncture, Durga came into his life, providing comfort and consolation. His wife's recriminations and even her visit to a Hindu god-man to have her husband brought back only provides an example of the strange encounters between a largely Marathi-speaking Bene-Israel community and the dominant Hindu culture.

The indigenous culture, which they certainly confirmed in dress, language and other ways, was too tempting and overwhelming to overcome, especially during the periods of stress. Yet, despite his affair with Durga, Danieldada did not stray from his roots. He practiced his religion. He came home and lit Sabbath candles and experienced communion with the spirituality of Judaism, which he only knew in his fashion. Although he gave in to temptation only during the darkest phase of his life, he was not understood sympathetically even by the narrator:

> At some point, his vision grew so clouded that he could no longer see the light. He went to live with Durga in the cantonment, near the Hanuman temple and the British Officers' bungalow. There was a certain ruthlessness in his being close to the house, and yet so far away from *everything*. (Italics mine.) [21]

The narrator never ceases emphasizing the presence of history and locale. The Hanuman temple, the British officers' bungalow, and Durga sum up everything. Danieldada's life adequately puts the colonial presence and the ubiquitous symbols of Hinduism into a context. The Hindu goddesses, such as Durga and Kali, the gods like Hanuman and Vishnu, and the festivals like Holi create an atmosphere of carnival, joy, and color. The Hindu caste system touches Jewish culture as well. The perception of white Jews, especially Baghdadi Jews and brown Jews, is palpable. The story of Daniel is symptomatic of Jews who stayed in India, resisting the temptation of *aliya* only because they lived in India too long. Their memories of this country and the relationships they forged here emerge as stronger than the pull of their roots to Israel. And, of course, they reach the inevitable understanding that having to start all over again is painful. It is not as if Indian Jews are completely integrated in Israel. As the novel testifies, they always marry with in the community. To them, the controversy about Ethiopian Falashas during the seventies was a curious and instructive debate.

Daniel's death and his funeral rituals have to be profoundly moving. One wonders what the Indian Jews have done for themselves over the long period of their stay here. According to some sources, they go back to the Biblical days. They lived here in security. There were no pogroms and no persecution. Indian society allowed them to practice their religion without any impediments from the mainstream culture. How is it that they could not produce achievements in art, culture, and the intellectual fields that compare to those created in Europe and North America? They have not contributed to the hermeneutical aspect of Judaism or produced great commentators on the Law. However, Daniel's story gives a measure of the story of Indian Jews:

> They cover his eyes with earth from Jerusalem. I take some in my fingers and sprinkle it over his eyes. Brown, dry earth of the Promised Land, textured exactly, like that of my surrogate motherland. Yards of white cloth, stitched on the sewing machine by Mother, Granny and Aunt Hannah. His shroud. The pantaloons, the long coat, the cummerbund and the cap. They put white sods on his feet and tie a sprig of fragrant leaves to his hands with a handkerchief. He is now ready for his last journey. Hands dusty with the earth of both lands, and wet with my tears, I wonder about Jerusalem. Samuel stands like a statue over the grave, the wax from the candles burning his hands.[22]

To write a truly enduring novel with sufficient interaction with the high Jewish culture in a place where no high Jewish culture is available is a task that only first rate artists can negotiate. Clearly, Esther David finds inspiration from a community that has not historically produced profound Jewish ethos with all its glories. Richard Wagner notoriously said that Jews cannot produce genuine art because they are rootless and their engagement with mainstream society is minimal. He said, "A language, its expression and its evolutions are not separate elements but part of an historical community and only he who has unconsciously matured in this community can take part in what it creates."[23] Whenever Cynthia Ozick[24] found time to reflect on art, she wrote about the dilemma of writing in English — which is essentially a Christian language. Esther David took courage from facing these inevitable difficulties — the absence of a usable past and of vibrant Jewish High Culture, the theoretical problems of creating art in alien and hostile medium — and gave us a first novel that stands as testimony to the travails and triumphs of the Bene-Israel of India. Who knows, like I.B.Singer,[25] who wrote about the vanished Jewish world of Eastern Europe living in New York, perhaps a possibility will emerge that the children of this community living in Israel will do us the honor of producing art of comparable achievement.

FOOTNOTES

1. Theodore Gross, ed., *The Literature of the American Jews* (New York: Free Press, 1973), p. 338.

2. Abraham Cahan, *The Rise of David Levinsky* (New York: Harper, 1917; 1960).

3. Mary Antin, *The Promised Land* (Boston: Houghton Miflin,1920).

4. Joseph Stein, Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harmick, "Fiddler on the Roof," in *The Best Plays of 1964-65* (New York : Dodd Mead Company, 1965).

5. Saul Bellow, *Seize the Day* (New York: The Viking, 1956).

6. Edward Lewis Wallant, *The Pawnbroker* (New York: Harcourt,1961).

7. Ludwig Lewisohn, *Adam* (New York: Harper, 1929).

8. Daniel Elazer, *The Other Jews: the Sephardim Today* (New York: Basic Books,1939).

9. Benjamin J. Israel, *The Bene-Israel of India: Some Studies* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1984), pp. 48-49.

10. Marshall Sklare quoted. in Venkateshwarlu, D., *Jewish American Writers and Intellectual Life in America* (New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1993).

11. Saul Bellow, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (New York: Viking Press, 1970).

12. Israel Horowitz, "Indian Wants the Bronx," in the *Best Plays of 1969* (Pennsylvania: Chilton, 1969).

13. Anita Desai, *Baumgartner's Bombay* (London: Penguin, 1989; 1988).

14. Nissim Ezekiel, *Collected Poems:1952-1988* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

15. Alfred Kazin, *Walker in the City* (New York: Grove Press, 1958).

16. Kancha Iliah, *Why l am Not a Hindu* (Calcutta: Samaya Publishers, 1996).

17. Nissim Ezekiel, "Jewish Wedding in Bombay," in Ezekiel, *Collected Poems: 1952- 1988,* (New Delhi: Oxford, 1989), pp. 234-235.

18. Esther David, *The Walled City* (Chennai: Manas, 1997), p. 1.

19. Esther David, *The Walled City*, p. 17.

20. Esther David, *The Walled City*, pp. 38-39.

21. Esther David, *The Walled City*, p. 62.

22. Esther David, *The Walled City*, p. 108.

23. Richard Wagner, *Stories and Essays*, Charles Osborne, ed. (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1973; 1991), p. 27.

24. Cynthia Ozick, *Art & Ardor* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983); *Metaphor & Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989).

25. I. B. Singer, *In My Father's Court* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1966).

India's Jewish Geography

As Described by Nineteenth-Century Traveler David D'Beth Hillel

By Alanna E. Cooper

Introduction

In his 2002 article, "The Land of Hard Bondage,"[1] anthropologist Tudor Parfitt analyzes the travel journals of Westerners who visited India as far back as the seventeenth century and as recently as the twentieth. Curiously, Parfitt finds that when these travelers described the country's inhabitants, many of them drew parallels between the local population and Jews.

For example, Francois Bernier, who traveled in the mid-seventeenth century, noted that the residents of Kashmir had a "Jewish appearance."[2] M. de la Crequineri, who traveled in the eighteenth century, noted that the Indians whom he encountered share a number of characteristics with Jews, including a "love of washing" and an "aversion to wine."[3] C.T.E. Rhenius noted that religious worship among the Vishnu and Siva exhibits "a strong likeness to Jewish dispensation."[4] And Godfrey Higgens identified the names of places all over India as being derived from Hebrew.

Based on such sketchy and inconclusive observations, these travelers — as well as several others Parfitt cites — make one or both of the following assumptions: that India's Hindus and the Jews were of the same stock, and that the Jewish religion and the Hindu religion shared common origins.

What can we learn from these travelogues, which posit shared Jewish-Hindu ancestry or religious origin, although their "data" can hardly be considered compelling proof of their assertions? Of what value are these travelers' accounts to scholars of history and ethnography, given that their conclusions are so far-fetched?

In her introduction to the *Ethnohistory* volume on Travel Literature (1986), Caroline Brettell notes that the information in all travelogues is shaped by the "stock of ideas about others" that travelers carry with them on their journeys. As such, travelers' reports should not be treated as objective, hard data, but rather as situated descriptions that reflect the authors' interests and particular points of view.

Along these lines, I would argue that one angle that can be followed in analyzing travel documents that posit a Hindu-Jewish link is to investigate the ideological baggage that colors the writers' assumptions. This means uncovering the underlying ideas that would have drawn these writers to the conclusion that Judaism and Hinduism share common religious origins, or that Jews and Hindus are from the same stock. While Parfitt does not specifically aim to analyze the ideas that may have motivated his travelers' conclusions, he does address this issue in a few asides.

He explains, for example, that the eighteenth century French scholar, M. de la Crequiniere, traveled to India in search of religion in its "natural" or pure form. He spent several years among "inland peoples whose traditions had not been overtly affected by contact with outsiders" in an effort to "clarify antiquity."[5] Indeed, Crequiniere believed that the practices he observed were aspects of religion in its pristine (or almost-pristine) state. Believing that the Jews, too, had remained true to their religion in its original form, Crequiniere attributed the similarities between Hinduism and Judaism to common origins.

Like Crequiniere, the nineteenth century British scholar Godfrey Higgens, also believed that all religions have a "universal origin." Working under this assumption, he was easily convinced by certain similarities that he found among the Jews, the Indians, the Celtic Druids and others, that their beliefs and practices represented religion in its natural form.

Parfitt's travelers were engaged in unraveling large questions about the nature of religion. Identifying these questions may not teach us much about Hindus or Jews themselves, however, it will give us insight into how broad discussions about religious beliefs, practices and origins used both these groups as objects.

David D'Beth Hillel's Travelogue

Using this framework of analysis as a starting point, note the early nineteenth century Jewish traveler, David D'Beth Hillel. While Parfitt's article does not mention him, D'Beth Hillel deserves special consideration for a number of reasons. His travelogue about India is among the few addressing the Hindu-Jewish link that was written by a Jew — and it appears to be the oldest among those few. He traveled some two decades before Israel ben Joseph Benjamin, the Rumanian Jew also known as "Benjamin the Second," who published *Eight Years in Asia and Africa* in 1859, some 50 years before Isaac Hayyim Barukh, who traveled from Tiberius to Calcutta in 1883.

Finally, D'Beth Hillel left behind a slim travel diary, which — despite its brevity — is filled with rich information about the people he encountered and about his own reflections on his experiences. His work provides an excellent window into the ideological baggage that may have drawn him to the conclusion that Jews and Hindus are from the same stock, in spite of his very sketchy data.

D'Beth Hillel's Motivations For Travel

D'Beth Hillel was an intriguing, complex man. Born into a family of religious scholars, he was himself a Rabbi who studied for many years in the yeshiva of the Vilna Gaon in Lithuania and in Safed (Palestine). Although D'Beth Hillel was strongly rooted within a traditional Jewish society that was presumably closed to many outside influences, he had a strong desire for adventure and sought to learn about the world beyond his own narrow horizons.

In 1824, when he was probably in his 20s, D'Beth Hillel set forth from his home in the Holy Land on an eight-year trip, the purpose of which is now unclear. He began by journeying through the Land of Israel, moved on to Lebanon and Syria, and then made his way through the mountainous regions of Turkish and Iraqi Kurdistan, Azerbaijan, Mesopotamia, and Persia. From Persia, he sailed to India, where he arrived in 1828. He spent several months in Cochin, two years in Bombay and approximately a year in Madras, where he lived until he returned to Israel in 1832.

During his long journey, he recorded notes in Hebrew about what he saw and learned. By the time he arrived in Madras, eight years after he left his home in Safed, his travel diary numbered some 600 or 700 pages. He edited this massive work, translated it into English, and published 300 copies of a small "private edition."[6] Today, only a scant handful of these volumes can be found, and those are in the United States and Europe; no library Israel has it. D'Beth Hillel's work would have fallen into oblivion if not for historian Walter Fischel, who republished it in 1973.

In the editing process, Fischel added an introduction and chapter headings, updated the spelling and grammar, and provided a shorter, catchier title. Whereas the original author named his work, "The Travels of Rabbi David D'Beth Hillel: From Jerusalem, Through Arabia, Koordistan, Part of Persia, and India to Madras," Fischel reprinted it as "Unknown Jews in Unknown Lands." This name change clearly indicates Fischel's own understanding of D'Beth Hillel's agenda.

Fischel surmises that D'Beth Hillel published his book primarily for subscribers, most of whom were British "clergymen, civil servants, and military personnel." He wrote for those who were interested in travel, particularly those who were "anxious to go to the Mediterranean through Arabia."[7] With this purpose in mind, D'Beth Hillel included a wealth of practical travel data and advice such as "distances from one place to another; the cost of hiring a boat, a horse, a mule, a camel, or other means of transportation; the lodging places; the amount to be paid for tolls [and] comments on the security of roads [and] bridges."[8]

Fischel points out that D'Beth Hillel's practical goals did not override his intense interest in the lost tribes,[9] a curiosity which he believed would also intrigue other potential travelers. In an advertisement, D'Beth Hillel described his book as "an account of the manners and customs of the places which he has visited, their languages, coins, weights, measures, etc." He then added that the book will "throw some light upon the existence and present state of the long lost tribes."[10]

In short, D'Beth Hillel wrote the book primarily as a travel guide, but he added notes on the lost tribes as a feature of additional interest. But why did D'Beth Hillel really travel? Or as Fischel asks, "What had prompted that author … to spend so many years of his life traveling through the countries of the Middle East and India?"[11] This question is particularly perplexing given that D'Beth Hillel — unlike most other Jewish travelers who set out on their journeys from the Holy Land in the early nineteenth century (and before) — does not seem to have traveled as an emissary on behalf of any particular institution or organization.[12] Rather, he appears to have been without a particular goal or destination, and without a clear means of supporting himself along the way.

Surely, D'Beth Hillel's motivations are clearer in his 600 to 700 page original text. However, given that we only have his revised version, which he crafted with a particular audience in mind, the answer is more difficult to ascertain. Using the available evidence, Fischel concludes that D'Beth Hillel's key concern was to find and identify the "forgotten Remnants of Israel" in the many places he visited. "Whenever he met ancient groups, sects, or races," Fischel explains, "he tried at once to identify their beliefs, customs, languages, and manners with old Jewish or Israelite traditions, drawing somewhat hastily [*sic*] and mostly unfounded conclusions concerning their connection with the ten tribes." Using this as evidence, Fischel concludes that D'Beth Hillel's travels were driven by his "vehement desire and anxiety to search for his brethren."[13]

Hence the title, "Unknown Jews in Unknown Lands." According to Fischel, D'Beth Hillel's primary purpose was to uncover the mystery of the lost tribes, to locate those far off communities that had become "unknown" to the wider Jewish world over the centuries because of their remote isolation.

A Cosmopolitan Traveler

Unlike Fischel, I contend that D'Beth Hillel did not journey across the globe only to remain within the narrow horizons of the Jewish world. His primary purpose was not to seek out the lost tribes, but rather, to view and experience the world's geography and people in all of their great variety.[14]

He was, as Fischel correctly points out, intrigued and highly preoccupied with his long-lost brethren, whom he believed to have located in India as well as other places including Ethiopia, Bukhara, and Persia. This fascination, however, must be read and understood in the context of his broad travel interests, including architecture, local custom, and nature.

In Damascus, for example, he described the built environment: "The rich people's houses are painted inside with silver and gold. . . . The court[yard]s of the houses are floored with large marble stones of four different colors….."[15] In

Aleppo, he writes of the people and their culture. "I witnessed there a curious custom. The Mahometans in their … festivals … bring large copper pots filled up with wine and liquor, and in them great copper cups; these they place in the midst of the congregation and everybody drinks according to this desire."[16] And in Kurdistan, he writes of the natural landscape. "On the banks … [of the river] are stones of different colors, which are very curious to look at. I stayed for about three hours, and examined them."[17]

Given D'Beth Hillel's varied interests, it is not surprising that he always provides a broader demographic context for any statistical information he provides about the various Jewish populations he encounters. For example, he writes that Beirut had about 15 families of "Israelite merchants," 2,000 families of "Nazernes," and 20,000 families of "Mahometans." And, he writes, that Bombay housed approximately 300 Europeans, 1,000 families of Portuguese, Armenians and "half-castes," 5,000 families of "Parsees," 20 families of "Arabian Jews," 600 families of "Bene Israel," 1,000 families of "Arabs and Moguls," 2,000 families of Brahmins, and 30,000 families of Hindus of all other castes.[18] The Jews, in other words, are but one segment of the world that D'Beth Hillel notices and describes. And yet, what is so intriguing about our author, is that despite his wide-angle view that captures so many different features of the social and natural landscape, his Jewishness inescapably informs his travel experiences.

Occasionally, it proves to be an obstacle, as shown by a winter night he spent in a village in Persia. "Nobody would receive me into a house for any money I offered them," he writes, "saying that the house would be defiled … because they knew me to be a Jew."[19] Other times, it proves to be an asset, such as when he was crossing a bridge where a poll generally was taken, "But I did not pay it because the collector of it was a Jew from Baghdad who knew me."[20]

At still other times, he was able to slip by unnoticed. Yet, even when he passed as a non-Jew, D'Beth Hillel was highly conscious of how (or whether) others would perceive his Jewishness. In Madras, for example, he entered a Cathedral while worshippers were in the midst of prayer. "They did not know that I was a Jew," he explains.

Oftentimes, he feared for his life on account of his Jewish identity. In Goa, India, for example, the boat on which he was traveling docked and his fellow voyagers went ashore. D'Beth Hillel, however, "feared to leave the vessel," having heard that the city's inhabitants "were still in darkness and the life of a Jew is not safe among them."[21] In Meshed, too, he feared for his life on account of his Jewish identity. "They did not regard me on the road as a Jew," he writes, "for if they had known me as such I should have been destroyed."[22]

Just as D'Beth Hillel's identity as a Jew shaped the way he experienced the world throughout his travels, so did his religious sensibilities. In particular, he was steeped in Biblical and Rabbinic literature, and these texts informed the way he understood the sites and people he encountered. For example, he identified many of the cities and towns he passed through with Biblical references. He believed that Zebulon, son of the patriarch Jacob, was buried in Sidon in Lebanon. [23] He also surmised that "our forefather Abraham" used to milk[24] his flocks[25] in Halab (Aleppo), Syria.

So, too, he traces the history of many archeological sites to the Bible. In Urfa, Kurdistan, he visits a water reservoir[26] "built of large white marble stones [and] very deep." Here, D'Beth Hillel reports, King Nimrod threw Abraham into the kiln and Abraham was saved when "the Lord changed [the kiln] into a tank."[27]

D'Beth Hillel also finds Biblical references for many of the customs of the various people he meets. For example, he witnesses the Muslims in Ninveh, Kurdistan, taking oaths by placing their hands on the door of a tower where they believed the prophet Jonah was buried. D'Beth Hillel traces the origin of this practice to the Biblical story of Abraham's servant, who took an oath by placing his hand under Abraham's thigh.[28] In India, he notes that butchers are not permitted to kill cows.[29] This practice, he explains, originated in the worship of golden calves instituted by Jeroboam, King of Israel.[30] He describes a Indian festival of "great joy among all the people," held after the monsoon season when ships begin to sail again.[31] He traces the practices associated with this festival — including throwing coconuts into the sea — to the book of Habbakuk, which contains a vague reference to rejoicing by the sea.[32]

Finally, D'Beth Hillel traces the origins of some of the people he meets to Biblical and Rabbinic references. This brings us to his discussions about finding his long-lost brethren. The peoples whom D'Beth Hillel identifies as long-lost fellow Jews fall into two categories. The first group includes those who identify themselves as Jews, such as the Bene Israel of India. The second group includes those who identify themselves as members of some other religious group, in spite of which D'Beth Hillel concludes that they must belong to the Jewish people, based on his observations of their practices. This group includes the Hindus of India.

Those Who Identify Themselves As Jews

While visiting the Jewish community of Sitya, Kurdistan, D'Beth Hillel notices that the town is situated not far from a river called "Halah." He surmises that this is the same river mentioned in Kings II, which lists the locales to which the Northern tribes were exiled.[33] He then describes the people: There is "no difference between them and the Arabs in appearance," he writes. They are, however, "separate by eating, customs, and marriages" and they pray in a synagogue. Overall, he summarizes "they are very ignorant of the Hebrew language and customs" and thus concludes, "I conceive that they must be some of the lost Ten Tribes."[34]

Similarly, he notes that the Jewish community in Shush, Kurdistan, is situated along a river called "Gosen" and located not far from Media (also names reminiscent of those listed in the Kings II verse). So too, he notes that the Jews in Shush, like those in Sitya, are "very ignorant of the Hebrew language and customs," and he concludes that they are also among the lost tribes.

His treatment of the Jews of Ethiopia, Bukhara, Georgia, Daghestan and Persia follow a similar pattern. While he does not identify each group with a particular geographical reference in the Bible, he does describe them all as "ignorant of the Hebrew language and customs" and concludes that they are lost tribesmen.

He also deems the Bene Israel Jews in and around Bombay to be "ignorant of the Hebrew language" not having had even "a single [Jewish] book" (prior to the arrival of the "Arabian Jews"). Furthermore, D'Beth Hillel notes that while the Bene Israel Jews do circumcise their sons and do "sanctify the day of atonement," they do not observe any other "customs belonging to the Mosaic law."[35]

Unlike the other "ignorant" Jews whom D'Beth Hillel encounters, he does not classify the Bene Israel as lost tribesman. Rather, without explaining why, he determines that they are descendents of the Khazars who converted to Judaism "about eight or nine hundred years ago."[36]

With such scanty evidence, why is D'Beth Hillel convinced that he has found the lost tribes and the descendants of the Khazars? What is it about these legends that are so compelling for him?

First, I believe he is negotiating an understanding of those people who are Jewish and who are, therefore, his "brethren," but whose appearances, practices, and manners are so different from his own that it is difficult for him to recognize them as family. Identifying them as lost tribesmen or as Khazars gives him a framework for negotiating this dilemma.

In essence, the narratives of the lost tribes and of the Khazars are stories that accommodate the centrifugal forces of diaspora history. They are tales about those whose history unfolded far away and disconnected from Palestine and Eastern Europe — the locales that form the centers of D'Beth Hillel's own Jewish life. As such, they offered D'Beth Hillel a lens through which to view the Jews of India, Kurdistan, Ethiopia, Bukhara, Georgia, Daghestan and Persia as part of the Jewish social universe, despite the fact that they are so different from what he recognized as Jewish.

Second, by using features of the natural landscape to help him identify some of these groups as "lost tribes," D'Beth Hillel overlays contemporary geography onto the Biblical map. In this way, the terrain that he passes over, which is so distant from his home, remains part of his world. His interpretation orients him, imbuing the distant and strange with a sense of familiarity, even Jewishness.

Hindus and Muslims as Jews?

D'Beth Hillel's view of the world as permeated with Jewishness is further highlighted by his identification of two additional groups as "lost Tribes;" the Muslims who inhabit the Khyber pass and India's Hindus.

D'Beth Hillel writes about a people who live in tents in the "wilderness, which is between Damascus, Egypt, Yemen, Mecca and Median." Anyone who passes by there must pay tribute to the tribe, and if they refuse, "the whole of the caravan is robbed." D'Beth Hillel himself never came in contact with these people, but based on the fact that the neighboring Arabs call this group the "Jews of Khaibar"[37] he identifies them as the tribe of Dan.[38]

Drawing on other far-fetched information, he also surmises that India's Hindus are among the lost tribes. "Many of the Hindu purification and mourning ceremonies and other customs bear a strong resemblance to those of the Israelites," he writes. Furthermore, he notes that Hindus practice circumcision and that they sanctify Saturday. These two observances, he explains, are of primary importance to the Jews. "These….are the two covenants which cannot be lost sight of by the Israelites … [they] must abide in their posterity to perpetual generations." D'Beth Hillel then concludes, "I should judge them to be the descendants of the long lost Ten Tribes."[39]

D'Beth Hillel's data provides little evidence to support the theory that the peoples of the Khyber pass or the Hindus of India were descendents of ancient Israelites. In context, however, this matters little. He was not engaged in an objective, scientific enterprise to trace the origins of these peoples. Rather, I believe that identifying them as lost tribesmen was his way of investing the world with Jewish presence. After years of travel and extended interaction with peoples whose customs, beliefs, and worldviews were so distant from his own, D'Beth Hillel surely encountered many challenges to his own systems of belief and practice. Investing the world with Jewish presence was, perhaps, his means of holding fast to the moorings of the world in which he was raised, while still experiencing the distant lands through which he traveled in all of their richness.

Conclusion

To summarize, I return to Walter Fischel's characterization of David D'Beth Hillel's purpose in traveling. Fischel argued that D'Beth Hillel's "innermost motive" was "a vehement desire and anxiety to search for his brethren, the forgotten 'Remnants of Israel' in far-off lands." Indeed, D'Beth Hillel was preoccupied with identifying his long lost brethren. He did not, however, set out looking for them. His trip, in other words, was not a quest to find the lost tribes. Rather, his keen attunement to the details of the sites, peoples and landscapes that he encountered — many of which were not Jewish at all — indicate that he traveled because he wanted "to see the world."[40] Significantly, however, his ventures seemed to have been filled with a sense of psychic uneasiness. As a Jewish traveler who was heavily invested in his Jewish identity, D'Beth Hillel had to contend with two difficult challenges to his world-view as he explored the natural and social terrain that extended far beyond his own horizons.

First, D'Beth Hillel had a strong identification has a Jew whose ideas about the world were shaped by Jewish texts. Traveling in unfamiliar landscapes so far from home he had a powerful need to invest the world with Jewishness, to impose familiarity upon the unfamiliar. For this reason, I believe, he is compelled to identify Jewishness within the landscapes and the peoples that he encounters — regardless of the tenuous nature of these connections.

Second, along his journeys, he encountered peoples who identified themselves as Jews, but who had a long history of separation from the Western centers of Jewish life that shaped D'Beth Hillel's own conceptions of Judaism. Given their epochal separation, their practices surely must have deviated from Rabbinic Judaism as D'Beth Hillel knew it. Ambivalent about how to relate to these people who are Jewish, but so far from what he knows to be Jewish, D'Beth Hillel categorizes them as lost-lost brethren, whether they are descendents of the Northern tribes or of the Khazars. This categorization places them at the margins of the Jewish world, which allows D'Beth Hillel both to embrace their Jewishness and to accept their differences.

Like the Christian writers who used the Hindus and Jews as objects in broad conversations about the nature of religion, so too did David D'Beth Hillel. For our Jewish traveler, however, the people whom he meets over the course of his adventures become objects woven into a very personal narrative. The stories that he tells about the people whom he encounters allow him harmonize his intensely Jewish world-view with his desire to explore and experience the world in all of its richness and variety.

Footnotes

1. Tudor Parfitt, "The Land of Hard Bondage: The Lost Tribes in India" *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 5 (June 2002): pp. 55-68.

2. Parfitt, "The Land of Hard Bondage," p.55

3. Parfitt, "The Land of Hard Bondage," p.56

4. Parfitt, "The Land of Hard Bondage," p.57

5. Parfitt, "The Land of Hard Bondage," p.56

6. Walter Fischel, *Unknown Jews in Unknown Lands* (Jersey City, NJ: Ktav Pub. House, 1973), pp. 14-16.

7. Fischel, *Unknown Jews,* p.15

8. Fischel, *Unknown Jews,* p.15

9. The "lost tribes" are those tribes of the Northern Israelite Kingdom who were conquered by the Assyrians in the eighth century BCE. What became of these tribes after their exile has remained the subject of mystery and much debate.

10. Fischel, *Unknown Jews,* p.11

11. Fischel, *Unknown Jews,* p.13.

12. As Fischel explains, "[N]o emissary in search of funds would have spent so much time in the isolated outlying villages in Kurdistan and in Persia, small and poor as they were. Nor would the towns from Bombay to Madrea have been attractive, since there was scarcely any Jewish community except Cochin, where the messenger could hardly have expected to find financial support for any charitable purpose." *Unknown Jews,* p.14.

13. Fischel, *Unknown Jews,* p. 14.

14. In fact, in response to the Rajah of Satar in India, who asked him to explain his impetus for travel, D'Beth Hillel answered, "to see the world." Fischel, *Unknown Jews,* p. 14.

15. *Unknown Jews,* pp. 65-66

16. Not only does D'Beth Hillel take note of this custom, he also takes an active interest in it, questioning how the locals — as Muslims — condone drinking alcohol. "I have inquired about this, and was answered that Mahomet did not command the not-drinking of wine in this town." (p.71).

17. Fischel, *Unknown Jews,* p.81.

18. Fischel, *Unknown Jews,* p.118-123.

19. Fischel, *Unknown Jews,* p. 99.

20. Fischel,*Unknown Jews,* p. 92.

21. Fischel,*Unknown Jews,* p.111.

22. Fischel,*Unknown Jews,* p. 91.

23. Fischel,*Unknown Jews,* p. 62-63.

24. The Hebrew word *halav* means milk.

25. Fischel, *Unknown Jews,* p. 69.

26. Which D'Beth Hillel refers to as a "large tank containing sweet and cold water."

27. Fischel, *Unknown Jews,* p. 72.

28. Fischel, *Unknown Jews,* p. 81.

29. Fischel, *Unknown Jews,* p. 116.

30. I Kings, chapter 12, verse 28: "Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold; and he said unto them: 'Ye have gone up long enough to Jerusalem; behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.'"

31. Fischel, *Unknown Jews,* p.122.

32. Habakkuk, chapter 1, verse 16: "They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag; therefore they rejoice and exult."

33. "[He] carried Israel away unto Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and in Habor, on the river Gozan, and in the cities of Medes." Chapter 17, verse 6.

34. Fischel, *Unknown Jews,* p. 74

35. Fischel, *Unknown Jews,* p. 120.

36. Fischel, *Unknown Jews,* p. 121.

37. A number of contemporary travelers and writers have also identified the Pushtuns who live around the Khyber pass (which cuts through the Hindu Kush mountain range, connecting the northern frontier of Pakistan with Afghanistan) as members of a lost Israelite tribe. See, for example, Eliyahu Avichail, *Shivtei Yisrael* (1987), Pp.121-128; Itzchak Ben Zvi, *The Exiled and the Redeemed* (1963) (Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Publications; 2nd ed. edition, 1976); and Simcha Jacobovi's film *Quest for the Lost Tribes,* 2002. The theory that the people of the Khyber Pass are among the lost Israelite tribes may have been drawn from the Biblical source, which states that Habor (which sounds like "Khyber") is one of the locales to which the tribes were carried away. Kings 2, 17:6 and Kings 2, 18:11.

38. Fischel, *Unknown Jews,* p. 67. It is unclear why D'Beth Hilllel would have identified the people of the Khyber Pass as Danites. Today, it is the Jews of Ethiopia who are generally associated with the tribe of Dan, both in popular literature and in some Rabbinic literature (such as Rabbi Ovadia Yosef's ruling regarding the status of Ethiopian Jews). This theory may have been drawn from the stories of ninth century traveler of Eldad the Danite. Eldad supposedly traveled from his home in the land of Cush (Ethiopia) to North Africa, where he told his co-religionists about the traditions, way of life, and diaspora history of his people, the Danites. His tales were first brought to print in Italy in 1480. (See A. Neubauer, "Where are the Ten Tribes: Eldad the Danite," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 1(1889), pp. 95-114; Elkan Nathan Adler, "Eldad the Danite" in *Jewish Travelers in the Middle Ages* (New York: Dover Publications, 1987), pp. 4-21.

39. Fischel, *Unknown Jews,* p.171

40. These are the words D'Beth Hillel himself used in response to the Rajah of Satar in India who asked him to explain his impetus for travel.

EXISTENTIAL AND METAPHYSICAL PERSPECTIVES ON OPPOSITION AND RELATIONS

by Madhuri Santanam Sondhi

Two philosophical ideas occupy positions of fundamental importance in the thought of Martin Buber and Basanta Kumar Mallik. First is the pervading challenge of polarity or opposition in thought and practice, and second is individuals-in-relation as the stuff of reality. Both seek to answer the common predicament of modern man's need to find 'a home in the universe.' Their overall concerns far out measure these ideas, but since they form the fulcrum of their respective worldviews, this paper will examine how they are tackled through different methodologies and in light of civilization-based assumptions stemming from their European-Jewish and Indian backgrounds.

Both philosophers stressed relationship as crucially important in dealing with the modern problems of alienation and conflict. They sought ways to harmonize opposites within their search for personal, societal, and philosophical integration. They perceived relatedness between humans, and between humans and their environment, as having suffered grievous rupture resulting in the condition of 'homelessness.' This state is in urgent need of rectification. So both scholars endeavored to indicate the direction in which a new, satisfying, and stable 'home' for humankind could be re-established. Buber focused on relationship in life as lived, which seemed to have all but disappeared in the Europe he knew, and he rejected arid metaphysical speculation and logical hair-splitting as escapist or trivializing substitutes for real experience. Mallik, while paying due profound respect to 'concrete' lived experience, sought to secure and anchor it in a philosophical framework of certainty. For him, experience and theory are not only bound together but reflect each other. If Buber projects a new home for man in genuine community that is realizable in the present, Mallik sees homecoming in nothing less than a universal cosmic vision, a prize awaiting humanity after repeated trials and discoveries.

Both philosophers distinguish between bound opposites or polarities and disjunctive contradictories. Reconciliation between certain types of opposites

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are essential for individual and community life. Although Buber focused on the problematique of polarity in the context of life as lived, and Mallik tackled the antinomies in their logical and metaphysical forms, they ended up with fairly congruent conclusions about the relevance these ideas have for individual, social, and communal life.

Neither Buber nor Mallik confined the essentially related world to the purely human. Buber came as close as he could to a mutuality of I and Thou with the plant and, of course, with the animal world, whereas Mallik, who gardened at home and philosophized on the ballistics and spaces of the golf course, went further and laid the groundwork for a reciprocity between even the inorganic and the human.

Mysticism played an important role in the lives of both philosophers, but in different ways. Buber's gradual rediscovery of Judaism drew him toward a philosophy of dialogue. Although he subsequently condemned the mystical world as trapped in the I-It, his own 'myst-ification' of the 'Between' — through which the I-Thou achieves an almost sacramental character — is evidence enough of his spiritual bent of mind. If Mallik ever went through a tussle between reason and mysticism, there is no known record. His written works, which started appearing after he reached the age of 60, carve a clear separation between academic philosophy and mysticism, but they do not refute mysticism.

In the philosophical ambience at Oxford where he spent much of his life, he studiously avoided the word "mysticism," which only suggested the irrational and absurd. His book *The Towering Wave* is the only exception. In this literary imaginative work, he played freely with the images and concepts of the *mysterium tremendum* alongside rational argument and debate. In his philosophical studies proper, he cursorily refers to direct, non-discursive knowing or awareness, and also to unitary states of (non)-consciousness.

Furthermore, Mallik did not accept the reality of the pure isolated mystic of Asian tradition as a social phenomenon, a logical possibility or a norm, any more than he accepted the absolutely free and unrelated individual described in the humanist scheme.

Polarity and Opposition

Buber, far from being a conventional metaphysical or analytic philosopher, was rather concerned with life as lived (*Erlebnis*). He has been variously described as an existentialist or personalist,[1] and as a prophet, poet or seer. In his writings certain dualities constitute the very grain and challenge of existence. The most well known is the I-Thou I-It duality, which is central to Buberism, and almost has come to symbolize it. Buber is not the first western philosopher to have conceptualized the importance of the Thou: his eminent predecessors include Soren Kierkegaard, Max Stirner, and Ludwig Feuerbach. However, the polarity of the It and Thou forms the defining profile of the Buberian problematique. Several commentators point to an almost methodological polarity as an essential mode of Buber's perception of the world. For Friedman, the "paradoxical unity of usually considered irreconcilable opposites" lies at the very heart of Buber's philosophy. As Buber wrote: "… complete relation can be understood only in a bipolar way, only as the *coincidentia oppositorum*, as the coincidence of oppositions of feeling"[2] Examples, apart from the Buberian theme of the duality of I and Thou, include distance-relation, vortex-structure, and moment-eternity.[3] The sets of dualities are not always typologically similar, though they may exhibit overlapping realms, but they do form an interlocking or organic structure of thought in which each has a bearing the others. Bergmann's analysis goes beyond simple polarity and points to the fundamental unity of the I-Thou: "the duality of I and Thou is not actually duality but rather unity … the two axes of this unity, the I and the Thou, are merely the two columns spanned by the arch of the *Between*."[4] Although Buber certainly regarded movement toward unity as characteristic of the Jewish tradition, he insisted that the separate identities of the two persons remain unimpaired.

Architectural metaphors suggest space created out of permanent structures, whereas Buber's I and Thou are in a fluid and dynamic situation. Their individuality is unaffected, but their relationships are in flux. They may from time to time, or perhaps only once, evoke the *Between* amongst themselves, and create, during that period, a larger existential unity. The *Between* is less suggestive of a third permanent 'thing' like an arch, more of an induced plane of communication or relation. Commonly one speaks of friendship, love, or even enmity 'between' two or more individuals, involving emotions, spirit, and instincts. By capitalizing the 'B,' Buber indicates a special mode of encounter, which at the moment or duration of occurrence creates unity between the participants without dissolving their separate identities. Each is transformed into personhood and transcends the ego-centered I of the It world. The encounter in the Between cannot be continuous, even when it provides a lifelong basis for relationship. However, it can always be re-evoked. The difference lies more in the nuance. Although the Between is also spoken of as 'embracing' the two partners, as a containing medium, Buber more often spoke of taking "a stand in the Between," suggesting a positively-willed movement or act of choice.

Rotenstreich sees the *Between* as the anchorage for certainty in Buber's thought. It is outside both individuals, which enables Buber to escape the subjectivism of an introspective approach to reality or certainty.[5] Immediacy is not simply a psychological or I-centered epistemological state, but touches external reality, the reality of the Thou and the reality of the Between, with absolute certainty.

Since thought moves in contraries and oppositions, why should Buber be singled out as a special example of dualistic thinking? Perhaps the answer lies in his presentation of his chosen problems and their solutions always and only in the form of polarity, explicit or implicit. For example, in his long essay on *Images of*

Good and Evil,[6] Buber's interpretation of the meaning of God's words after Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit is that they have become, "as one of us, to know good and evil;" this signifies their becoming *cognizant of opposites*. This would apply not only to moral situations, but to "adequate awareness of the *opposites inherent in all being* within the world" (emphasis added) and "awareness of the opposites latent in creation,"[7] from a Biblical point of view. Although the immediate consequence of knowing opposites engenders confusion and suffering within the limitations of the human condition, Buber interprets the ambiguous phrase "as one of us" (as one of the angels? as God himself?) to contain a promise of fuller understanding. Thus, he offers both a problem and an indication of its resolution. This almost sums up Buber's entire enterprise, at least in so far as it is a search for the true meaning of opposition in thought and action. (And in an equivalent sense, it sums up Mallik's enterprise as well.)

Not being a systemic philosopher, Buber does not enunciate a theory of dualism as such. Rather, he rejects certain conventional dualistic philosophies or attitudes which posit disjunctures such as: body and mind, God and Satan, being and becoming, spirit and matter, and animate and inanimate. He deals with polarity through certain inescapably related pairs of dualities which generate tension but not disjunction. Thus, in the case of the I-Thou I-It pair, the I-Thou relation is presented as normatively superior, providing the matrix and focus of development for the individual and the community. The importance of the I-It is not thereby diminished; it remains equally an essential aspect of life and reality, albeit at a more mundane level. The two, in fact, are symbiotically related: the one provides meaning to life, the other sustains it — both are required for successful social and community organization. Indeed, Buber's particular distinction between opposition and polarity and his treatment of the latter give him special title to be described as a philosopher of dualities. He distinguishes between disjunctive 'opposites' and mutually implicative polarities, which are always meaningfully 'bound together.' Any effort to separate the latter is invalid. In their mutual tension, they provide meaning to life. In the context of what he describes as man's religious situation Buber writes:

> … his *being there* in the Presence, is characterized by its essential and indissoluble antinomy. The nature of its being determines that this antinomy is indissoluble. He who accepts the thesis and rejects the antithesis does injury to the significance of the situation. He who tries to think out a synthesis destroys the significance of the situation. He who strives to make the antinomy into a relative matter abolishes the significance of the situation. He who wishes to carry through the antinomy other than with his life transgresses the significance of the situation.

> The significance of the situation is that it is lived, and nothing but lived continually, ever new, without foresight, without forethought, without prescription, in the totality of its antinomy.[8]

Buber distinguishes the religious antinomy from the philosophical, illustrating the latter through Kant who relativized the opposition between necessity and freedom by assigning them to the phenomenal and noumenal worlds respectively. Through this separation, their reconciliation becomes possible. But in "the reality of standing before God," says Buber, "I cannot escape the paradox that has to be lived by assigning the irreconcilable propositions to two separate realms of validity … I am compelled to take both to myself, to be lived together, and *in being lived they are one*."[9] (italics added)

Thus for Buber, the existentialist, the lived antinomy is crucial to his problematique: in being lived as 'one' it renders reconciliation and synthesis void and meaningless. A moral or religious decision made in the contingency of the lived moment, a decision which accords with the mental and moral understanding of the individual, may be felt as stemming from a unified self. In that sense necessity and freedom, or the bearing that any other pair of polarities may have on a life situation, can be experienced in that moment as 'one.' Their particular proportion provides the act with its particular unity. But the freedom is not 'pure' freedom, nor necessarily inexorable, and on examination the felt oneness might well yield a relativized or compromised pair. That examination is not necessarily misconstrued, but being discursive, or as Buber would say, occurring in the world of the It, it cannot capture the integrity of the moment, which stems from the immediacy of relation. Modern man has lost this immediate dimension of experience, and Buber is committed to re-present it as real, possible, and realizable. Modern man, after all, is a sceptic, unable to trust the immediacy of the moment; he is also an analyst, disentangling the threads of necessity and freedom that went into the actual decision. He might also be a reductionist, downgrading the decision and immediacy into various psychological and sociological compulsions.

For Buber, reductionism is symptomatic of the illness of the age in which man reduces every aspect of existence to the objective world of It. Buber attributes the loss of trust in immediacy to the uncertainty arising out of the loss of power to relate; the modern individual substitutes total objectivity or private emotions (today we might add somatic reactions) for relation. But he did not address the relationship between analysis and immediacy in his writings. He presumed that in stressing immediacy he had automatically avoided conventional, dualistic, or subject-object philosophy, and he did not provide grounding for his own system. This unresolved duality (or polarity) between immediacy and its structured description recurs throughout Buber's work.

Mysticism

The polarity of the I-Thou I-It is generally held to be the culmination of Buber's philosophic development, of his gradual turning away from his youthful pursuits of 'mystical union,' which he came to regard as self-closure.[10] Perhaps one may usefully digress at this point into an examination of Buber's beliefs about and criticisms of, mysticism, starting with a crucial incident that Buber later pointed to as the one which propelled his withdrawal from mysticism.[11] However, it is more than likely that it represented a climax reached from the mounting tension between two apparently divergent paths.

As is clear from *Ecstatic Confessions,* and from the *Addresses on Judaism*, Buber had abandoned customary religion for direct spiritual experience or *Erlebnis* (inner experience), which may be described as mystical, and need not be associated with, or grounded in, any of the received religions, nor in any religion at all. Buber not only read widely in mysticism, as a young man he was given to experiencing "attacks" of ecstasy that could be brought on by consideration of any familiar object, "which then became unexpectedly mysterious and uncanny, finally lighting a way into the lightning-pierced darkness of the mystery itself."[12] He had no spiritual guide and, as he wrote to Maurice Friedman, he did no regular practice of meditation, nothing "willed" or "pre-meditated:" his experiences were spontaneous.[13] However, his readings or interactions with persons such as those who joined the New Community in Vienna would have confirmed his own sense of ecstatic unity, oneness with nature, and the totality of the universe.

The decisive moment arose in the wake of Buber's self-perceived failure to respond fully to the unspoken distress of a young visitor. He ascribed this failure to an interrupted state of ecstatic rapture that had clouded his attention. He was seized with remorse when he learned that the young man subsequently died, though not through suicide. He regretted that he had not been more 'present' to the man's problem, to understand if not counsel. This feeling of guilt served as a justification for rejecting mysticism for the rest of his life. He condemned mysticism as encouraging a-sociality, even narcissism and, thenceforth, reworked his ideas on religiosity so as to remain essentially in the realm of the interpersonal, both *vis-à-vis* other persons and *vis-à-vis* God.

According to Indian tradition, meditation does not make the spirit insensitive: on the contrary, a post-meditative state is characterized by keen awareness and percipience, enhanced capacity for sympathy, communication and *ahimsa* or non-violence (to which love is integral).[I] Bliss accompanies awareness, but does not blunt it. From Patanjali's perspective, if Buber had been a master, say, of the *ashtanga*, or eight 'limbs' of yoga, he would have been acutely aware of the other's inner anguish and would not have failed to respond with complete appropriateness to his visitor's condition. So Buber's "turning away" from 'mysticism' after this encounter was, in fact, a turning away from a particular form or stage of religious ecstasy and the metaphysical label he attached to it.[II]

Be that as it may, Buber became an articulate critic of the drawbacks of conventional mysticism. In his "Foreword" to *Pointing the Way,* he describes the mystic's life as constituted by two dimensions of being — the 'higher,' in which he experiences only the Self and is unaware of the world, and the 'lower,' from which he constantly seeks 'escape' to the higher.[14] Again, "…the possibility opened that the dialogic of the soul cut itself off from all real communicating with the otherness outside it and degenerated into a self-enjoying of individual meaning, indeed to a *hybris* (sic) of an All-Self that arrogates to itself the self-enclosed unity of the Godhead existing before all creations and emanations."[15] Later, Buber also critiqued Indian philosophy for being dismissive of the real world as illusion, an interpretation of *Vedanta* that was popular at the time, even with several Indian thinkers, including Radhakrishnan and Mallik, though today *maya* is treated more as an epistemological than an ontological position.[III]

In Pursuit of Lived Religiosity

Buber's urge for lived religiosity found new expression in his philosophy of dialogue, published as *I and Thou* in 1924. Several scholars locate the roots of his new thinking at a much earlier date, finding evidence for dialogic premonitions in *Daniel* (Chatterjee) or in the addresses on Judaism he gave over a period of several years both before and after the Great War (Shapira). Others, such as Mendes-Flohr, locate this shift in a letter from Buber's friend and mentor, Gustav Landauer, in 1916. Landauer criticized the "asocial orientation of his thought"[16] and set off a process of rethinking evident in a series of writings up until the first draft of *I and Thou* in 1916. Some find the seeds of dialogic thinking, certainly of community, in the Bible, and Buber's spiritual evolution might just have the character of an anabasis in returning to its origins.

Buber's relational grounding of the interpersonal and socio-communal[IV] *hic et nunc* also reflects his discomfort with early twentieth-century Europe, where the world of the I-It seemed to overwhelm or extinguish the power of entering into lived relationships between persons and within communities, replacing them with a progressive mutually distancing objectivity, shrinking the ego into pure self-centredness. Again, it had to do with his realization that the ossified traditional forms of religion needed to be superseded by a meaningful spirituality comprehensible to the modern mind.[17] Hence the importance of reclaiming interconnectedness, of restating a dialogic relationship between I and Thou, enabling recognition of and reaching out to the Other's inherent subjectivity, reinterpreting scripture and spirituality. The I-Thou opens the individual both to other humans and to God: indeed, divinity — as redefined in Buber's perspective — is an integral and enabling aspect of any meaningful or 'hallowing' experience. Buber, himself, speaks of the life of dialogue as not 'one in which you have much to do with men, but one in which you really have to do with those with whom you have to do.'[18] The ideal and complete I-Thou occurs where the relational openness is mutual, but most relational situations are skewed and, in some exceptional cases, such as education and psychotherapy, necessarily asymmetric. Treatment of the other as object characterizes the I-It, be it the same person who till a moment ago was encountered as Thou, or any other person, a He, She, organic or inorganic entity. Hence, the I *experiences* the It whereas it *relates* to the Thou. Buber also refers to both as ways of relating in which the I is only formalistically related to the It, with the object included in the subject's experience as part of his/her being, for a limited purpose and use. In the I-Thou, on the other hand, rather than a subject experiencing another, the subject and the subject share a mutual awareness. "I do not experience the man to whom I say Thou. But I take my stand in relation to him, in the sanctity of the primary word."[19] The Thou, therefore, rules out all possibility of camouflaged egotism or self-interest, and is meant as a complete answer to the narcissistic aesthetes of *fin-de-siecle* Europe.

Conceptions of Possibility, Existence, and Actualization

Buber describes the I-Thou and I-It as primary *words*, which 'intimate' rather than describe relations. The verb 'intimate' has resonances of 'indicate' and 'allude to,' a pointing to a presence rather than a description of an object or thing. But he goes on to say that "being spoken (the primary words) bring about *existence*."[20] The primary words point to the *possibility of relation or experience*, but it can only come about or actualize through the spoken address. Indeed, Buber speaks of the *a priori* of relation as an ever-present possibility for connecting human beings, though it is only realized through acts of dialogue which create relatedness and community. Even the more formal or mechanical societal processes are brought about through means of the spoken word. There cannot be a society of pure possibility, where such primal words are never spoken, but most certainly they can vary in their proportion and power. When the word is withdrawn or altered, existence accordingly changes with it. The word is thus an agent of reification. Mallik by contrast, as we shall presently see, posited an actual *a priori* relatedness of which individuals may be unaware, and a somewhat different conception of possibility, existence, and actualisation.

Buber stipulates that primary words are always spoken from 'being:' the I-Thou from the whole being and the I-It from less than whole being. The It may demand attentiveness, as in the concentration summoned up in the pursuit of scientific knowledge, but no matter how intense, such activity still requires the attention of only part of the personality: the intellect or the mind. The I-It attention may also be obviously casual, as in semi-attentive reading or conversation, in repetitive mundane dealings, or superficial encounters. But the I-Thou is direct, in the present, demanding the full attention of the individual, the total being of the I in a state of awareness of the entire personality of the Thou — 'body, mind and soul.'

The primary 'words' therefore are better understood as intentional: as 'intendings' in the transitive sense they may or may not find utterance in actual speech. Were the 'spoken' word confined to actual utterance, it would exclude several situations of wordless I-Thou intentional communion, and would certainly be redundant in the case of the I-It. Dr. D.W. Winnicott, the renowned London child therapist, related an incident when he was presented while on holiday with a particularly difficult child. At first, he could not establish communication with the child through his normal repertoire of words, games, and play.[21] So, in the evening, he took the child by the hand down to the seashore, and in companionable silence and felt communion, the two sat together and watched the sun go down over the waves. This 'relational' event opened the door for trust and rapport between child and therapist, facilitating more explicit interchanges. As Buber wrote, "where unreserve has ruled, even wordlessly, between men, the word of dialogue has happened sacramentally."[22]

Three Types of Relation

In *I and Thou*, Buber describes three types of relation, with nature, with men, and with spiritual beings or essences. The third category of 'spiritual beings or essences' is somewhat vague and ambiguous: "the relation is clouded, yet discloses itself;" "we perceive no Thou, but feel ourselves addressed ..." According to Friedman, Buber spoke in the context of artistic creation, as a sculptor might see the essence of the form he is about to hew out of a block of marble.[23] Buber expatiates in more detail on the relation with nature, but obviously the inter-human is paradigmatic. Equally important is the relation with the 'Eternal Thou,' which is not mentioned as a separate category, perhaps because apart from the possibility of a direct relation, it is also present in all I-Thou encounters.

Buber described the relationship with nature, when not purely mechanical, as hovering somewhere above the It, but not quite reaching the Thou: "the relation sways in gloom, beneath the level of speech. Creatures live and move over against us, but cannot come to us, and when we address them as Thou, our words cling to the threshold of speech." Special moments may come in this somewhat twilight world of indistinct boundaries, the result of 'both will and grace,' when one clearly meets a Thou in some aspect of nature. Such was his encounter with a linden tree, "bodied over against me." Though he cannot vouch for consciousness in the tree, he declares the relation to be mutual. He encounters "no soul or dryad, but the tree itself" with "its form and structure, its colors and chemical composition, its intercourse with the elements and with the stars."[24] This illustrates Buber's emphasis on the particularity of individuals in dialogue, but the reference to the tree's "intercourse with the stars" uncharacteristically and briefly goes beyond human-nature dialogue to an almost pantheistic intra-natural intercourse, which would have pleased Mallik.

In his postscript to *I and Thou* Buber elucidates that an animal is not like man, clearly split in his nature between two worlds of the I-Thou and I-It, though it possesses "a latent twofoldness," which is why a relation with an animal can be described as one "on the threshold of mutuality."[25] Thus he goes beyond the literal interpretation of Genesis that the natural world exists primarily for the use of man. Despite often making use of nature for human advantage, the Hindu, by contrast, sees humanity and nature as part of a continuum. Indian examples of communion with the organic and inorganic world in a field of responsive mutuality, can be found in the life of Ramana Maharishi (1879-1949). Like St. Francis of Assisi, he was reputed to be able to communicate with various birds and animals and significantly relate with the mountain Arunachala.[26] This was not underlain by a philosophy of dialogue but of Vedantic Oneness. Mallik's philosophic theory also covered possibilities of relationships between the sentient, organic, and inorganic world, which will be examined below.

The 'Eternal Thou'

At times Buber indicates that the 'Eternal Thou' may be called God or by any other equivalent name. He distinguishes between the religiosity — which he advocates — and received religion, and does not use conventional attributes to describe God. His spiritual world is a hybrid of mysticism and personhood: quite clearly he rejects immanence as an attribute of God, and yet hints that there is no thing or situation in the world where God is not present, and which cannot be 'hallowed' or made sacramental. He does reject the notion of infinity with which he grappled almost throughout his lifetime. Existentially the ideas of finitude or of infinity as a beginningless unending series caused him acute anxiety as an adolescent.[27] He found some solace in Kant's *Prolegomena to All Future Metaphysics* in which space and time are shown as *forms* of sensory perception and not as things in themselves. Between the thesis of infinity and the antithesis of the finite "there exists an irresoluble contradiction: an antinomy of cosmological ideas; being itself is not touched by either."[28] Buber alternatively spoke of relation between man and the *eternal*, which he differentiated from infinity. The concept of the eternal or the ever-present as opposed to infinity has an existential depth rather than a connotation of endless linear progression. Though by definition without beginning or end, eternity can be interpreted as a seamless totality, a-temporal, without past or future. However the discomfort was not quite overcome: "The threat of infinity remained for Buber … a lifelong torment but one that proved to be the occasion for, rather than the obstacle to, existential trust."[29] It will be interesting to see how Mallik deals with similar problems of finite and infinite.

Buber does not provide a full definition of God apart from the attribute of eternity, but variously refers to Him in different contexts; indeed his whole aim is to provide pointers to experience and not definitions. As he says, God is not so much spoken about as spoken to, as Thou. Does this entail a mutual exchange, or is it an asymmetric relationship as Buber has described in psychotherapeutic or pedagogic situations? There, the ideal therapist or teacher addresses the patient or student as Thou, to enter into an understanding of the other with his or her whole being and to empathize with the other's distress, ignorance, or confusion. The patient or student, on the other hand, cannot respond fully to the therapist's or teacher's presence, circumscribed as he or she is by the limiting effect of pathology or immaturity. Would not the person addressing God be under a similar constraint? Buber makes a case for mutuality, which produces a condition of knowledge and love, but it is not one of equivalence. He states categorically "...we may even say God and Man, like in being are the indissoluble real pair, the two bearers of the primal relation, which from God to man is termed mission and command, from man to God looking and hearing, and between both is termed knowledge and love." In other contexts he affirms that God needs man just as much as man needs God. This suggests a kind of asymmetrical symmetry in the essential duality between man and God, a correlative dependency born of moral reciprocity and mutual need. In the case of the inter-human I-Thou encounters, the *Between* is ontologically an intrinsic aspect of the event: with the I-Eternal Thou. Buber does not mention the *Between* unless one were to formalistically construe is as 'knowledge and love.' If one understands the *Between* to signify God or eternity, then the dialogue with the Eternal Thou by definition is sufficient in itself, but it cannot be symmetrical with the inter-human I-Thou. Indeed, he does not list the I-Eternal Thou as one of the three kinds of relation.

Buber is at pains to differentiate the I-Thou relationship from the purely internalized dialogue between I and the Self: indeed, several paragraphs of the terse aphoristic text of *I and Thou* are devoted to rebutting the mystical thesis of 'annihilation of the self' in the Self, which received such prominent treatment in the testimonies of the Christian monastics in his *Ecstatic Confessions*. He also critiques the implicit existential dualism posited between the reality of the state of mystical union versus the unreality of the 'real' physical world. The I-It is an essential aspect of being in the world in which the other is experienced as object in a mechanical, formal, or utilitarian manner. Subject-object relations are one-sided and involve only part of the individual self, hence not genuine relationships. The It is in a state of 'reflection' to the I: it is contained within the I's experience and is not truly there 'in its own right.' Buber condemns conventional philosophy for being entrapped in the epistemological subject-object relation, which is no relation, and which has had a labile existence between the Scylla of subjective idealism and the Charybdis of positivism. Only between subject and subject can there be true relationship which debars the spectre of solipsism.

Through the I-Thou humans interact meaningfully with other humans, with the divine, and with nature, and such relationships are also the *sine qua non* for building community. The I-It is indispensable for conducting daily affairs, investigating the world of nature, and acquiring knowledge for all situations that require rational measured responses in the interests of security and survival. Although the I-Thou relation is a rare occurrence, and most of the time humans inhabit a world dominated by the I-It, without the presence of I-Thou relations a community lacks direction, depth, and organic unity.

Thus, already in his first statement of the I-Thou, Buber shows the integral interconnectedness between the I-Thou and the I-It. They are opposites, contraries; they cannot occur simultaneously but are mutually implicate. It is possible to employ both in alternating attitudes toward the same person, and it is indeed necessary to do so. He does allow that many relationships are but a confused blending of the two, since, as confused, they do not constitute a third category, but merely fail in their purpose. He focuses on the fundamental characteristics and significance of the I-Thou so as to arrest its decay and disuse in modern life. It is described as the *sine qua non* for the development of human personality, the means of adding magic and depth to inter-human relationships (not merely the conjugal or equivalent ones), essential to the successful functioning of any community. But it is not sufficient in itself and requires its opposite as a complement for successful life organization.

Dualities

To look briefly at some of the other aforementioned dualities: distance and relation exhibit a polarity in that without distance relationship cannot manifest (which is also a rebuttal of mysticism understood as collapsing the identities of separate individual selves), and relation is a desirable requisite for the bridging of distance. However whereas the I-Thou, I-It alternate necessarily in time, distance and relation are held together in a synchronic and spatial polarity. They are, as it happens, a *sine qua non* of the I-Thou, I-It.

Vortex and structure as understanding of the world also have a parallel in the polarity of chaos and direction in relation to individuals and society. As the Greek opposition between chaos and cosmos indicates a disjunctive absence and presence of order, the categories of vortex and structure seem to describe mutually exclusive opposition rather than bound polarity. Buber also uses direction in a more personally meaningful way as an answer to, or a way out of, chaos (which, in Judaism, is the World of Confusion), but to describe chaos as an essential requirement for direction, or both chaos and direction as necessarily related either in time or space is stretching the point. For in the finding of direction, chaos is overcome, and ceases to be a continuing term of the pair. Even if it remains a possibly renewable threat, or the overcoming of chaos becomes a graduated process, or even a never-ending process in the context of telic linear time-oriented religious or secular worldviews, chaos remains a disjunctive opposite and not a polar term like It to Thou or Order to Freedom. No doubt Buber also referred to the tension between a received or newly-created structure continuously threatened by vortex, but this can hardly be construed as a normative polarity. In the Tantric pair of Shiva Shakti, often iconographically conceptualized as Shakti standing on a recumbent Shiva, there is an explicit interdependency between Shakti as chaotic energy and Shiva as (directional) wisdom. Shakti without Shiva is chaotic and Shiva without Shakti is inert. But this is not an exact equivalent to Buber's concept of vortex and structure.

Time Concepts

With regard to moment and eternity, one has to look carefully at Buber's use of time concepts. On the face of it, as two points of a felt time dimension, charted, so to speak, along the same time axis, this pair again does not qualify for polarity. As shown above, Buber discriminated between infinity and eternity, rejecting the former as associated with the notion of linear time.

He adopted eternity as the forever present. From this viewpoint moments can only be plotted along a continuous graph of infinity, not eternity. Common poetic metaphors speak of 'eternal moments,' moments in which eternity is experienced as timeless presence. But neither poets nor Buber can describe the moment as 'part of eternity,' which would remove the polarity. What Buber aimed to do was to relate the 'moment,' as a temporal or historical situation, to a future a-temporal eternity in some macro-historical universe, or the lived moment to an experienced or fathomable eternity.

Obviously such concepts are fraught with contradictions. History and future eternity may just be considered polar opposites within a particular worldview (the particular features of Judaic exile versus the millennium), but since the relation is diachronic and teleological, and not alternating, it is more disjunctive than polar. An individual's experience of a 'moment of eternity' suggests a-temporal transcendence, and in that sense may be contrasted with the historicity of the moment with which it may alternate: this would conform more closely to Buber's notion of polarity, but was probably not his intention.

This relates to individuals, singly or in relationship, whereas the history-millennium polarity concerns societies. Thus these polarities do not conform exactly to the alternating I-Thou, nor do they manifest similar patterns amongst themselves.

Polarity

An important polarity between mysticism and dialogue pervades Buber's thought even after the enunciation of the I and Thou, although Buber himself viewed them as disjunctive opposites. It is undeniable that something very akin to mysticism haunted his dialogic formula till the end, especially his descriptions of the *Between*. Indeed, he specified that he did not deny the actual experience of 'undivided unity' in meditation, but rejected its interpretation as 'primal being' inclusive of the entire universe. He renounced the mystical attitude, in so far as he had accepted it, of denying full reality to the world of normal experience. But the *Between* exemplifies very intensely, the polarity of unity and duality or unity and plurality.

Another prevalent polarity which Buber does not methodically state or resolve and which receives attention from Shapira, is that between life or existence and systemic theory. He actually wrote to Hugo Bergmann in 1919, "I am now working on the general foundations of a philosophical (communal and religio-philosophical) *system*, to which I intend to devote the next several years."[30] (*italics added*) Buber was, in fact, working on his draft of the *I and Thou*, which saw publication five years later. In an essay "On the History of the Dialogical Principle," he mentions that *I and Thou* was intended as the first of a five-volume study which he had briefly outlined in 1916, "but its systematical character estranged me before long" and he abandoned the effort.[31] Certainly *I and Thou* seems remote from systematic philosophy, though Shapira describes it as an anti-systematic system, by which he perhaps means that though anti-metaphysical it nevertheless contains a coherent web of interrelated concepts.[32]

Perhaps the understated metaphysical concept implicit in Buber's worldview lay in attributing to the selected polarities a continuous striving towards unity. The very polarity points to unity, indicating a 'split' in a primally intended unity. "Being is in the state of duality: the duality of yea and nay, as the Chinese formulation expresses it; of good and evil, as the Persian puts it; and of the real and illusory world, as given in the Indian formulation." Buber ascribes to the Jew, whom he includes amongst the Orientals, a special aptitude for experiencing not the "isolated existence of things" but their amalgamation through their common and communal characteristics.[33] In this sense, Buber's preoccupation with opposites and their underlying unity may reflect a Judaic characteristic. But at times he seems to suggest that a perfect unity is unattainable, though the striving is unavoidable. Be that as it may, we know as a matter of history that Buber at first sought to overcome polarity through mystical experience and later through the dialogic process. Opposites are not merely contraries which entail one another, but form a positive organic structure through their mutual complementarity. In a lecture delivered at the age of twenty-two he spoke of "the harmony of opposites" within individuals, a harmony constituted by the joining of forces which lead to a living unity.[34] The idea of organic unity was further developed in a review of the work of the artist, Lesser Uri, in which he wrote: "Everything touches upon everything else, awakens and develops everything else..."[35] As polarity this phenomenon remained a leitmotif through all the transformations in his thought. It found detailed exposition as in the dialogue between Reinold and Daniel:

> And this is your *nearest* danger: descend into the abyss! Realize it! Know its nature, the thousand-named, nameless polarity of all being, between piece and piece of the world, between thing and thing, between image and being, between the world and you, in the very heart of yourself, at all places, with its swinging tensions and its streaming reciprocity. Know the sign of primal being in it. And know that here is your task: to create unity out of your and all duality, to establish unity in the world; not unity of the mixture, such as the secure ones invent, but fulfilled unity out of tension and stream, such as will serve the polar earth — the realized countenance of God illuminated out of tension and stream.[36]

Elsewhere he points out that the normative pairs good and evil, beautiful and ugly, derive their significance from the dualities, direction and lack of it (vortex), form and formlessness, which lie behind them. "The negative concept is immediately bound to the positive, being the emptiness to its fullness, the chaos to its cosmos." Hence he concludes that good and evil cannot, no more than right and left, above and beneath, be a pair of opposites. In a re-emphasis on his theme of organic unity, and almost echoing a Mallikean position, he says: "Man is not good, man is not evil; he is, in a pre-eminent sense, good and evil together."[37]

Before leaving Buber's treatment of the subject of dualities one may take note of another of his comments, which leads directly to the thought of Basanta Kumar Mallik:

> It is only when reality is turned into logic and A and non-A dare no longer dwell together that we get determinism and indeterminism, a doctrine of predestination and a doctrine of freedom, each excluding the other. *According to the logical conception of truth only one of two contraries may be true, but in the reality of life as one lives it, they are inseparable ... The unity of the contraries is the mystery at the innermost core of the dialogue.*[38] (italics added).

Unlike Buber, Basanta Kumar Mallik[V] starts with the premise that experience and theory are integrally connected as two aspects of one occurrence, albeit subject to error and illusion. In a few memorable sentences worth quoting in full, he declares:

> Certainly a theory cannot fight on the field of battle or work in a factory or even pray like a devotee in a temple to appease the guardian deity. But did it ever happen that the soldier or the worker or the devotee appeared on the scene before the theory had been either sensed or duly formulated? The fact of the matter is that since theory and practice are essential to one another and appear and disappear together, it follows that a soldier, as such, no more fights than a theory, as such, does.[39]

Thus, Mallik encapsulates theory, history, and ethics in one event. Contemporaries describe him as frequently using any occasion or paradox in real life, no matter how small or seemingly inconsequential, as the starting point of complex metaphysical speculation. On a larger historical scale, he is indebted to Hegel, some of whose major concepts he criticized in their particularity, but several of whose philosophical structures are formally present in his own work. In keeping with Hegelian methodology, he sought for logico-metaphysical structures underlying historical events, but his logic and constructions were markedly different from those of the German philosopher.

Mallik's philosophizing started not with concrete experience, but with the metaphysical task of providing evidence for its possibility. He shared Buber's critique of Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum*: the individual is not a product of thought, but experiences the reality that makes thought and the world possible. In constructing his metaphysics, however, Mallik employed something very similar to Descartes' "clear and distinct ideas," which would have been anathema to Buber, ever wary of ideas overcoming reality. Mallik's set of self-evident categories was different from the Cartesian: for example, he circumvented the conventional duality of mind and matter by defining both as descriptions or modes of referring to undifferentiated reality. As a systemic and universalizing thinker, he attempted to find slots in his thought-edifice for the important ideas contained in the various philosophies and cultures which he encountered. By refusing to ground knowledge of the multiple in experience, Mallik wished to escape the two-world theory and the problem of relating the contingent with the necessary. He stressed that individual centres are the stuff of reality, each is necessarily "unique, independent and original," and at the same time they are *essentially related*. Individual centres can be human, animal, organic, and inorganic. All are present in their full multiplicity in the primal condition of the historical or concrete universe, the ground of all moral, intellectual, and cultural evolution. This might almost serve as a metaphysical foundation for Buber's dialogic philosophy, where he emphasizes that the primary words (I-Thou and I-It) point only to the *possibility of relation or experience*: they can only actualize through the spoken address. Indeed, the *a priori* of relation is the ever-present possibility for connecting human beings, realized through acts of dialogue which create relatedness and community.

Thought and Action

To deal with both the popular and philosophic scepticism of the modern age on the one hand, and with the conflicts between traditional dogmatisms on the other, Mallik set himself the task of resolving what he described as "the still outstanding antinomies of thought and action." As he wrote in his introduction to *Related Multiplicity*:

> … I proceeded after that ultimate assurance about Being to characterize Being, to find out how it could be at the same time one and many, infinite and finite, universal and particular, unique and identical. Was there a way by which one could establish that the Real or the Positive was both one and many, and yet avoid the pitfalls of all monistic and pluralistic interpretations? Could we preserve Divinity without committing ourselves to the liabilities of the mystical, humanistic or any other conception about it? Or, finally, was it possible to provide for the claims of perpetuity or endlessness, and perfection or comprehensiveness, without running close to the age-long effort to define infinity as both beginningless and endless, and the finite as the cosmic imbecile that serves the infinite only as a foil?[40]

Mallik's was an ambitious project to provide answers to these ubiquitous philosophical dilemmas, through, as he found appropriate for the occasion, a judicious use of logic, metaphysics or what he considered 'cosmology.' We will consider some of the various antinomies mentioned above in the course of the following brief review of his thought.

Mallik's enquiry starts with the absurdity of radical scepticism that seeks to assert that nothing can be known. The assertion is obviously self-contradictory, the absolute negative an impossibility, hence Being or the positive is indubitable. Buber, in a sharp denunciation of metaphysical practice, appears to condemn outright this type of formulation:

> To be sure, many a man who is satisfied with the experience and use of the world of things has raised over or about himself a structure of ideas, in which he finds refuge and repose from the oncome of nothingness. … and regales himself with the

> spectacle of primal being, or of necessary being; but his life has no part in it.[41]

One may interpret the qualifying clause of the man "satisfied with the experience and use of the world of things" to exonerate at least Mallik, who was hardly satisfied with the condition of the world as he found it. However, his philosophy was more a rebuttal of, than a refuge from, nothingness, and he regarded the concept of the absolute negative as quite vicious apart from being misleading. Nonetheless, there is a chronic theoretical incompatibility between metaphysicians and existentialists, to which Buber and Mallik, despite some startling similarities, are no exception.

Doubt

Mallik's first step was to establish Being as against a general notion of nothingness, his second, to formulate the implicit logical assumptions of the Cartesian method of doubt. Descartes himself had not argued in terms of a logical process. Hannah Arendt describes the intellectual background to the philosophical scepticism epitomized by Descartes as created by the exciting new scientific and technological discoveries of the seventeenth century.[42] She points in particular to the invention of the telescope, which had dramatically exposed the fallibility of ordinary perceptual evidence. Not only were astronomical theories like that of solar revolution invalidated, but the reliability of sense experience in general became questionable. This undermining of certainty or truth was reflected in the wholesale Cartesian questioning of all empirical and theoretical knowledge. But Mallik does not start his enquiry with unreliable perceptions. He quite likely assumed the former, as the phenomenon of fallible perception has long been a tool of philosophic argument in India, epitomized in the dream versus waking state analogies. Instead, either influenced by his Nyaya forebears from Nadia, or in an uncanny repetition of their insights, Mallik suggests that the technical form of the doubting process employed by Descartes entailed positing opposing alternatives that do not admit of choice. His favorite analogy was of the Ass of Buridan dying of starvation, unable to choose between two equally succulent stacks of hay. This uncertainty and indecision is the essence of, or a synonym for, doubt. He goes further than his Nyaya forbears in structurally construing this process to mean that if "two propositions or terms … happened to contradict one another, it is inconceivable that they would do so unless there was a third proposition or term which was equally implied by them."[43] Or, as he alternatively phrases it, "the differences which lead to incompatibilities must necessarily imply an agreement as the basis or root from which they normally spring."[44]

The opposing terms or propositions generating doubt are not bare contradictories, for were they so, the one would be totally rejected and the other positively established. One would have arrived at an indubitable truth. Doubt, however, is not simple negation but an uncertainty that arises out of the possibility of alternatives in a state of mutual contradiction. And "mutual contradiction (*different from bare contradiction*) is an instance of definite relationship; it cannot appear between terms which are absolute differents."[45] (italics added). From this much it is clear that Mallik would regard Buber's statement on logic quoted above as mistaken in classifying logical contraries as disjunctive: they are relational terms and only sheer contradiction is disjunctive. The difference, of course, is not more than semantic: both were differentiating between relational states of mutual contradiction or contrariety (Mallik) or polarity (Buber) and non-related disjunctive states.

The background to the alternatives, the positive ground or belief implied by both, can itself be challenged by another opposing belief or presupposition. And Mallik's reading of the Cartesian *dubito* is to, again and again, procedurally place the implicit third term alongside its own opposite in search of yet another assumed presupposition. If democracy is opposed to communism, they are commonly embedded in humanistic republican politics: republicanism is opposed by monarchy and they jointly imply social organization, and so on from any pair of opposites. This regressive triadic process only comes to a stop when no ultimate presupposition reveals itself and the philosopher is left in a state of paralyzing uncertainty, or with the only certainty that he is uncertain or in doubt. Though doubt is a mental phenomenon, Mallik holds Descartes' conclusion of arriving at an unchallengeable foundation for the entirety of the human mind to be circular and unwarranted, for Descartes' deduction reinstates the same cluttered mind which had been forced to shed its contents in the process of doubting. What actually remains, Mallik counters, is just the logical possibility for mind. The original 'concrete' mind has been demonstrably proven to lack certainty, and remains just "an ordinary fact of immediate consciousness" like any other that forms the subject for psychological or philosophical analysis. The *res dubitans* is not the human mind with its full complement of precepts, concepts, and judgments, but 'mind' as the ultimate background of human experience which underlies the whole continuous process of doubt and stands as a "support or presupposition to alternatives."

To repeat, the *res dubitans*, or residuum of doubt, cannot be a content-filled human mind. Indeed, the mental residuum is so stark it can hardly be identified as human. To combat anthropocentric proclivities, Mallik first emphasizes that 'mind' is not only the end result of doubt but also the *process itself.* Secondly, he declares that not only is doubt characteristic of the human species but also of the animal since *the essence of doubting lies in the process of mutual contrariety and not in the constituting terms.* So all that happens is that "human beings fall into doubt in a way which is simply different from that of animals or other existents of the physical world, precisely because our life is constituted by precepts, images and concepts. " Persons having intimate dealings with animals would bear this out. However it is not so common to find instances of his final, somewhat obscure, assertion that "the last instance of doubt in the animal world will be practicably indistinguishable from a purely vegetable status. …, (and) if even the vegetable world is eaten into by the blight of doubt ... (t)he universe which human experience represented will be broadened out as a purely spatio-temporal stratum or as some radio-active field…" However it must be noted that plant-lovers and botanists have sympathetic observations about the reactive capabilities and 'choices' of plants, and Indian Tantric theory, which has names for consciousness chakras in humans and animals, simply projects them on to vegetation without detailed description.[46] This application of the technique of doubting to the entire human, organic, and inorganic world, is the first adumbration by Mallik of universal participation in a certain basic shared awareness. The generic term 'mind' abstracted from its human association is a "consistency which serves as the basis for alternatives."

Reality

This mind is also described as the 'barest minimum of existence' or Reality, so that in converse to the above, "(A)nything existent can appear as consistency or presupposition behind alternatives, or as alternatives." And since existence comprises the "totality of events," alternatives or dualities are integral to it, if not part of its definition. Put simply, Reality is all there is, from the minimum of existence or mind to the full plenum of the world. Mallik seems to have pushed the circularity in Descartes' reasoning further back to Reality in general, unless one accepts his assumption that any indubitable Reality is a guarantee of all Reality.

Mallik's critique of modern philosophy focuses on the consequences of the Cartesian error which attributes ontological certainty to the content-filled human mind. The post-*cogito* philosophical position is ontological and no different from the *status quo ante*. Mallik states that modern philosophy's claim of having effected a rupture with its classical and medieval past by making epistemology rather than ontology its starting point arises from this basic confusion. Philosophers subsequent to Descartes 'innocently' and implicitly accepted the ontic reality of the human mind as having been proven and established. All their attempts to build a structure or system rooted in this basic mistake were unsound, and led either to dogmatism or scepticism, if not solipsism. Locke and Kant, for example, struggled to build their systems on unstable ontological foundations made up of characteristic human sensations, concepts or judgments, all the while propounding the primacy of epistemology.[47] The lability of the exercise finally led to the renunciation of the search for indubitable certainty, and the emergence of probability as a working criterion of truth. However Mallik feels that there is an important primary source of differentiation between pre-modern and modern philosophy, and that is not its claimed revolutionary epistemological point of departure, but the seriousness accorded to the sceptic by the modern philosopher, who "gravely and with utter seriousness confronts the negative."

Conflict

Before proceeding further we may note in parentheses the integral importance of conflict in the Mallikean system. He refers, for example, to problems both in "the speculative world with its conflicting categories and ideas, and the practical world with its conflicting values and interests," which is almost a summing up of his metaphysical and societal concerns. Some of the major philosophical 'conflicts' he lists occur between such categories as infinite and finite, universal and particular, matter and mind, subject and predicate, law and freedom, perception and conception, noumenon and phenomenon'. Though this list of antinomies displays preoccupations hardly parallel to Buber's, there is a certain overlap, and taken altogether it is certainly not without significance for Buber's chosen polarities. Mallik's focus on conflict rather than tension between opposites betrays the concern which drives his forays into logic and metaphysics. Conflicts, both civilizational and religious, formed the background to his experiences in India. Political antagonisms expressed through two major wars dominated Europe during his domicile there in the first half of the twentieth century. (His theory of conflict matured in a flash on Armistice Day, 1918; *The Real and the Negative* was written in 1939 as World War II got under way.) Tensions can, but need not, develop into overt conflicts: all conflicts are rooted in some original tension between alternatives. Hence in some but not all respects, this difference between Buber and Mallik is also more semantic than real.

The Laws of Thought

Mallik now proceeds to re-apply the Laws of Thought, which have provided the methodology for the process of doubt, to the bare reality, or sheer mind or existence which forms the residuum of doubt. The mystic takes the leap from the last instance of mind into featureless reality, and although Mallik was positively inclined toward spiritual experience, he scrupulously separated the spiritual from philosophical speculation, which he insisted must be governed by the exercise of reason alone. In this insistence he was indeed influenced by the norms of western philosophy, though in practice several of his 'incontrovertible' assumptions were not so rational or universal as he imagined. Having rejected mental phenomena as uncertain, he resorts to what he intends as a purely logical and rational reconstruction of the universe through utilizing the Laws. We recapitulate this briefly, since it again points to the crucial role of opposition in building up the universe.

The Law of Contradiction can be formulated as: A cannot be A and not-A at the same time. Taken as sheer *contradiction*, the Law's function stands as purely negative, to locate the contradictory and eliminate one of the opposites. This is an essential, important function in rational discourse, and Mallik describes it as the *logical form* of the law.

But there is also a *metaphysical function* of the same Law of Contradiction. The opposing terms A and not-A when taken as *contraries* cannot actualize together, but they may do so successively in time or space. Moreover he argues, as contraries or opposites they imply one another, and as such they "must coexist in some plane." This plane he names the realm of possibility, which is *logically* but not temporally prior to actualization. Were it temporal, the two opposing possibilities would neutralize each other and neither would actualize. Thus Mallik's possibility is not equivalent to Aristotle's notion of potentiality, which is temporally prior to actuality. Moreover, he describes possibility as a kind of existence since it is part of that process of mind which underlies and makes possible the doubting process. Again, metaphysically, existence as the opposite of non-existence or excluder of the absolute negative implies an unending series of events. Initially Mallik terms the *res dubitans* interchangeably as reality, mind, existence as the foundation of any and every form of reality or existence which is not self-contradictory, but later he discriminates between actual reality and existence: the former is concrete, the latter possible. Once existence is defined as the realm of possibility it ceases to be a tautologous term. It is not used as a fundamental predicate, because it is not posed of any concrete subject: it is not a simple 'what might have been' and can no longer be, but a real possibility, an ever present possibility, which "keeps out the (absolute) Negative." Possibility/existence is also the realm where one of the opposites has been prevented from actualizing: hence existence can be defined as "the structure and frame of the universe which brings about the neutralization of the Negative." Thus, whereas Buber believed that the *coincidentia oppositorum* could actualize in moments of decision-making on the "narrow ridge," Mallik assigned them to a non-actualizable but "existent" sphere.

Since, like Carroll's Humpty Dumpty, Mallik gave special meanings to certain terms like existence, mind, reality, Being and non-Being, with different meanings at different times, he could appear inconsistent and confusing. Bare existence, for example, in the initial stages of his metaphysics, is used to refute the possibility of the absolute negative: in other words, bare existence is synonymous with reality. Yet he argues that the negating of the negative *opens the door* to "eternal reality," "making it possible for every conceivable kind of entity or existence to have as full a chance as possible."[48] This is no longer 'bare existence' but more a plenum, and existence and reality appear embroiled in circularity. He also asserts that since reality is seamless, any certainty about a seeming 'part' establishes the certainty of the whole. Combining this with his definition of existence as possibility makes all (logical) possibilities certain, and his cosmological description of the universe draws significantly on this metaphysical leap.[49] (Mallik's use of 'eternal' resembles Buber's 'infinite.') But his theory of relatedness is not dependent on such categories, and stems from logical reasoning.

In contrast to possible existence, actual concrete reality (which is not equivalent to reality as described above) includes our experiences of sensations and images and is defined as "the sphere of our historical organization where conflict takes place." Clearly, Mallik sees reality, whether in its actual or possible phases, as essentially characterized by opposition or duality. Buber's differentiation between polarity and duality is precisely equivalent to Mallik's differentiation between opposites as contrary and contradictory. When the two types of relations get confused, they create ethical and existential problems which have a crucial bearing on the mind's propensities to conflict.[50] Social dynamics, for example, is a play of contending and alternating oppositions. Institutionalized as democracy, we get a system of party and policy alternatives: any alternative elevated into an absolute by the logic of contradiction can only destroy or threaten others. Mallik's account has strong teleological features which will bring his position parallel to Buber's, for he states that the function of concrete reality is "to realize an ideal end." Before proceeding further, it may be useful to sum up the following implications of this exercise which are foundational for the Mallikean system:

- By the Law of Contradiction in its disjunctive form, reality or Being exists absolutely and non-relationally as independent and singular.
- By the Law of Contradiction in its oppositional form, reality or Being exists relationally with its possible alternative, non-Being, as relative or plural.
- In relation to the absolute, the negative is impossible.
- In relation to the relative, the negative is possible.
- Reality or Being can therefore be described as both Absolute and Relative, or Actual and Possible.
- Absoluteness entails continuity or perpetuity, discontinuity characterizes the Relative.

The Continuous

With the help of these formulas, Mallik constructs a cosmological framework of a triadic Reality composed of three successive universes. He does not describe them as phases of one extended system, for he wished to emphasize the independence and self-sufficiency of each of the three. In *The Real and the Negative* he spoke of two absolute universes and one relative: the first beginningless which comes to an end, the second which both begins and ends, and a third which begins and endlessly continues. It makes no sense, argues Mallik, to think of the Universe having a beginning without getting into infinite regress. Yet, the historical world we inhabit had to begin, so some preceding state of affairs must have ended. It is like speculating that something must have preceded the Big Bang. This world will also end, but since complete ending is unthinkable, something else will start and not end. The first and third phases are continuous and are named the First and Second Continuous Universes. They are separated by the historical period of discontinuity, and logically the three cannot coexist together. Thus he sorts out the time problems relating to infinity and finite by spacing out the polarities.

This was just the kind of device which earned Buber's disapproval in his criticism of Kant who sought for reconciliation through separating freedom and necessity into noumenal and phenomenal worlds. For Buber, the possibility of a moment of 'lived unity' of the opposites was real: for Mallik, it was impossible, and if felt to be so was an illusion which could not serve as the foundation for any stable structure. Yet although Mallik denied the possibility of harmonizing opposites in the present (Buber did not speak of harmony but of the lived moment of tension), he projected that possibility into the future. As it happens, neither Mallik nor Buber could banish the term 'infinity' from their philosophical vocabularies, despite their rejection of common received meanings. Infinity indicates a time dimension in some respects congruent but not synonymous with their own notions and each sought to redefine the concept to suit his own outlook.

Later, Mallik was to retreat from the notion of absolute reality, since none of the phases of the triadic universe were infinite (in the received sense) and self-sufficient. In *Related Multiplicity* he speaks instead of a duality of two non-absolutes, of non-absolute Being and non-absolute non-Being. The first Continuous he describes as a continuity of non-Being (or possible existence), followed by a discontinuous universe governed by both non-absolutes of Being and non-Being. The third and last universe following the end of the Discontinuous, of non-absolute Being, is also a possibility. Only the discontinuous universe is actual: the first and third are logical and necessary extrapolations, viewed as possibilities for the past and the future, incapable of being experienced during the historical phase. "There were some exceptions, no doubt. "[51] With this brief cryptic sentence interposed at the end of a paragraph, perhaps Mallik acknowledges in passing the possibility and reality of mystical experience on the part of a few, i.e., the possibility of experiencing the non-relational Continuous from within the frame of the Discontinuous, but adhering to his intention of keeping mysticism apart from philosophy, he leaves it as the faintest of hints. In the context of a comparison with Buber, such exclusions assume more significance.

Mallik toys with the idea that the first phase of the Continuous approximates to Buddhist *nirvana*, and the third to Vedantic Brahman, but this would make them inaccessible to experience in the present, which both Buddhists and Vedantists would find unacceptable. Moreover many Buddhists would challenge the interpretation of *nirvana* as sheer nothingness as opposed to fulfilled Being. Although Mallik did not pursue such ideas in *extenso*, the mere fact of their mention in his work indicates, but quite lightly, possible avenues for further development, for he certainly felt that traditional statements had outlived their utility. What immediately concerned him was *asserting the reality of the historical relational universe* while finding a theoretical niche for the non-relational.

Since Mallik's system is an almost complete metaphysical schema, his theoretical structures are all mutually implicate, and it is difficult to isolate any one for scrutiny by itself. In this section we have only dealt with the logical and metaphysical basis for contrariety: its consequences on individual relations will become visible in the next section, it also has implications for human and social life which cannot be dealt with immediately.

Part II: Homelessness

In his inaugural course of lectures entitled "What is Man?"[52] Buber, as Professor of Social Philosophy at Hebrew University, provides a history of (western) man's attempts to build a home in the world and of his investigations for assurance and security along other avenues when that failed. By home he meant a worldview which positions man in the universe in a secure and encompassing way. Worldviews have their origin in what he describes as an "original relational incident" or a response to the Thou made in some foundational event of a particular culture or civilization. Such would be the response of Moses to the words addressed to him by God, the Eternal Thou, in the desert, which constitute the foundational events of Judaic culture, or that of the Vedic *rishis* to the Vak-Thou, words plucked out of the cosmos, or heard with the inner ear, which are foundational for what has come to be known as Hindu culture.[53]

> Every great culture that comprehends nations rests on an original relational incident, on a response to the *Thou* made at its source, on an act of the being made by the spirit. This act, strengthened by the similarly directed power of succeeding generations, creates in the spirit a special conception of the cosmos; only through this act is *cosmos, an apprehended world, a world that is homely and houselike, man's dwelling in the world,* made possible again and again.[54] (italics added)

The structure issuing from the original relational event or dialogue can continue to provide shelter and act as a source of creativity only so long as the members of that culture are themselves able to enter into relation with the Eternal Thou of the original address, and with one another. Should that power of entering into relation be lost for any reason, cultural meanings cease to have force: a 'demonic spirit' replaces received wisdom, and the life of the nation falls into the trap of total objectification and causality or loss of freedom.

Buber opines that the chances for human dwelling dwindle accordingly as infinity is taken seriously. Infinity as beginninglessness and endlessness dismantles limits leaving humans with fluid and vulnerable horizons within which to attempt a structuring of their lives. (It is not without significance that Mallik described a bounded and 'discontinuous' universe as the setting for the human home.) Even Kant could not reconstruct such a 'home.' Buber pays attention to various modern philosophers including Hegel and Marx who failed in their attempts to alternatively create a home *in time* through providing a meaning for history through secularizing messianism, or through an image *of society and its perfectibility* with a promised home built on conditions of material production.

Buber's own preference is for that aspect of modernity which moves in a more authentic direction by creating *security through community* in the universe, without sacrificing human centrality. Feuerbach started philosophizing with the concept of the 'whole man' through his adumbration of the concept of I and Thou:

> The individual man for himself does not have man's being in himself, either as a moral being or a thinking being. *Man's being is contained only in community, in the unity of man with man, a unity which rests, however, only on the reality of the difference Between I and Thou.*[55] (italics added)

Nietzsche outdid Feuerbach in centering man in the universe, but unfortunately only as a problematic uncertain being. The future real or species man was yet to develop through the free exercise of the will to power. Buber substituted the will to power by the will to relation which could effect immediate change. (Mallik also projects the 'real' or 'actual' man into the future, but his conception is substantively different from Nietzsche's.)

Buber also criticizes the excessive objectification of the major contending ideologies of the twentieth century, *individualism and collectivism*, which reflect the impact of the modern scientific revolution. Apart from the obvious arguments against collectivism, Buber also maintains that modern individualism has an essentially imaginary basis and cannot address the human situation. Mallik was to take this theme further.

Two factors in particular have hastened on the critical 'anthropological problem,' starting with the *sociological*, or the "increasing decay of the old organic forms of the direct life of man with man. … such forms are the family, union in work, the community in village and town."[56] New community forms, like the club, trade union, party, *et. al.*, can kindle collective feelings but not establish security. The second is a *crisis of the soul*, expressed as 'man's lagging behind his works' since he is no longer the master of the world he has created. He experiences a threefold dimension of failure: one, in technique, whereby he has become almost an extension of the machine which he invented to serve him; two, in the runaway production of goods, well beyond his capacity to reasonably coordinate; and three, in the political unleashing of demonic powers which have passed out of his control.

This critical survey leads up to the centrality of the anthropological question, 'what is man?', in response to which Buber defines philosophical anthropology as a study of the *wholeness of man*, which includes relations between individuals and within communities through the I-Thou which assumes a close connection between relating to God and to fellow humans. Since in all instances of the intersubjective I-Thou the divine is present in or as the Between, this is *the only real way cosmic solitude can be overcome*.

> Only when these two arise — the binding up of time in a relational life of salvation, and the binding up of space in the community that is made one by its Centre — and only so long as they exist, does there arise and exist, round about the invisible altar, *a human cosmos with bounds and form, grasped with the universal stuff of the aeon, a world that is house and home, a dwelling for man in the universe*.[57](italics added)

Homelands: Conflicting Systems

Basanta Kumar Mallik also grew up in a social environment suffering from a 'crisis of confidence,' though not quite parallel to that prevailing in Europe. The intellectual and cosmic security of the Indian was rudely shaken by the dynamism and power of an imperially-introduced modernity: the situation bore some comparison with that of European Jewry a century earlier when faced with the challenging rationalism of the Enlightenment. However, whereas the rational thrust of the Enlightenment was towards recognition of Jews as equal citizens (whether wholly realized or not), the imperial impulse towards non-Europeans was explicitly anti-egalitarian and paternalistic. Still, through its educational institutions, the Raj nurtured generations of students on a diet of science, reason, and political modernization. Several Indian philosophers, Mallik included, learned to circumscribe their intellectual efforts within the domain of reason, in contrast to the combination of reason and non-rational apperception that marked received Indian philosophy.

However, society was not immediately affected to any great extent by the individualism inherent in modernity, basic Indian social forms did not disintegrate, and families, communities, and castes continued as close-knit and mutually sustaining groups. Unlike *fin de siecle* Europe, a symbol for decay and decadence, the nineteenth century in India for a significant section of the educated elites was one of resurgent cultural confidence and optimism, which found political expression in a movement for national independence. With the exception of a few perceptive thinkers, any social dislocation was perceived as a negative, but not very significant, impact of westernization mediated through imperialism. It was certainly not seen as an inexorably disintegrating process, and it was presumed that national independence would bring it to a halt. The gradual appropriation of expanded, but not yet radical, notions of individuality was viewed positively, as a needed corrective to Indian social group structures. Access to western learning through the colonial system of higher education however, brought sensitive individuals into contact with the more agonistic thinking of their western counterparts, to the 'anthropological question,' but it was not a widely felt predicament.

In the case of Mallik, however, once he shifted to Oxford and experienced the cultural and social disruption associated with the *fin de siecle* and two cataclysmic wars in the first half of the twentieth century, he found himself right in the midst of the European crisis. His intellectual task thus widened to include the problems that beset both Asian and European continents.

Once he had ingested the lessons of conflict both in Asia and Europe, Mallik became convinced that it was no longer possible to restate any of the received traditions, those worldviews which had provided a sense of belonging and security in the past. In these traditions he included modern humanism as an expanded restatement of the classical. This understanding of modernity/humanism as tradition is pivotal to his analysis of current dilemmas and prescriptions for the future. Mallik's review reached back further than Buber's, not in terms of intellectual history, but in terms of the basic social patterns within which particular civilizations were contained. India was now willy-nilly part of an emerging international world, and its innate universalism had to learn to encompass more concretely the multiple cultures and societal forms it was encountering.

He looked for the most useful and enduring ideas in various traditions and sought to harmonize them into a more comprehensive system, building on the twin assumptions that most ideas that endure must serve a useful purpose, and that there *must be a common ground* to all the known socio-cultural conflicting systems. This naturally entailed a departure from the traditionalists of all previous cultures and civilizations including his own, but his oft-expressed hope was that of "fulfilling the spirit of his ancestry," through a more complete universality and harmony.

The Towering Wave

Thus, in 1953, when Mallik's first metaphysical work earned unexpected approbation from a yogi in India,[58] he was inspired to pen a literary allegorical work entitled *The Towering Wave* that would reflect the starting point of his philosophical quest, its analysis of apparently failed traditional worldviews, and would indicate a new direction. He quintessentially sums up the contemporary social and historical predicament and suggests a new working understanding which entails seeing through the illusions of all past traditions, and prepares the way for discerning a truth which illumines both personal and societal problems. Mallik regards the inflation of a preferred value into an absolute as an instance of illusion (to be distinguished from *maya* which mistakes oneness for plurality) that leads to the impulse of reifying this 'absolute' through various mythological forms of activist expansion ranging from persuasion or preaching to war or genocide. (Mythology in Mallik's system refers particularly to activities aimed at establishing one's preferred absolute or illusion, be it a religion, an ideology, or whatever.)

He begins right in the middle of the contemporary crisis, using dream imagery in an almost Vedantic way:

> The last towering wave behind the dam gradually sloped back into the trough with boiling rage in green, black and white and the dam stood throbbing like a vessel which has just weathered the last blow from the heaviest sea. The sigh of relief which unmistakably greeted the dam was heaved as if by the whole earth surmounted by the sky. Will the dread wave come back, will the trough boil over again and urge the wave to rise and bend the dam to its knees? This cry flooded the whole horizon.[59]

Inside the dream stands a Professor, an archetypal scholar, caught in the cobwebs of his own superior "rationality." From within the dream, he dismisses the dream as irrational, shrugging off fear of another war. Yet war actually breaks out, and large numbers of young students die before the dream comes to an end. The obstinacy of the Professor denying the 'fact' of the illusion epitomizes the tenacity with which untenable assumptions can be maintained.

In the ensuing chapters, Mallik frequently refers to this *first dream*, to the convulsive movement of the "granite bed" of the dam, jolting the very foundations of home and shelter. It encapsulates the then current mood of dread, existential insecurity and uncertainty. Although the metaphors derive from the socially disruptive Great War, Mallik interpreted the dream-imagery to indicate that the whole human community is held hostage by a kind of collective illusion, leading to periodic cycles of disaster; in this sense it is also a projection of Mallik's theory of history.[60] The "Epilogue" to Mallik's first book, *The Real and the Negative*, describes the environment as having consistently bewildered people with its irrational, capricious, and even demoniac manifestations, driving them to a continuous search for security and certainty.[61] Here is an open parallel with Buber's analysis of the search for security in the western world, accompanied by meretricious alternatives or widespread skepticism. "As the artist might put it, the main motif of all history was to produce just the anguish of soul which stands symbolized in the slow, unsteady march back to an empty home from the ever-recurring funeral on the banks of the Ganges or on the hilltop or in the highly decorated cemetery."[62]

Translation of the dread into popular imagery and concepts is followed by a *second dream* (the Second World War), which is almost a repetition of the first and provokes further despair as well as frenetic efforts at international conferencing and other socio-political initiatives. In between, Mallik inserts what is almost a visitation by a shadowy 'eastern' figure who brings an inexplicable conviction of peace and fulfillment for all. Finally a *third dream* arrives, in which a Mystic brings assurance that there is indeed a truth, and indicates where it can be found. The "mystical" assurance is presaged in the first dream by "a very faint whisper," which unheard or unheeded promises that the wave has spent itself and will not return. It is only in the third dream that the mystic gives clear and explicit directions to serious seekers on how to shake off the recurring confusion.

The second part of the book shifts from dream sequences to a search for answers to three dilemmas or paradoxes. The first concerns the co-presence of Ananda and Maya, or Blissful Reality and Illusion, and the *ultimate uncertainty that Nirvana or Brahman may also be illusion*. The second arises from the inexplicable co-existence of God (love and peace) and the Demon (evil): *does God also love the Devil* that he fails to redeem man and abstains from choosing between the two? And the third relates to the veils that cover the 'real self;' if the veil or fiction can overwhelm man, *why cannot he conquer the veil*?[63]

These dilemmas express a radical skepticism with regard to the three dominating worldviews of Indic (or Asian) spirituality, Abrahamic religions, and modern humanism (by the 'real self' Mallik intends the reality of the individual valued over and above the 'fiction' of collective or community), which together almost constitute the civilizational history of humankind. Their inherent contradictions are now out in the open, all 'homes' are shaken and threatened, and the comprehensive loss of certainty fills the human mind with dread.

So far the book has summed up the modern existential and sociological predicament which provides the catalyst to Mallik's own philosophical quest. It continues with a more detailed exposition of the flawed worldviews leading to the need to forswear persuading or forcibly converting others to any of them, and ends with a vision of future reconciliation.

Following the third dream with its hint of an answer, a group of persons, mostly scholars from different countries, undertakes a kind of intellectual pilgrimage across what is recognizably European and Indian terrain to end in the Himalayas. In the course of their encounters with various people, including representatives of the Peace Movement, war-refugees, academics, statesmen, and even roughnecks, they evolve a code or ethics of mutual abstention which governs their interactions amongst themselves and with their environment. This ethic does not provide an answer to their questions, but by deactivating the competing irrational beliefs that fuel contention, conflict, and warfare, it creates a neutral field for new insights. In a real sense the travelers form a *community*, not God-centered as in tradition, but united by a common bond of trust both in themselves and in a solution waiting to be discovered. In their self-confidence they are heirs to *modernity* and the Enlightenment; in their common faith in the Mystic's yogic insight they connect to the *Oneness* visions of Asia, which *do not question evidence* (i.e. do not conflict with fact and reason). Thus, they combine features of all three traditions, individuality, community and Oneness. Ultimately, they reach their destination and discover the answer to the three paradoxes which have been the subject of their debates and arguments. This knowledge is not retained as rational insight for posterity but disappears with the members of the group, for, says Mallik, there cannot be a dogmatic proclamation of a new Truth. Truth has to be won and experienced anew by all individuals and peoples. In this respect, despite his metaphysical proclivities, Mallik resembles Buber in proclaiming a *method* of discovery and an existential goal rather than a new 'ism,' but unlike Buber's, his method incorporates debate and discussion as a preliminary to the final consummation which is more than just a conclusion.

There is no social counterpart here to Buber's existential 'immediacy' and 'intimacy' though there is a promise of "intimate contact' and 'warm relationship.' Mallik confined himself to providing a philosophic grounding for universal relatedness, echoing Buber's mistrust that mere philosophy or metaphysics in the classical mold cannot deliver its promised security, because "the question about man's being faces us as never before in all its grandeur and terror, no longer in philosophical attire, but in the nakedness of existence."[64] Concrete reality is the starting and ending point of philosophy. There is indeed a sharp distinction between bare categories and their concrete instances, but in action only the concrete is involved. For example, one never desires freedom in the abstract but always freedom for a particular person, community, or nation.

In this unusual book Mallik for once makes explicit his ideas on the relationship between academic disciplines especially history and philosophy, with the perceptiveness and intuition ascribed to practicing mystics. Mastery of yoga does not simply benefit the practitioner alone, but is relevant for the common human life. Yogic insight can provide faith, a promise for future understanding, but it does not trivialize or negate the necessity of intellectual and rational comprehension. This goes hand in hand with his logical rejection of conventional notions of the absolute, whether Brahman, *Nirvana*, or whatever: indeed he shifts the meaning of illusion from mistaking the contingent world for the real to attributing absoluteness to the non-absolute. Since 'absolutes' are intimately tied to opposing philosophico-societal values which lead to conflict, illusions are ultimately about history as well. Mallik proffers an insight into history that can help discern these traps and dissolve the miasma that obscures clarity of thought regarding the human condition. The truth promised by the mystic, therefore, is not within the strict traditions of either Jerusalem, Kailash, or Athens, but a fulfillment of all three, in that the mystery of the common ground behind all of them, which would reveal the common purpose of mankind, is the grail that is waiting to be, and can be, discovered.[65]

The movement toward this truth through debate and discussion on various aspects of fact and value emphasizes that it is only through honest dialogue that one may reaffirm what the nightmares have shattered, 'a home in the universe.' Indeed, in the "Epilogue" referred to above, Mallik ends on a visionary note:

> The civilized man of the future need no longer be afraid of his environment, whatever its appearance; he should be in a position instead to look for intimate contact or warm relationship, whether in the midst of a desert or the depth of a forest or in the heart of the animal world, just as much as he hopes to do in the society or company of men…
>
> *And the home of civilized man after this can be built only in the heart of the universe* rather than on the mere shores of a lake or the peak of a mountain, or the arboreal shelter of green-flowing meadows. And the vision that will lead him on from moment to moment or age to age, or from one birth to another, will spring from his undying faith in immortality — his divine attribute — to keep on moving till all the shores of the limitless oceans of profound mystery have been reached.[66] (italics added)

The 'home' or security of which all are in search, therefore, can no longer be found in a particular civilizational or external manifestation. It has to rest securely on faith in the possibility of understanding the reality underlying the universal predicament. The constitution of the group of seekers and their interactions with the surrounding human and non-human environment demonstrate the essential relatedness of all beings and their essential inner equality or lack of inequality.

Part III: Relatedness and Individuals

Individuals and their relationships formed the fulcrum for the thought of both philosophers. If Buber emphasized relationship as in a sense even prior to individuality as "the radii before the points," Mallik saw the historical universe as one in which related individuals or "related multiplicity" are an indissoluble given, regardless of the psychological processes of individual growth and perception. As pointed out, Buber aimed to restore relationship and community in a universe seemingly reduced to atomized individuals or abstract collectives. Mallik used related individuality as a central building-block for a new kind of society different from received individual, community, or group-centered types.

Buber was heir to a philosophical tradition in which individuality had always been a central element, despite the widely differing circumstances pertaining in the classical city-states and Judeo-Christian communitarian history. In Mallik's background, at the other extreme, lies the radical monistic statement of Vedanta, that Reality is One, and even when this monism is modified to include some differentiation and accommodation for individuals, they are never central to the discourse. With the onset of the modern age, individuals have emerged out of the shadow of divine containment and eschatology into a more self-conscious light. They are viewed as the sole repositories of reality and value, despite the philosophical problems relating to epistemology and communication. Indeed, individualism has become almost the common sense of the modern age, a common sense so 'obvious' that proof for its certainties is assumed and not always demanded. At the same time, the burden of individualism has come to assume critical proportions.

Buber was at pains to establish the priority and apriority of relation. Relationship is primary: "In the beginning is relation — as category of being, readiness, grasping form, molds for the soul; it is the *a priori* of relation, *the inborn Thou*." Relation, which Buber describes as 'lived' relation or 'whole' relation, is the true original *unity*. "There is no *I* taken in itself, but only the *I* of the primary word *I-Thou* and the *I* of the primary word *I-It*." Unity is not undifferentiated oneness, but a relational gestalt, an experience in which there is, in primitive societies for example, no clear dualistic distinction between self and others or self and the natural world, but all are closely involved with and interacting upon one another. In this condition of relational density, there is no clear sense of 'I' separate from others and the world. All experience is relational, and through the constant experience of being impacted by a perceived '*Thou*,' a separation of *I* and *Thou* is effected, which opens the possibility of the second primary perception *I-It*. The natural world also enters into relational experience, but passively in contrast to the mutuality of relationships between humans; both animal and plant worlds participate in some kind of *I-Thou* mutuality.

There is a parallel evolution in the new born baby's sense of weak *'I-ness'* coupled with strong *'Thou-ness,'* which gradually evolves and is trained into a bi-focal vision based on a strong I. "It is simply not the case that that the child first perceives an object, then, as it were, puts himself in relation with it. But the effort to establish relation comes first.... second is the actual relation, a saying of *Thou* without words in the state preceding the word-form; the thing, like the *I*, is produced late, arising after the original experiences have been split asunder and the connected partners separated." From this situation to the post-Cartesian world of scientific objectivity is a long and seemingly inevitable journey. Buber has no essential quarrel with the epistemology of science. But it has reached critical proportions in that in the current predicament the *I-It* appears to have almost extinguished the possibility of the emergence of *I-Thou*, and that is the hallmark of alienation.

To combat this Buber sought, through the Kantian structure of the *apriori*, to establish relationship as a fundamental mode of being. His adoption was a modification of both the 'categories.' The relational *apriori* is not an epistemological category like space and time, a universal dimension of perception and knowledge, but it is *apriori* in so far as it structures human relationships within the world. The relational *apriori* also resembles to some extent the categorical imperative, in so far as it is attitudinal and volitional, and gives rise to immediacy. It is grounded in a primal reality but it operates freely without necessity. So when Buber speaks of the *apriori* of relation, he describes a process which emerges from a largely undifferentiated containing "cosmic" gestalt of universe and child. Although he also tries to speculatively recreate the weakly differentiated world of the primitive, he speaks more confidently about child-development as an observable phenomenon.

The unborn baby's experience in the antenatal period, he avers, has a "cosmic quality" through an organic "knowledge of the universe." This primal human world is one of organicity and containment where the cognizing or relational 'I' is not manifest. Once the body of an individual is delivered into the world, it can grow into full being only through relating. As the child gradually separates from the mother, each act of physical and psychic distancing reinforces experience of the world as for itself, not for the yet unformed I. But this separation is at the same time compensated by a spiritual reconnection with the *mother* through relation, which evolves into what Buber describes as not *experience* of the mother, because experience always appropriates the other into oneself, but "*correspondence with what is alive and effective against him*," a Thou. This Thou is projected onto all that is "bodied over against him," and gradually self-consciousness, consciousness of an I over against the various Thous, comes into existence through this alternating separation and relation. Only after the I and Thou are established, does the possibility of the I-It appear.

The Threshold of Speech

Paradoxically Buber's conceptualization of primal antenatal organic existence, as both a cosmic and metacosmic state of knowledge, has no 'I' as knower or cognizer. Given his logic of evolution, one is tempted to trace the continuance of this state into the differentiated world, as the supporting environment out of which relations emerge and from which the Thou and I gradually separate.

Buber would not be comfortable with a spatial metaphor however; primary relations not only alter but create environment — indeed, relation supersedes the preceding environment. Again, the 'Between' might almost suggest primal being or the residuum of the metacosmic state of knowledge. But it is a creation, for it is created by the address of the primary word, and Buber clearly distinguishes primary undifferentiatedness from the Between. Conversely he suggests that the experience of undifferentiatedness in meditation is a regression to this primary state of being. The *Between*, which Buber also calls God or Spirit, is an element of a *differentiated* situation, and 'hallows' the meeting of the I and Thou which has summoned it into presence. Again, he also says that "spirit is the word," in seeming contrast to his pronouncement that the two primary words *create* relation and experience through the *silent address*. In relating to nature or 'spiritual beings,' the former "hovers on the threshold of speech" and the latter though silent, *begets* speech.

It is only in the archetypal human relationship that spirit is manifest as speech: yet again, the word as speech is not within man, but *man takes his stand in speech* "and talks from there," a difficult yet compelling metaphor. The linkage between spirit and language has, apart from Biblical and Cabbalistic overtones (though admittedly, Cabbala has more of an alphabetico-syllabic orientation), suggestions of the Upanishadic *sabdabrahman*, if not Tantric *nadabrahman* with its distinctions between *vaikhari*, spoken speech and *anahata*, 'unstruck' or unuttered pre-spoken sound.

Buber implicitly emphasizes the primacy of the word, which is Spirit, which is metacosmic knowledge, which again suggests the conflation of being and knowledge. Thus the ontology of the Between is multilayered, exhibiting polarities between mysticism (a step short of *nirguna brahman*) and dialogue, showing that Buber's intended bouleversement of 'mysticism' is far from complete. But as the bridge between two subjects, it equally emphasizes the presence of the Other as person, whether human or Eternal. Silence, adds Buber, is the ultimate relationship, where the spirit is present but leaves the Thou free. Once the spirit manifests in uttered speech, the Thou can, but need not immediately be, pulled into the world of the It, which he describes as "the melancholy of man and his greatness. For that is how knowledge comes about, a work is achieved, and image and symbol made, in the midst of living beings."[67]

Becoming I and Thou

The evolution into a full-fledged I-consciousness and It-world is a gradual but not passive process. Experience does not flow into the senses from outside, but the individual engages in actions and is acted upon by that which Buber describes as being "over against" him, so that the emergence of the I entails constant wrestling with the environment. Indeed, the *effort* to establish relation precedes its realization, as instinctively the child stretches out its hand towards its mother, followed by a silent address to her as Thou. Buber would like to say that before the child knows the mother as such, or any other person or object in his surroundings, he wants to relate to something, anything "over against him," an interpretation of the apparently aimless clutchings of infant hands. Initially relation, therefore, is perhaps *toward* rather than *with* a Thou (for the instinct of the child is to view every person or thing as Thou), "as category of being, readiness, grasping form, mold for the soul; it is the *a priori* of relation, *the inborn* Thou."[68] The Thou gradually becomes accessible across the distance of separation, until such time as the individual can reach the stage of almost viewing itself as another Thou. These are the beginnings of self-consciousness, of entering into "relations of consciousness of itself."[VI] Only after this does it become possible to experience the world as an It for the I. The It as mode of perception exists before things as logically implied by the primary cosmic world. Prior to self-consciousness the It was, so to speak, an It in Itself, a neutral environment 'out there.' But post discovery of the Thou and the I, the distancing experiences push back the frontiers of the Thou again and again, till the subject shrinks to a functional point, and appropriates the It existing 'in and for itself' to form the I-It 'word.' In fact primal distance is the basic presupposition of all human relations.

Thus, a generally projected Thou consciousness is followed by an 'I' consciousness, and a reconnection established through the relational I-Thou. This process exemplifies the *apriori* of relationship. Last of all, the 'It' world of objects separates from the Thou, and appropriation of the world as experience can begin. The instinct toward the Thou relation and, derivatively, toward the It relation, is *apriori* in so far as it is inborn and self-developing, preceding all discursive knowledge; however, although the Thou and It are alternative ways of relating to Reality, and the Thou in fact, precedes the It, the individual may choose to abandon the Thou relationship altogether, but as an *apriori* it is always recoverable.

Buber differentiated between individuality and personhood. There is no I taken in itself, but only the I of the primary relational words. The I of the I-It expresses individuality when it differentiates itself from other individualities, appropriating them as part of its own experience, or experiencing the world with the aim of using it. By contrast the I-Thou puts the 'I' into the mode of becoming a person, through the relational mutuality which engenders subjectivity in both participants, and the "personal actualized being" gradually emerges. Thus the 'I' in both cases is not the same.[69] However, Buber allows that the same 'individual' may relate to another as Thou and/or It, i.e., an enduring center alternates between the modes of relation and experience, almost implying three entities, two I's and the bodily individual.

On the relationship between 'body and self,' Buber disconnects the 'I' of the Thou word from the instinctual drive for self-preservation or any other bodily instinct. The body is cousin to the I of the I-It as a world-appropriating, manipulative and exploitative center and not its opposite. One might oppose body with 'person,' a combination of the I's of Thou and It. Again, given his theory of the development of the I's during infancy and childhood, preceded by a non-subject-object antenatal cosmic containment, the enduring individual is more than just a bodily center, which, from the beginning, is host to a larger-than-physical awareness and thereafter to the primary words.

Both words of address are primary. The world appropriated as It is the perceived law-governed universe ruled by causality which the scientist investigates and puts to technological use. So long as it is counterbalanced by a world where genuine meeting is possible and remains in creative polar tension with it, the purposes of both individual and true community can be served. However historically the world of manipulation has exhibited a tendency, not always uniform, to expand and overtake the other. When the capacity for encountering the Thou is lost a kind of dichotomous or schizophrenic existence ensues. A man (Buber used 'man' for humankind and 'person' for an evolved-into-relationship human being) is divided between the external meretricious institutions of the public world, where no real public life can be conducted, ("an animated clod without a soul") and the meretricious private world of feelings (an "uneasily fluttering soul-bird") incapable of supporting real personal life.[70] Should the individual lose the capacity to return to the Thou world, personhood is lost, and community degenerates into a de-humanized mechanically-ordered society.

> And in all the seriousness of truth, hear this: without It man cannot live. But he who lives with It alone is not a man.[71]

Buber has been faulted for failing to provide a philosophical grounding for the I-Thou.[72] The I-It is clearly a subject-object experience, both intentional and cognitive, whereas Buber affirms awareness of the total otherness of the Thou without analyzing how this is possible without loss of subjectivity, and fails to produce a theory of cognition for the subject-subject relationship. Buber was, of course, dissatisfied with the subject-object theories of received philosophy and strove to describe an apperception which is not one of normal cognition or pure emotion (purely subjective), or even volition (it comes as "grace"). It hovers at the critical edge between philosophy, poetry and/or mysticism, and explains the exasperation of several philosophers with his writing, and the difficulties earlier alluded to of classifying Buber's work. However as metaphor, as an attempt to expand the meaning of both secular and Jewish life for the modern individual, to integrate different elements of mysticism and relationship into a community framework, it is imbued with cultural significance.

Doubts have also been cast on the narrow polarization of the I-Thou and I-It, which excludes other forms of relatedness. Buber suggested that any third experience is basically confused, although he stressed that the I-Thou experience fundamentally alters the quality of relationship with the one who alternates between Thou and It. One may add that in any society or community, individuals do not necessarily exploit or objectify one another, but as often display a basic decency and respect for one another which are not necessarily the results of experiences of immediacy, but attitudes stemming from beliefs, nurturance, conducive social environments, education or whatever.

Non-Relational and Relational

Buber analyzes both mystical concepts of absorption into unity/Brahman or nullity/*nirvana*, as constituents of the world of It. The It world is governed by causality, essentially experienced by the I through use and appropriation. Neither Brahman nor *nirvana* fit this description, but that is not Buber's main point. The crux of the matter for him is the role of I in mystical experience, and its divorce from "lived reality." Experience is a paradoxical concept in the mystical context; as Buber says, experience is always experience of something, of an object, and the object is appropriated into, is part of, the individual's experience. In mystical 'experience,' however, the object disappears, and Buber presumes that what remains is an ego which claims to embrace the universe. However the ultimate mystical experience is non-relational and cannot by definition be I-anything. As he says in other contexts, it rather resembles antenatal pre-relational metacosmic knowledge.

Despite the absence of subject object experience, Indic practitioners, when seeking a linguistic description, often, for want of appropriate terminology, use either category in a meta-formulation, the subjective Self or objective Thatness, sometimes personalized as Thou. The different stages of meditation take the practicant through treating the whole of the body-mind complex as an object as described in the *Katha Upanishad* chariot metaphor. What objectively looks at this I object can be named the 'Self,' but it has no individual particularities. Through cultivated detachment, the relational I and its objects of concentration finally drop away, even the formal dualism of the Aham Brahmasmi, and what remains, is non-relational or trans-relational being (Vedanta) or non-being (Buddhism), the bliss of sheer consciousness or awareness, different from simple unconsciousness or lack of consciousness.

Being a practical exercise, it is better judged by its effects on the personality than its necessarily paradoxical theory (though it is not a deliberate celebration of paradox). The ultimate state cannot be maintained on a continuing basis, and alternates with ordinary but improved mental, emotional, and physical activity, somewhat echoing the effect of the I-Thou on the I-It. The 'ordinary' world of relation is not belittled: several interpreters find the non-relational and relational to be two aspects of reality; the experienced/relational world is illusory only when and in so far as it exhibits exclusive claims to reality.

When Buber discarded both the experience and theory of mysticism, he discarded his own understanding of mysticism as rejection of relationship and society. What could never leave him, however, was the experience of immediacy (which he insisted did not diminish the reality of the I-Thou), of timelessness (if one uses the Bergsonian concept of duration as opposed to measured linear time), of the 'word' that cannot be uttered (including the pre-articulated word), and of the richly colored Between. All these bore strong evidence of an enduring mysticality now arising in the space between self and other instead of in pure self-direction.

Individual Centers of Reality

In turning to Mallik's account of individuals, we step back into a metaphysical world, where the philosopher perceives his task as one of providing *evidence* for what is.[73] He sees the basic stuff of the historical universe as multiple centers in "deep and intimate relationship with one another" across all space and all time. An unrelated individual is absurd. Obviously all, or perhaps most, centers are not aware of this universal connectedness. One can extend Mallik's doctrine of illusion to account for the ignorance of individuals regarding their true proportion and relatedness to one another. The independence and uniqueness of an individual center is not diminished by its capacity to enter into relationship: an individual cannot be defined without it. As an existent, and with the onus of "keeping out the negative or non-existence," it has to co-exist along with the discontinuous universe, i.e., it has to be present from its beginning to its end. Ergo, the different beginnings and endings within the discontinuous universe are links in a chain — all entities are continuously present, though changing their individual and communal histories.

Individuals are *centers of reality* in the contingent historical world of beginning and ending known as the Discontinuous universe. The Discontinuous results from the interplay of the dual possibilities of non-absolute being and non-absolute non-being. Mallik argues that since this world is non-monistic, it must contain multiple instances of all possibilities (where there is not one, there can only be many). Commonly one *experiences* multiplicity and *derives* the concept of unity through reflection, but to avoid the two-world theory of contingent and necessary, Mallik *deduces* multiplicity from the dual possibilities in his endeavor to keep the argument strictly rational. Lastly, he employs what looks like a Bradleian argument, that wherever there are two instances, there must be a third 'thing,' i.e., a relation between them. Relation, if treated as an object, induces infinite regress; however relationship is not another individual center capable of independently entering into relationship with other centers or with relationships, which is absurd (or a categorical mistake if one prefers). Relation is a logical connective, and Mallik's use of the word 'thing' is systematically misleading even within his own system. Individuals are distinguishable by their particularities, but essentially connected with all others, hence they are not isolables.

Mallik starts his description of an individual center as an instance of either the possibilities of being or of non-being, which are manifold in the discontinuous universe. For example, there are multiple instances of plant, animal and human life, each of which is itself and not the other, e.g. tree, horse, or friend. Any individual (center of reality) can be one of several similar centers from amongst A, B, C, D, etc. As instances of humanity, A may also be an instance of wife, mother, friend, social worker, or equestrienne; each category also has several instances. Center A also has a personal biography which unfolds in time through a succession of discrete phases, A1, A2, A3, A4, etc., where each number can denote any unit of time. The A which unfolds through time-phases is the enduring center, though the cluster of possibilities of which it is an instance keep changing. A as an individual is a unique, continuing, mutable series of instances. But, in a community or group A is but one instance among many of a kind.

Mallik is careful to avoid the use of abstract nouns; individuals are not instances of motherhood or friendship. He does not want to posit a Platonic realm of ideas over and above the instances, holding that abstract nouns such as motherhood do not refer to any thing. We can legitimately speak only of concrete instances of mothering, or befriending, but he does not tackle the problem of universals or universalizing (mothering, befriending) head on. Instances of a particular type are not necessarily continuous. In between caring for her children, a woman might do many other things, teaching, shopping, playing, riding, in which case she will be a teacher, customer, player, rider or instances of those activities. Thus any individual forms the nucleus for two different series, personal and communal. Moreover, since the different centers can be instances of the same or of opposite possibilities, they are continuously in relations of conflict, cooperation or harmony.

Comparing Mallik's account of the individual with that of the humanist and Vedantist, we find that for the former (in which category we may include Buber, despite his emphasis on the necessity of personhood), the individual is explicitly the subject-matter of history, whereas for the latter the individual is 'part' of a totality. Mallik shares with the first the explicit nature of the individual as a unique historical series. He does not in any way regard the individual as 'part' of a whole, but always as related and self-sufficient, in the sense of being a legitimate source of reality. It might look paradoxical, as to how a center can be "self-sufficient" and essentially related at the same time. By relatedness, Mallik does not mean dependency. An important theme in his work is the refutation of the 'creatureliness' of man, no doubt a reaction to his early missionary education. He recognizes no restraint on the potential of the individual center in its capacity to know.

Knowledge arises in the course of the interactions of the multiple centers. The cognitive experience is always a 'whole,' a unitary instance of consciousness. When we are aware of an object or person, then it, he or she is literally part of our consciousness. This resembles Buber's description of the I-It experience as something self-contained, but Mallik's analysis does not necessarily entail manipulation and appropriation, though such may occur. Mallik refers to the *mechanism* of cognition, which in his system would be the same for the It or the Thou. If Sita sees a stone, one can say either that the stone is in Sita ('s consciousness) or that Sita is the stone, in so far as at that moment of time, being Sita includes consciousness of the stone. Similarly, when Rama and Sita see each other, or interact with each other, each has a composite experience of him- or her-self plus the other. Even when one claims to see the other as pure other, that other is still technically within one's cognizing consciousness. In this sense one may say that Ram is Sita and Sita is Ram. However, there is no ambiguity about *referring* to the other center which exists in itself and has comparable self-contained experiences.

Fundamental Disagreement

Given their differing points of departure, Buber and Mallik appeared to differ profoundly on the question of maintaining exteriority in cognition, although their positions exhibit more similarity when seen in the overall teleological context of their theories. For Buber, the Thou, fully recognized in its own otherness, cannot be part of the I's experience. Mallik took the opposite position. To some extent, the difference is terminological. Mallik sought to rectify Berkeleyan idealism. There has to be a real stone out there, without which there would be no stone-in-my consciousness. But I can only know the stone-in-my-consciousness. The 'otherness' of the Buberian Thou is not diminished by my cognitive experience, indeed there is no other way I can be aware of it.

Buber was rectifying the social alienation of the modern self and what he regarded as the inflated solipsistic narcissism of mysticism (the Unifier is in me). Hence, he anchored the mutual encountering of Thou-ness not within the individual experiences of the two concerned, but in the Between outside of both which maintains the distance between the two identities and also the objective reality of the non-Self. The Between is emphatically *not* union. It is not within the experience of the selves concerned; they take their stand in the Between without losing their separate identities. Only after heightened awareness subsides is there a relapse into ordinary subject-object cognition or experience. Buber wished to differentiate sharply between the two, although he allowed that I-Thou awareness could not but ameliorate or modify the sharpness of the subsequent I-It (at least toward the same person).

In principle Mallik can accommodate a non-linguistic awareness of I and Thou, so long as there is discrimination between self and other, and that indeed is what Buber emphasizes. But Mallik's Thou-in-my-awareness has always to be distinguished from the-Thou-in-itself, once again, without prejudice to the depth of mutual recognition. This is the most fundamental point of disagreement between Mallik and Buber. Buber's I-Thou posits the complete knowing of another in all the other's particularity and quiddity through non-linguistic apperception outside of experience. The ontological basis for making this assumption is the reality of the Between ,which mysteriously enables the individual to overcome the natural boundaries of subject-object I-It cognition. Mallik accepts non-differentiated experience beyond or outside subject and object, but not a Buber-type subject-subject cognition. This is a real difference, and not merely terminological. Whereas Buber has indeed departed from the non-differentiated experience of Selfhood (in Mallikean terminology, from non-consciousness) and entered the realm of inter-relatedness *through the Between or God*, he has entered the field of consciousness, where positing two real subjects in the primal experience is, from Mallik's perspective, impossible.

Cognitive situations are always mutual according to Mallik. Whenever we are making cognitive — be it another person, or a sentient or insentient being, we are also being reciprocally cognized, though not necessarily in the same perceptual *cum* mental way. Since all individuals are related, there can be no unilateral experiences. This mutuality blunts the propensity towards egocentricism and anthropocentricism. Not only does the astronomer look at the star, avers Mallik, but the star 'looks back' at the astronomer. Mutual cognition however does not necessarily entail communication. With non-human centers and between them, cognition might well be minimal, a sheer awareness of difference. Knowledge or rationality has been defined as the differentiating characteristic of the human, but Mallik redefines it as the human way of entering into relations of conflict or cooperation with the world. The same would apply to any other species that uses rationality. Furthermore, non-ratiocinating beings also conflict or cooperate. For Buber, ordinary cognition or knowledge also is never really neutral or dispassionate, but is rather purposive in relation to a subject. Thus in Mallikean terms the Buberian I-It also entails mutuality. As object of manipulation, the It passively experiences the I, just as much as the I actively impacts the It: both are centers of experience.

Mallik defined consciousness as awareness of difference and distinction. By this definition, no completely homogenous experience can be conscious, and so the non- differentiated mystical experience must be non-conscious. Obviously, he does not mean 'unconscious' states such as blackouts, comas, dreamless sleep and so forth, which are recognized by their symptoms as well as results. Rather, individual centers are non-conscious when they are in their mystical, unitary, and simple states, and they alternate between their conscious and non-conscious states. In this sense also, where consciousness is virtually experience of multiplicity, all individual centres, whether 'inorganic, cellular or psychical' are instances of consciousness in that they are aware, not necessarily reflectively, of the separateness of their existence from the surrounding environment. Hence the opposite of consciousness is not 'unconscious' matter but the undifferentiated simple states of individual centres. Like Buber, Mallik wished to avoid the dualism of mind and matter, and he does so by considerably stretching the categories to denote the active and passive functions of individual centres involved in conflict and harmony. When A and B are in conflict, they are active and passive alternately, when they cooperate they are together active or passive vis-à-vis some third or more centres. All centres, whether organic or inorganic, can have alternating mental and material phases, but they cannot simultaneously be in both.

Having altered such commonsense but aporetic notions of mind and matter, Mallik goes on to distinguish human centers from the organic and inorganic as having the capacity to 'know.' Knowledge is constituted by precepts, concepts, and images, and is only one type amongst a complex of constructive or conflicting relationships. As to whether one can thus sharply differentiate human knowledge from that of certain intelligent animal species, that question may be contestable, given recent research on tool-using and memory in certain forms of marine life. However the fact that some animal forms share certain forms of knowing with humans does not basically affect Mallik's thesis about awareness of differences. Knowledge can also be expressed in doubt or belief about reality. As a phase of the individual center it enables the center to enter into relations of conflict or harmony with other centers, human or non-human. The function of knowledge as *understanding*, however, is to grasp the central end of the realm of possibility, which is actually realized as unity.[74] In some of his later works, Mallik suggests that all organic and inorganic instances reflect the organizations of the human and change along with them. Hence when the human progression into harmony takes place, all the denizens of the universe, organic and inorganic, will evolve together, the lion will lie down with the lamb.

Thus Mallik's grounding for the discontinuous universe is in a multiplicity of essentially related centers, all referring to and interacting with one another through space, enduring and continuously related through time, with the potential to grasp the common purpose of their co-existence. For Buber, it is primarily the human universe which is essentially related, either within itself or with aspects of nature and certainly with the divine. This provides both philosophers with a bedrock on which to build irenic theories of society or community: both interpret it optimistically as pointing to fulfilment.

Footnotes

I. The philosophical school which places man as person in relation to person at the center of the field of concern is known as personalism. Its areas of emphasis include personality, freedom, self-determination, moral responsibility, evil, and a personal God. cf. George Thomas White Patrick, "Introduction to Philosophy," in Avraham Shapira, *Hope for Our Time: Key Trends in the Thought of Martin Buber* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1935) p. 223, as quoted in Thomas McGloin, PA, *John MacMurray.*

2. Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), second edition, pp. 82-83.

3. Shapira, *Hope for Our Time.*

4. Bergmann, As quoted from *Buber's Dialogical Thinking* (in Hebrew), Bergmann's introduction to Buber, *Besod Siach* (Jerusalem, 1959), pp. xi-xii.

5. Nathan Rotenstreich, *Immediacy and its Limits, A Study in Martin Buber's Thought* (Philadelphia: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1991), pp.49-50.

6. Vide Martin Buber, *Images of Good & Evil*, Michael Bullock, trans. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952), pp. 13-26.

7. Buber, *Images of Good and Evil*

8. Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 95.

9. Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 96.

10. See for example, Paul Mendes-Flohr's classic study, *From Mysticism to Dialogue* (Detroit: Wayne State University,1989).

11. Martin Buber, "Autobiographical Fragments," in *The Philosophy of Martin Buber (Library of Living Philosophers)*, Paul Arthur Schlipp and Maurice Friedman, eds. (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company,1967), pp. 35-26.

12. Buber, "Autobiographical Fragments," p. 25.

13. Maurice Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work (3 vols.), Vol.1, The Early Years 1878-1923,* (New York City: E.P. Dutton, 1986), p. 93.

14. Martin Buber, *Pointing the Way: Collected Essays*, Maurice Friedman, trans. (Amhearst, NY: Humanity Books, 1990), pp. ix-x.

15. Buber, "Autobiographical Fragments," p. 37.

16. Margaret Chatterjee, "The Concept of Realization," in *Studies in Modern Jewish and Hindu Thought* (London: Macmillan Publishers, Ltd., 1997), pp. 72-85; Shapira, *Hope for our Time*, p. 85; Mendes-Flohr, *From Mysticism to Dialogue,* p. 102.

17. See Dan Avnon, *Martin Buber, The Hidden Dialogue* (New York and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998)

18. Martin Buber, *Between Man & Man* (New York: Collier Books Macmillan Publishing Company, 1965), p. 20.

19. Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 9.

20. Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 3.

21. As related in a lecture at the London School of Economics, 1961, noted by the author.

22. Buber, *Between Man and Man,* pp. 3-4.

23. Friedman, *Martin Buber and Asia*, p. 416

24. Friedman, *Martin Buber and Asia*, pp.6-9.

25. Buber, *I and* Thou, p. 126.

26. Vide Arthur Osborne's *Ramana Maharishi and the Path of Self-Knowledge* (B.I. Publications, reprint 1970), chapters VI (Arunachala) and XI (Animals).

27. Buber, *Between Man and Man*, p. 136.

28. Buber, *Between Man and Man*, p. 136.

29. Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work*, p. 32.

30. *The Letters of Martin Buber*, Nahum N. Glatzer and Paul Mendes-Flohr, eds. (NY: Schocken Books, 1991), "Martin Buber to Hugo Bergmann," January 21, 1919, p. 241-242.

31. Walter Kaufman, "A Plan Martin Buber Abandoned," from the Prologue to *Martin Buber I and Thou*, Kaufman, trans. (NY: Simon and Schuster, Touchstone Edition, 1996), pp. 48-49.

32. Shapira, *Hope for Our Time*.

33. Martin Buber, "The Spirit of the Orient and Judaism," in *On Judaism*, Nahum N. Glatzer, ed. (NY: Schocken Books, 1967), p. 64.

34. Buber, "The Spirit of the Orient and Judaism," p. 22; FN. 18, p. 210. This lecture, not published during Buber's lifetime, was entitled "Old and New Community," and was later published by P.R. Mendes-Flohr and B. Susser in *AJSR* 1 (1976), pp. 50-59.

35. Buber, "The Spirit of the Orient and Judaism," p. 23. Cited from *Lesser Uri,* early version from *Ost und West* 1 no. 2 (1901).

36. Martin Buber, *Daniel Dialogues on Realization*, Maurice Friedman, trans. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1964), pp. 98-99.

37. Buber, *Daniel Dialogues on Realization*, p. 78.

38. Martin Buber, "The Faith of Israel" in *Israel and the World* (New York: Schocken Books, 2987). Originally published 1928.

39. Basanta Kumar Mallik, *The Towering Wave* (Oxford: Hall the Publisher, 1953), p. 218.

40. Basanta Kumar Mallik, *Related Multiplicity* (Oxford: Hall the Publisher, 1952), p. 3.

41. Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 13.

42. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 274.

43. Basanta Kumar Mallik, *The Real & the Negative* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1940), p. 32.

44. Mallik, *The Real & the Negative*.

45. Mallik, *The Real & the Negative,* p. 56.

46. Mallik, *The Real & the Negative,* p. 71.

47. Mallik, *The Real & the Negative,* pp. 29-54. See the chapter on "The Cartesian Technique" for Mallik's detailed argument.

47. Mallik, *The Real & the Negative,* p. 79.

49. Vide *Non-Absolutes* in which the complex arguments to support this thesis on the Stages of the Universe are spelt out in detail from Chapters IV to XV.

50. See Madhuri Sondhi, "Basanta Kumar Mallik's Theory of the Dynamics of Intersocietal Conflict," *Comparative Civilizations Review* 25 (Fall 1991).

51. Mallik, *Related Multiplicity,* p. 33.

52. Buber, *Between Man and Man,* pp. 118-205.

53. For further reading of a fascinating structural comparison of the Torah and the Veda in Judaic and Hindu civilizations see Barbara Holdrege, *Veda and Torah, Transcending the Textuality of Scripture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

54. Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 54.

55. Buber, *I and Thou*, pp. 147-8.

56. Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 157.

57. Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 115.

58. Sri Sri Dwarika Nath Dev Tapesvi of Kaleswar, Bengal. Winifred Lewis, "A Short Biography," Garland of Homage (London: Vincent Stuart Limited, 1961), pp. 62-3.

59. Mallik, *The Towering Wave,* p. 3.

60. Letter from Mallik to L.A.G. Strong, 1953. In the writer's possession.

61. Mallik, *The Real & the Negative,* p. 524.

62. Mallik, *The Towering Wave,* p. 212.

63. Mallik, *The Towering Wave,* pp. 54-55.

64. Buber, *Between Man and Man,* p. 139.

65. Basanta Kumar Mallik, *Non Absolutes* (London: Vincent Stuart, 1956). Mallik spells this out in greater detail in this book, which was his next philosophical work.

66. Mallik, *Non Absolutes*, pp. 538-339.

67. Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 40.

68. Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 27.

69. Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 62.

70. Buber, *I and Thou*, see p. 44.

71. Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 34.

72. Nathan Rotenstreich, *Immediacy and Its Limits: A Study in Martin Buber's Thought* (London and New York: Gordon & Breach Publishing Group, 1991)

73. See Mallik, *The Real & the Negative*, Ch. XIV, "Theories of Similarity, Particularity and Universality," pp. 201-222.

74. For a fuller discussion on individuals, mind matter, and knowledge, see Madhuri Santanam Sondhi, *The Making of Peace* (New Delhi: Selectbook Service Syndicate, 1984), pp. 228-250.

Notes

I. Ahimsa is defined as more than mere abstention from injury — it flows, as Gandhi also used to say, from an attitude of love for humankind and life in general.

II. It has been pointed out that although Buber declared his liberation from mysticism he did not repudiate Taoism, or certain aspects of it, in the same way. The unity of the yin yang is isomorphic to his sense of the relationship between opposites which also reach towards unity. Even more, as Buber writes, despite being the "path of things, their manner, their peculiar order … (the Tao) exists as such in things only potentially. It comes out only in contact with others. Then it becomes active."[1] This previsions his philosophy of dialogue.

III. The extent of misunderstanding is perhaps personified by Grete Schaeder's comments on the teaching of the Upanishads in which she interprets dreams as "the liberation of the spirit for the performance of its sovereign transformations" and deep slumber as the stage for the unification of the personal self with the self of the world, so that "unity is found only in the loneliness of deep sleep." *The Hebrew Humanism of Martin Buber*, p. 443.

IV. The word 'communal' is used throughout this work in the Judeo-Christian sense of indicating community in a positive sense, as a community of individuals in mutual relationships of responsibility and belonging, mediated by a common religious belief. In the Indian context, it is currently construed as a religious or ethnic community illegitimately making use of its identity in the political field.

V. The uninitiated reader who wants to know more about Mallik could usefully consult his first two works, *The Real & the Negative* and *Related Multiplicity*, and the author's *The Making of Peace* (Selectbook Service New Delhi 1985) and her articles on Mallik in *Comparative Civilizations Review* (Carlisle, PA, Fall 1988) and *Interdisciplinary Peace Research* (La Trobe University, October/November 1991)

VI. This is the opening from where a practitioner of yoga, who exactly cultivates relating to his own mind from the perspective of the Thou, can proceed.

The Identity of a Mystic:
The Case of Sa'id Sarmad, a Jewish-Yogi-Sufi Courtier of the Mughals*

By Nathan Katz

Said to be the second largest mosque in the world, Delhi's Jama Masjid is the bastion of Islam in North India. There prayers are offered, *fatwas* issued, pilgrimages made, vows fulfilled, and mystics venerated. Between 1638 and 1650, Mughal Emperor Shah Jehan built both the masjid and his royal complex, known today as the Red Fort, separated by a mile-long, broad avenue that was the Empire's prime marketplace.

As one enters the masjid through the *shahi darwaza* (royal entrance), at the honored right portal is a *dargah*, a Muslim saint's tomb, dedicated to Sa'id Sarmad (1590?-1660?), one of the mystical luminaries of the Mughal Court. All of the appurtenances associated with a Muslim saint's cult are to be found there — pilgrimage manuals, *taskaras* or hagiographies, collections of his mystical quatrains, as well as a festival (*urs*) held annually on his death anniversary (the 18th day of Rabi).

Sarmad as Muslim, Jew, Atheist, and Mystic

Possession may be nine-tenths of the law, but Sarmad's religious identity is not quite so easily established. According to his first biography, written by the Iranian Tahir Nasrabadi sometime between 1672 and 1678, Sarmad was "a Jew who later converted to Islam."[1] According to Mu'bid Shah's (or Mohsan Fani's), *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*.[2] Sarmad "... was originally from a family of learned Yahuds [Jews], of a class they call Rabbanian...; after an investigation into the faith of the Rabbins and the perusal of the Mosaic books, he became a Muselman."[3] Shah was Sarmad's friend in Hyderabad. Sarmad and Abhai Chand were his informants about Judaism in his excursus into comparative religions, the *Dabistan*. The chapter on "The Yahuds" contains Sarmad's eccentric presentation of Judaic beliefs and Abhai Chand's Persian translation of Gen., 1-6:8, bearing the title, "The Book of Adam." Most scholars, such as B. A. Hashimi,[4] unquestioningly cite this verse as evidence of Sarmad's Muslim identity. Lakhpat Raj goes further to assert that, "It is obvious that his conversion to Islam was out of earnest convictions..." but offers no evidence for his knowledge of Sarmad's motives.[5]

But is that only one version of the religious identity of Sarmad, the "official" versions of the saint's cult?

According to Maulvani 'Abdu'l Wali, Walter J. Fischel, and others.[6] Sarmad remained a Jew despite his spiritual peregrinations around India. Wali reconstructs Sarmad's beliefs as contained in the Judaism chapters of the *Dabistan*. His beliefs include a rejection of the messiahship of Jesus, a Kabbalistic theology based on emanations of light, the transmigration of souls and a complex theory of divine rewards and punishments. Wali concludes that, "He had neither any faith in Christianity or in Islam. Once a Jew he remained ever a Jew."[7]

Fischel, a pioneering scholar of Jews in Asia, approvingly cites Wali's conclusion, explaining: "A merchant by profession and, it seems, a very prosperous one, his search for knowledge and wisdom brought him into contact with the leading Mohammedan scholars of his time, under whose guidance he studied Islamic philosophy, metaphysics, and science, and under whose influence he was apparently induced to become a Muslim. His conversion was probably only nominal and superficial, since he himself later warned the Jews not to convert themselves to Mohammed's religion."[8]

Others, including some of Sarmad's contemporaries, insisted that he was neither Muslim nor Jew, but a conniving atheist, much as they alleged about his student, the Mughal crown prince Dara Shikoh. One such skeptic was Dr. Niccolao Manucci of Venice, court physician to Dara's rival, Aurangzeb. Manucci wrote that, "Dara had no religion. When with Mohamedans he praised the tenets of Muhammad; when with Jews, the Jewish religion; in the same way, when with Hindus, he praised Hinduism. This is why Aurangzeb styled him Kafir [infidel]. At the same time, he had great delight in talking to the Jesuit fathers on religion, and making them dispute with his learned Mohamedans, or with a Hebrew called Cermad [Sarmad], an atheist much like the prince."[9]

Two recent Indian books about Sarmad offer a fourth possibility, that he was a Mystic or Sufi and that Mystics and Sufis are often misunderstood as belonging to one or another religion, or as being atheists. One contemporary author who holds this view is Isaac A. Ezekiel, an Indian Jew and a Radhasoami Satsangi (a *satsangi* is a member of the Radha Soami Satsang). In his foreword to Ezekiel's book, fellow Satsangi Joseph Leeming comments:

> "Sarmad was a unique member of the spiritual galaxy composed of the scores of great saints of India of the past and of the present day. This is because he was born of Jewish parents and was brought up as an adherent of the Jewish religion. During his visits to India, however, he found that a greater spiritual truth was known to the illumined souls of that country, and from one or more of them he discovered and absorbed the real and basic truths of the purpose of human life, of genuine spirituality, and of the Path to God-realization."[10]

If Sarmad was no Jew, according to Leeming, he was no Muslim either. "Sarmad is known to most present-day Indians as a Muslim Saint, or Master of the highest order. This seems to be partly due to the fact that in giving out his spiritual teachings he quoted the sayings of many Muslim Saints. It is possible that he nominally accepted Islam; but he did not teach its orthodox beliefs. Instead, he taught the practice given out by all Perfect Masters, of listening to the Divine Melody of the Word and Power of God, the Holy Spirit."[11] Ezekiel succinctly made the same point: "In mysticism, the religious affiliations of saints are of no importance..."[12]

While our Satsangi writers seem to want to make all mystics their own, M. G. Gupta is content to declare Sarmad a Mystic or Sufi and leave it at that. When he does so, he employs the term "Sufi" in much the way that contemporary western Sufis do, as utterly separable from Islam in particular and from religion in general. Gupta wrote, "Sarmad was a mystic saint of the highest order and had rejected the traditional faiths — Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism and had no use for idol-worship, rituals, canonical laws, scriptures, mosques, and temples."[13]

Such diverse attributions of faith — Muslim, Jewish, atheist, mystical — reflect more than jealous claims upon the mystic. An understanding of Sarmad's life (as found in his Muslim hagiography and in his poems) and of the religious environment of his day — both the fecund *bhakti*-crucible of medieval North India and the religious policies of Mughal emperors — shed light on the thorny question of the relation of the mystic to a religious tradition, and in a larger sense on the relationship between mysticism and religion, or between the esoteric and the exoteric.

The Problem of a Mystic's Identity

Just who a mystic is depends on what one understands mysticism to be. Thus, the complex issues surrounding Sarmad's religious identity rest upon a prior understanding of mysticism itself. The essential question is whether there is one mysticism or many, whether there is one mystical experience that is subsequently interpreted through the categories of thought and language of specific religious traditions, or whether these categories precede and, therefore, condition all experience, mystical and otherwise.

During an earlier period in the history of *Religionswissenschaft*, these positions were cogently articulated by Aldous Huxley[14] and R. C. Zaehner.[15] Huxley held that that there is one metaphysical/experiential essence that is subsequently interpreted according to the doctrines of the world's various religions. His point was put most forcefully by Agehananda Bharati, who wrote that all religions are reducible to a "numerical oneness" and that while the non-dualist strands of Hinduism best reflect this metaphysical fact, it is nonetheless the basis for all mysticism, monistic, theistic, or otherwise.[16] Zaehner contended against Huxley's perennial philosophy, holding mysticism to be of at least two types: the higher theism and the lower monism. More recently, this debate was reenacted in the academic repartee between Steven T. Katz.[17] and Huston Smith.[18] Katz argues that there are as many mysticisms as there are religious traditions (or perhaps he would hold there are as many mysticisms as there are mystics) because each tradition conditions the experiences of its adherents. Since there is no unmediated experience, he argues, there could be no one, extra-linguistic ("ineffable") experience that becomes intelligible subsequently through the language of the mystic's tradition. Smith counters that the mystics of all traditions, at least the "introspective" sort of mystics, concur about the ineffable core of their experience, an agreement that he takes at face value as evidence for an ineffable reality underlying such experiences.

And somewhere in the midst of this debate we encounter Sarmad, who wandered from synagogue to masjid to ashram, claimed by each group as one of their own, and claimed by modern followers of certain mystical traditions to have transcended all such categorization.

His Life

Sarmad is best known in India for going about naked and for having been beheaded by Aurangzeb. Of course, there is much more to his life than this, and one may simply recapitulate the highlights of his *taskara* to begin to appreciate his many accomplishments.

1) Sarmad was born in Armenia around 1590. A Jew, he read both the Taurat (Torah) and the Injil (Gospel) before studying Islam, to which he converted. He was an outstanding Persian poet and a successful merchant.[19]
2) In 1031 A.H. he arrived at Thatta (near modern Karachi), an important port during Mughal times. He was so impressed with religious discussions in India that he decided to stay.[20]
3) At a poetry conference, he heard a young Hindu boy, Abhai Chand, reciting *ghazals*. Sarmad immediately fell in love with the youth. The two began cohabiting, but Abhai Chand's family objected and separated the lovers. Sarmad became despondent and eventually was reunited with Abhai Chand, with the boy's family's blessings.[21] Abhai Chand became Sarmad's student, studying Jewish religion and the Hebrew and Persian languages well enough to translate sections of the Hebrew Bible into Persian, which were included in Mu'bid Shah's *Dabistan*.[22]
4) At some point and for reasons not entirely clear, Sarmad renounced all clothing.[23] He let his hair and nails grow, according to a description by Mu'tamad Khan: "I found him naked, covered with thick crisped hair all over the body and long nails on his fingers."[24]

5) Sarmad and Abhai Chand moved to Lahore, where they remained until 1044 A.H., when they moved to Hyderabad. In the Deccan, Sarmad flourished. He attracted many followers in high positions and he and Abhai Chand collaborated with Mu'bid Shah on the *Dabistan*. Sarmad's fame as a poet and a mystic grew.[25]
6) He then moved from Hyderabad to Delhi, stopping briefly at Agra. His fame preceded him, and in proximity of the Mughal court, Sarmad was befriended by Sufi *shaikh* Khwaja Syed Abdul Qasim Shabzwari.
7) Mughal crown prince Dara Shikoh, long interested in mysticism, asked his father, Emperor Shah Jehan, to investigate Sarmad's spiritual eminence. The Emperor appointed *qazi* Inayat Ullah Khan to lead the inquiry, but Sarmad somehow was inaccessible to the judge, and accosted the Emperor at his court. The Emperor praised Sarmad's sanctity, but questioned him about his nudity. Sarmad is said to have replied with a quatrain: "Why do you object to my nudity at the same time as you acknowledge my miracles? The truth is not what is visible, but the truth is what is concealed in my heart, and that is love." Sarmad remained naked and so impressed the crown prince that he became his disciple.[26]
8) With the encouragement of his *guru*, Dara transformed the Mughal court into an arena for interreligious debate, much as had been done by his grandfather, Emperor Akbar (1542-1605).[27] The *taskara* describes the unlikely scene: "There used to be Muslim scholars as well as Hindu yogis present in his [Dara's] court and he used to rank them all alike. In fact, he adopted religious practices that were a mixture of Muslim and Hindu beliefs... These practices were such that Aurangzeb, a staunch Muslim, hated him. As Aurangzeb was against Dara Shikoh, automatically Hazrat Sarmad came under suspicion."[28]
9) As Shah Jehan became infirm, his empire became divided among his four sons: Shuja and Murad Baksh ruled in Bengal, Aurangzeb the Deccan, while Dara remained in Delhi with his ailing father, preparing to occupy the Peacock Throne. As battles raged, Dara and his allies, in alliances forged by Sarmad with the Shivaliks in Maharashtra.[29] the Sikhs in Punjab and an array of Shi'a and Sufi Muslims, waged war against Aurangzeb and his Sunni allies. Aurangzeb prevailed, and then imprisoned and finally executed his elder brother in 1659.[30]
10) Dara's defeat led to a purge of his supporters, and Aurangzeb's chief justice, Mullah Abdul Qazi was appointed to investigate Sarmad.[31] Charges against Sarmad were filed, although it is not clear just what the charges were and for which ones he was convicted.

Some of the charges had to do with morality. His nakedness was a scandal of sorts. He was said to use *bhang* (marijuana), which had been outlawed by Aurangzeb just after his coronation.[32] Sarmad's homosexual affair with Abhai Chand also bothered some.[33] — although these three behaviors would have been unexceptional at the time. He was even accused of drinking Dr. Manucci's wine.[34]

Two of the charges in particular had to do with religious heresy. He is said to have denied the ascension of the Prophet *(al-Miraj)*. And there is the famous incident when he was called into court by Mullah Abdul Qazi who demanded that he demonstrate his Muslim *bona fides* by reciting the *Kalima*, the Muslim affirmation of faith: "There is no God but God." Sarmad is said to have recited, "There is no God" and then fell silent. In response to the *qazi*'s demand that he complete the credo's recitation, Sarmad reportedly said that he was still immersed in the negative and had yet to achieve the positive, reflecting the Sufi teaching of *fana* and *baaqa*, the annihilation of the individual and subsistence in the Eternal.[35] Then again, there was the heresy that Sarmad proclaimed faith in Hindu gods (see his quatrain 320 below), and as Lakhpat Rai reasoned, "Aurangzeb, a religious bigot, could have tolerated a naked Jew or even a naked Muslim who was supposed to be acting in contravention of Islamic law, but he could never tolerate a Muslim having faith in a Hindu God."[36] For one or another of these heresies, Sarmad may have been sentenced to death.

Other charges were purely political. One, of course, was his championing the cause of the defeated Dara against his usurper-brother. He was not popular among the mullahs of the day, Mullah Abdul Qazi in particular. Rai argues that it was the mullahs, not Aurangzeb, who were Sarmad's antagonists. Jealous of his popularity, they connived to turn Aurangzeb against Sarmad.[37]

Sarmad also had failed to pay proper respect to Aurangzeb on several occasions.[38] There is the famous encounter between Aurangzeb and Sarmad on the roadway between the palace and the Jama Masjid. Aurangzeb reportedly asked the seated Sarmad to cover himself with a blanket, and Sarmad told the Emperor that he should put the blanket over his lap. As Aurangzeb lifted the blanket, he saw "freshly chopped heads, including the heads of his three innocent nephews and their companions." Terrified by this vision, Aurangzeb dropped the blanket, and Sarmad asked, "Tell me, shall I hide your crimes or my body?"[39]

The incident is the subject of one of Sarmad's quatrains:

> He who gave thee an earthly throne,
> Gave poverty to me;
> The costume covers ugliness;
> The faultless are granted the gift of nakedness.[40]

Sarmad was beheaded for blasphemy in 1070 A.H. Legends recount how his head rolled from the palace to the masjid, reciting mystical quatrains all the route. His popular *taskara* appends a legend which aims to affirm Sarmad's saintliness while at the same time exonerating Aurangzeb: "When his head was chopped, he became so angry that he jumped, picked up his head and climbed the stairs of the masjid.

"Suddenly the loud voice of his *shaikh*, Syed Hare Bhare Shah, was heard. 'Sarmad, where are you going?'

"'I am taking my case to the court of the Prophet Muhammad," he replied.'

"The voice again spoke: 'Calm down. You have reached your destination. For the whole of your life, you never complained. Why this anger now? This was your fate; otherwise, Aurangzeb was fully aware of your power and greatness.' After that Sarmad became silent and collapsed."[41]

The *taskara* concludes: "It was the decision of God to raise Sarmad's status. It was decided to crown him with the jewel of martyrdom, and he proved deserving at every step. As a matter of fact, he knew about his fate from the very beginning."[42]

His Mystical Poetry

We find intimations about Sarmad's confessional identity in his mystical poetry, many conflicting. Sarmad's chief work, the *Rubiayat-i-Sarmad*, contains between 320 (according to Ezekiel) and 340 (according to Gupta) quatrains, at least 20 of which illustrate Sarmad's relationship to religions — Islam mostly, but also Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and atheism. We also have one quatrain composed by Abhai Chand, and included in the *Dabistan*, which is pertinent to our question.

In his *Rubaiyat*, we hear a humorous, antinomian voice, one that abjures religions for the sake of God. Surveying his 320 quatrains (to follow Ezekiel's text and numbering), we discover the following motifs:

1) Four quatrains express disdain for organized religion in general.
2) Eight quatrains convey contempt for Islam in general and even Sufism in particular. Another five quatrains praise wine-drinking, which of course is proscribed in Islam but which is a central metaphor for mystical ecstasy in Sufi literature. He also commits two Islamic blasphemies: in three quatrains he proclaims himself an idol-worshipper, and in one he equates himself with the Prophet Muhammad;
3) Seven quatrains poke fun at Hinduism, especially the sadhus, although in one he proclaims himself a devotee of Rama and Lakshman, and as mentioned, in three he proclaims himself an idolater, which may be an affirmation of a Hindu identity; and
4) In one quatrain he expressed disdain for Judaism.

Of the first type of quatrain, those which express disdain for religion in general, number 5 (in Ezekiel's numbering) is typical:

> All search for happiness in worldly wealth
> or in temples, mosques and churches.
> O my Lord, save me from these, I pray these most earnestly.[43]

And in quatrain 313, we read his enigmatic words:

> O Sarmad! Thou hast worked havoc in attacking organized religion. Thou has sacrificed
> Thy religion for a Man whose eyes are red with intoxication.
> All thy wealth hast thou thrown at the feet of the Master,
> who is an idol-worshipper.[44]

Islam, however, is his favorite target for derision. He lampoons the Sufi's woolen cloak (*Suf*), the Ka'aba, and piety in general. For example, quatrain 17 reads:

> I care not for the rosary or the sacred thread.
> Am I pious? I care not.
> Nor do I wear the long woolen robe, it is so heavy.
> My concern is with my Friend (Master) alone.
> What do I care for the world's opinion.[45]

In quatrain 54, both the Ka'aba and the temple are objects of scorn:

> The Lover and the Loved, the idol and the idol-worshipper,
> Who is the cheat among them?
> Darkness prevails in the Ka'aba and the temple.
> Come into the Happy Valley of Oneness,
> Where only one color prevails.
> Think deeply. Who is the Lover and the Beloved, the flower and the thorn?[46]

And in quatrain 238:

> Repeat not stories about the Ka'aba and the temples, O Sarmad,
> For they are not the Way.[47]

In quatrain 218 Sarmad affirms Islamic practice but denies Muslim identity:

> True, I am an idol-worshipper;
> I am not of the faithful flock.
> I go to the mosque,
> But I am not a Muslim.[48]

Muslim piety and learning, as well as the emblematic cloak of the Sufi, are objects of scorn in quatrain 275:

> O men of piety! What sweet deliciousness
> Hast thou tasted in this hypocrisy? It is so insipid.
> Thou hast many flowing woolen mantles to show off thy piety,
> But don't forget that from the thread of thy rosary,
> Thou hast made a strong rope with which to bind thyself.
> As for myself, O Master, I can only pray for thy protection.[49]

Islam, of course, prohibits the consumption of wine (which is required in both Judaism and Christianity), and a number of Sufis have elevated drunkenness into a metaphor for mystical union. In accord with this antinomian trend, Sarmad wrote at least five quatrains that not only praise wine but also demean prohibitions against wine, as quatrain 197:

> O men of piety, thou sayeth that wine is forbidden by religion;
> I tell thee that it is most sacred, and not unlawful.[50]

And quatrain 124:

> Who cannot tell the difference between true piety and hypocrisy?
> Not by hypocrisy, teaching and deceit is God realized.
> You (religious men) say, "Don't drink wine, but become pious like me."
> "Go and tell this to those who don't know you," I reply.[51]

In quatrain 46, Sarmad commits the blasphemy of comparing himself to the Prophet. This blasphemy was one of the charges brought against him before:

> Sarmad has attained Love Eternal; and selflessness from the wine,

> Even the executioner's sword cannot make him sober.
> He hath attained the status of Muhammad and remaineth
> there.[52]

Sarmad was nearly as critical of Hinduism as he was of Islam, and the sadhus fared no better in his eyes than the Sufis. In several quatrains, he dismisses "Ka'aba and temple," and in others it is "the rosary and the sacred thread," meaning in both cases Islam and Hinduism. His criticisms are launched against both exoteric and esoteric varieties of Islam and Hinduism. For example, the sacred thread of the brahmin, albeit covered by the robe of the sadhu, is Sarmad's object of scorn in quatrain 26:

> O sadhu, this robe of thine covers the sacred thread;
> 'Tis a deception involving struggle unending.
> Carry not this burden of shamefulness on thy shoulders,
> Then wilt thou avoid a thousand sufferings.[53]

The sadhu is derided in quatrain 217:

> O mendicant with patched and ragged mantle,
> Why preach to me so much?
> Thou knowest nothing of real Love.
> My mind is engaged in more important work than learning
> piety;
> My heart is torn to pieces by Love of the Beloved.
> What does it care for the covering of a patched mantle?[54]

So far as shedding light on Sarmad's religious identity, one of the most puzzling quatrains is number 320. In it, Sarmad apparently declares his abandonment of Judaism and Islam, and a conversion to Hinduism. Despite this quatrain, however, of all the options available, no scholar or traditional biographer has ascribed a Hindu identity to him. The quatrain reads:

> O Sarmad! Thou hast earned much worldly renown,
> Come to Islam and got away from Judaism.
> What shortcoming didst thou find in the Prophet and in God,
> That thou turned away from God and the Prophet
> And become a disciple of Ram and Lakshman.[55]

Another wrinkle in this tapestry of confessional identification and non-identification is found in the only extant quatrain by Sarmad's lover and disciple, Abhai

Chand, found in the *Dabistan*:

> I submit to Moses' law; I am of thy religion, and a guardian of thy way;
> I am a Rabbi of the Yahuds, a Kafir, a Muselman.[56]

If we are to take all of Sarmad's quatrains at face value, and if we are to assume that Abhai Chand speaks for him, then we are left with a set of paradoxical assertions:

1) That he simultaneously was a rabbi and that he abandoned Judaism;
2) that he was not a Muslim and that he was;
3) that he was an idol-worshipper and a devotee of Hindu gods but opposed both the Brahmins and the sadhus; and
4) that he opposed Mullah and Sufi alike, but that he frequented mosques and wrote mystical poetry that was very much in the Sufi tradition.

To try to make sense of these contradictory assertions, we must view them against the background of the popular religious life of medieval North India and the religious life and policies of the Court of the Mughals.

Religious Life during the Mughal Era

Religious life in North India during the medieval period (roughly 1000-1756) was dominated by cycles of conflict and accommodation between Islam and Hinduism.

Even before the arrival of the Mughals, on the popular level this great cultural accommodation expressed itself in a variety of syncretistic movements: Sufism; Ramananda's (ca. 1400-ca. 1470) non-caste-based devotion to Rama as supreme god; monotheistic, *bhakti*-oriented Vaisnava movements such as Vallabhacarya's (1479-?); the Kabir Panth founded by Benarsi Muslim weaver and poet-saint Kabir (1398? 1440?-1518); and Sikhism founded by Guru Nanak (1469-1538).[57] As the period has been summarized, "Widespread religious movements, having. . . their roots partly in the vivifying contacts of Hinduism with Islam, had produced a religious enthusiasm among the masses that was transforming the older Brahmanical religion."[58] Indeed, in the religious crucible that was medieval North India, caste lines were often blatantly disregarded and confessional barriers hardly existed. In such an eclectic religious environment, Sarmad's spiritual peregrinations are not so remarkable as they might have been during other historical periods.

On the level of courtly culture and the government's policies toward religious pluralism, there were oscillations from emperor to emperor. Akbar's court highlighted interreligious discussions and mystical conclaves, traditions echoed by Dara Shikoh. In the capital he built at Fatehpur Sikri, near Agra, Akbar built himself a throne on a platform in the middle of a pool of water; the four walkways to the throne would be occupied by Sunni, Shi'a, Jesuit, Hindu, Zoroastrian, or Jaina sages who would debate issues and doctrines. This resulted in a policy he called *suhl-i-kulh*, or equal respect toward all religions, a policy simultaneously praised by minority religious leaders and scorned as a heresy by Sunni leaders.[59] Akbar's openness to other religions led to claims that he was a Christian, a Jain, and a Parsee (Zoroastrian), as well as a Sufi[60] — much like Sarmad.

Mughal polity ranged from official hostility towards Hinduism (and Sufism and Shi'a Islam) to tolerance for religious diversity reminiscent of the third century BCE Buddhist emperor, Ashoka Maurya, and back to stern repression, Hindu temple-razing, and inequitable taxation, policies which were later modified yet again.

Even before the demise of the Delhi Sultanate in the fourteenth century, the social fact of religious syncretism was reflected in government policies that allowed Hindus to govern themselves according to Hindu law, so long as they paid their *jizya* (non-believer's tax) to Muslim rulers. This toleration was anathema to the stern-minded Babur (1483-1530), the founder of the Mughal dynasty whose policy was to suppress Hinduism by destroying Hindu temples, often constructing a masjid on the site. Within 50 years, his grandson Akbar (1556-1605) reversed the *jizya* in 1565. Akbar's *suhl-i-kuhl* policy was to be in force until Aurangzeb seized power and reinstated the hated *jizya* in 1679. Perhaps to Aurangzeb's mind, the flamboyant syncretism of Sarmad was too much to bear. Perhaps he was motivated by the need to increase the government's revenues.[61] Whether Aurangzeb's unpopular policies led to the downfall of the Mughal Empire is debatable,[62] but what is clear is that the remarkable courtly culture of amicable debate among religions and an imperial policy of tolerance toward religious minorities, instituted by Akbar and recalled by Dara Shikoh, ended with Aurangzeb's reign, and with them also ended the possibility of a Sarmad in the Mughal Court.

Conclusions

Of course, we cannot know what Sarmad himself felt about his religious identity, whether in his own mind he remained a Jew, or became something else, whether Sufi and/or Muslim, Hindu, atheist or "Idolater."

But we can view him against the cultural background in India, his adopted home. This places him in a most remarkable milieu. On one hand, on the popular level, there was the interreligious, mystical crucible of Kabir, Ramananda and Nanak, influential figures with religious identities nearly as complex as Sarmad's. On the public level, we can view the oscillations of Mughal policy about religions, from the triumphalism of Babur, to the syncretistic, mystical *din-i-illahi* of Akbar, to the combative sternness of Aurangzeb. While his passion and poetry speak for themselves, Sarmad is less singular or idiosyncratic when viewed in the context of the culture of Kabir and Akbar.

We may also observe the processes by which his religious identity was commandeered *ex post facto* by the official Islam of Delhi's Jama Masjid, and how it was imposed upon by a modern Hindu sect, the Radha Soami Satsang, and by scholars such as Fischel, Wali, and Gupta.

FOOTNOTES

*This article first appeared in *Numen: International Review for the History of Religions* 47 (2000), pages142-160, and is republished with permission. The editors believe that most readers of this journal may not have seen this article before, as there is likely but little overlap in readership of the two journals.

1. *Taskara-i-Tahir Nasrabadi*, a text discussed by Maulavi 'Abdu'l Wali, "A Sketch of the Life of Sarmad," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 20 (1924), p. 121, n. 3. Nasrabadi's work is the basis for the *taskaras* that are sold for a few rupees at Sarmad's *dargah*. (See the Urdu *taskara*, p. 18) The contemporary *taskara* published by Pir Syed Muhammad Sarmadi is available in Urdu (*Hazrat Sarmad Shaheed*, Delhi, Kutub-Khanna-e-Sarmadi, no date) and Hindi (*Hazrat Sarmad Shaheed Rooh*, translated into Hindi by Ahmed Jalees, Delhi, Kutub-Khanna-e-Sarmadi, no date). The quote in the text is from page 17 of the Hindi *taskara*.

2. *Taskara-i-Tahir Nasrabadi*, "A Sketch of the Life of Sarmad"

3. David Shea and Anthony Troyer, *The Dabistan, or School of Manners* (Washington: M. Walter Dunne Publisher, 1901), p. 299.

4. B. A. Hashimi, "Sarmad, His Life and Quatrains," *Islamic Culture* (1933):663-672, p. 666.

5. Lakhpat Rai, *Sarmad, His Life and Rubias* (Gorakhpur: Hanumanprasad Poddar Smarak Samita, 1978), p. 20.

6. For example, M. J. Seth, *Armenians in India* (Calcutta: Sri Ganga Press, 1937), p. 171, who held that Sarmad was an Armenian Jew whose family had settled in Persia.

7. Wali, "A Sketch of the Life of Sarmad," pp. 120-121.

8. Walter J. Fischel, "Jews and Judaism at the Court of the Moghul Emperors in Medieval India," *Islamic Culture* 25 (1951), p. 120.

9. Niccolo Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor*, William Irvine, trans. (1907, page 223), quoted by Wali, "A Sketch of the Life of Sarmad," p. 120. According to Sheikh Mohamed Ikram, many Europeans, especially Jesuits, were partisan toward the strict Sunni rulers in India, and had little patience with the more tolerant Sufis or Shi'as. "The Jesuits were critical of this [i.e., Akbar's] policy of tolerance, declaring the destruction of Hindu temples by Muslims 'a praiseworthy action,'

but noting their 'carelessness' in allowing public performance of Hindu sacrifices and religious practices." Sheikh Mohamed Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, Ainslie T. Embree, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 235.

10. Joseph Leeming, "Foreword" to I. A. Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, (Beas, Punjab: Radha Soami Satsang, 1966), p. vii.

11. Leeming, "Foreword" to Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. vii.

12. Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. v.

13. M. G. Gupta, *Sarmad the Saint (Life and Works)* (Agra: M. G. Publishers, 1991), p. v.

14. Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books/World Publishing Co., 1968 [1944]).

15. R. C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (London: University of London/Athlone Press, 1960).

16. Agehananda Bharati, *The Light at the Center: Context and Pretext of Modern Mysticism* (Santa Barbara, CA: Ross-Erikson, 1972).

17. Steven T. Katz, "Language, Epistemology and Mysticism," in Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 22-74; and his rejoinder to Huston Smith's critique, "On Mysticism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 56, no. 4, (1988):751-757.

18. Huston Smith, "Is There a Perennial Philosophy?" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 55, no. 3, (1987): 553-566.

19. Urdu *taskara,* p. 20.

20. Urdu *taskara*, p. 21.

21. Virtually every biographer has insisted that the love between Sarmad and Abhai Chand was "pure." The earliest written account of their relationship is found in the 1660 work, the *Dabistan*: "When he arrived at the town of *Tatta*, he fell in love with a Hindu boy, called Abhi Chand, and abandoning all other things, like a Sanyasi [Hindu renunciate], naked as he came from his mother, he sat down before the door of his beloved. The father of the object of his love, after having found by investigation the purity of the attachment manifested for his son, admitted Sarmad into his house, and the young man too met him with an equal affection..." (Shea and Troyer, trans., *The Dabistan,* p. 299.) However, nowhere in Sarmad's poetry is there any indication that his love for Abhai Chand was other than carnal.

22. Urdu *taskara*, pp. 21-23.

23. Urdu *taskara*, p. 23.

24. Introduction to *Rubaiyat-i-Sarmad* (Lahore: Marghoob Agency, 1920), pp. iv-v, quoted by Rai, *Sarmad, His Life and Rubais*, p. 25.

25. Urdu *taskara*, 23-25.

26. Urdu *taskara*, pp. 25-27.

27. See "Akbar the Great," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Koren, 1971), s.v.

28. Urdu *taskara*, p. 27. It is important to note that the *taskara* opposed Aurangzeb to his brother Dara, and not to Sarmad. It is one of the ideological underpinnings of the *taskara* that both Aurangzeb and Sarmad were "right," as expressed in the Preface (pp. 7-8): "Hazrat Sarmad was a victim of injustice, but on the other hand Aurangzeb was not a culprit... Aurangzeb was not an enemy of Hazrat Sarmad, but as Emperor he had a moral obligation to defend the religion, Islam."

29. Very recent excavations in Thane, near Mumbai, have unearthed an old Jewish cemetery, some of the graves in which are of Jews (Bene Israel) who held high ranks in Shivaji's army. See Pinhas David Bhalkar's report in *Kol India* (June 1998):25.

30. Urdu *taskara*, pp. 29-34.

31. Urdu *taskara*, pp. 33-36.

32. Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, p. 189.

33. Gupta, *Sarmad the Saint (Life and Works)*, p. 45.

34. Gupta, *Sarmad the Saint (Life and Works)*, p. 44.

35. Urdu *taskara*, p. 42.

36. Rai, *Sarmad, His Life and Rubias*, p. 53.

37. Rai, *Sarmad His Life and Rubias*, pp. 49-50.

38. Gupta, *Sarmad the Saint (Life and Works)*, p. 45.

39. Urdu *taskara*, pp. 39-40.

40. *Rubiy'at* 105, in Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 321.

41. Urdu *taskara*, p. 44.

42. Urdu *taskara*, p. 47.

43. Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 295.

44. Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 378.

45. Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 298.

46. Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 308.

47. Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 357.

48. Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 351.

49. Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 367.

50. Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 345.

51. Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, pp. 325-326.

52. Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 306.

53. Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 301.

54. Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, pp. 350-351.

55. Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, pp. 379-380.

56. Shea and Troyer, trans., *The Dabistan*, p. 299.

57. F. E. Keay, *Kabir and His Followers* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, Sri Garib Das Oriental Series No. 171, 1996 [1931]), pp. 27-28.

58. Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, p. 232.

59. Akbar's liberal religious policies were "resented as being in substance an attack on the Muhammadan religion," according to Vincent A. Smith, *Akbar, the Great Mogul* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Co., 1966), p. 132.

60. Smith, *Akbar, the Great Mogul*, pp. 115-119.

61. Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, p. 198. Under tremendous popular pressure, the *jizya* was revoked by Aurangzeb's successor in 1720. S. M. Edwards and H. L. O. Garrett, *Mughal Rule in India* (Delhi: S. Chand., 1930), p. 216.

62. Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, p. 199. As Edwards and Garrett wrote, "...Aurangzeb reimposed the *jizya*...and followed a policy of destroying as many Hindu temples as possible...goods belonging to Hindu merchants were subjected to a custom's duty twice as heavy as that demanded from Muhammadan traders." *Mughal Rule in India*, pp. 153-154.

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Part V
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Book Review:

Beside Still Waters: Jews, Christians, and The Way of the Buddha

By David Blumenthal

H. Kasimow, J. and L. Keenan, *Beside Still Waters: Jews, Christians, and the Way of the Buddha* (Sommerville, MA: Wisdom Publications: 2003), 284 pages, ISBN 0-86171-336-2, paperback, $14.95.

Asian Buddhism is about "clapping hands and ringing bells to get the attention of some god, and the tying of paper prayer slips to the branches of trees … Buddha statues of all sorts, along with fearsome demonic figures … the spirits of ancestors,"[1] and incarnation, incense, and bowing before the Buddha.[2] It is also about very strict and prolonged moral and spiritual discipline. For example, "We would effectively sit in meditation for months at a time … The gates to the monastery were locked shut for the winter, and we lived in a state of deep contemplation until spring."[3]

Few of the contributors to this book have submitted themselves to this extended discipline; fewer still live in the ethnic-cultural world of Buddhism. Rather, all have opened themselves to what Reb. Zalman Shachter-Shalomi calls "Buddhism for export," that is, Buddhist ideas that are compatible with the west and Buddhist practice that is non-denominational, not tradition specific. In doing so, they have added a dimension of spirituality to their own lives which, in turn, has refreshed and renewed their appreciation of their own religious traditions. In this sense, *Beside Still Waters* is a very good book, but it is neither an exposure to Buddhism nor a book of dialogue in which Buddhists talk about what they have learned from Jewish or Christian spirituality.

To put it another way: Norman Fischer, himself a Buddhist abbot with Jewish roots, distinguishes between "religion" and "spirituality." The former is rooted in tradition, doctrine, belief, ritual, rule, authority, coherence, and sanction from the past; it is culture-bound. The latter is a liberation from culture, an opening to experience and feeling. For exactly that reason, he maintains, "It is easier to find spirituality in a tradition you are not culturally embedded in ... For the authors of this book, Buddhism was more a catalyst toward spirituality than a religious tradition."[4] Thus, those who practice Japanese Zen Buddhism are able to do so while ignoring the deeply racist nature of Japanese society where, to the best of my knowledge, there is no such thing as naturalization, where discrimination against non-racial Japanese is deeply rooted and so on. Still, as Fischer and others point out, "for western people ... God can't hear us and we can't hear God as long as there is too much noise." And, conversely, "although meditation practice awakens so much within us, and satisfies so much for us, it leaves some corners still crying out for warm contact ... a feeling for calling out and being called to."[5]

This book shows how this crossing over to a non-tradition-specific Buddhist practice can enliven one's own roots. Fortunately, all the essays are rooted in personal experience: autobiography is the only way to display this openness, and each of the essays is well done. Some writers have had deeper Buddhist experience than others; Alan Lew, the rabbi, seems to have gone the farthest. Some integrate better than others; Terry Muck, the evangelical Christian, has put it all together in very coherent form. But all have reached out, have tried, have "sat" in meditation practice and then have returned to their own religious traditions.

The path of enlightenment, however, is not lacking in difficulties and inconsistencies. Several of the essayists deal with the problem of maintaining spiritual composure in the midst of a hectic western life. Richard Marks writes of having Buddhist statues in his living room for religious reasons although he is actively Jewish. He and others write about how one tries to mix meditation with carpools, laundry, sibling rivalry among children, and the burdens of a double career family.

Sallie King, in her aptly entitled essay, "The Mommi and the Yogi," brings the reader to yet a deeper level of conflict: "The Buddhist message I heard was this ... Attachment is what returns us again and again to this samsaric world. The proper response to the samsaric world is detachment … But, at the same moment, I have before me this infant ... Our bonding has tied me to her ... there is ultimacy in this world. In practice, it is an ultimate good, for me, to care for this child. Nothing else matters as much; nothing else comes even close."[6] The stark contrast between the attachment of motherhood and the detachment of Buddhist practice could not be more clearly stated. King compensates by the practice of Quaker love, even as, toward the end of the essay, she realizes that "letting go" is also a form of love. She is honest enough to say that she is comfortable in neither tradition but needs both.[7]

In this sense, the Jewish contributors did not, I think, penetrate to the deeper levels of conflict. The Buddhist teaching of the insubstantiality of suffering runs deeply against the grain of Jewish national identity. Jews have suffered and still do suffer at the hands of enemies who say, "Let us destroy their national being so that the name of Israel never be mentioned again."[8] And one must deal with this suffering, not by getting beyond it but by active, forceful resistance. Similarly, the Buddhist teaching of the insubstantiality of joy runs deeply against the mainstream of Jewish mystical experience. It is those rare moments of joy, of being accepted and accepting ourselves as children of God, that form the center — not the periphery — of Jewish spiritual awareness. These moments must be cultivated for their very specificity, difficult though that may be as Reb. Zalman notes. They may not be transcended or superseded by other practices, though such other practices can be a path to Jewish spiritual joy.

As a traditional Jew who has expounded a theology of protest,[9] I must say that most religions deal better with joy, submission, and love than they do with frustration, anger, and rage. Why is it better to deal with anger through reaching a deeply spiritual understanding of its ego-rootedness and, hence, its insubstantiality? Pain hurts, and we must have some way of expressing that hurt. Anger is a positive human emotion; so is rage. The expression of our rage against our fellow human beings is limited by state and religious or moral law. The expression of rage against God and the cosmos is limited by liturgical and theological constraints. But both are there; both are legitimate ways of relating to our social and spiritual reality. How would the Jewish/Buddhist authors deal with the deep spirituality of *Psalm* 44 and other such prayers of protest? How would their Buddhist mentors deal with the legitimate need of individuals and groups to express their anger toward the cosmos/God? I think a dismissal, even if it is profoundly spiritual, has missed the point.

Finally, colleagues tell me that there are other Buddhist traditions that incorporate violence within the search for righteous political leadership. Such leadership seeks to alleviate suffering, as well to support old and new feminist traditions, which regard motherhood as a fully legitimate path to enlightenment. I cannot judge these matters for lack of scholarly competence. However, it seems to me that our authors, perhaps because they came to Buddhism through certain meditative streams within the tradition, have not paid sufficient attention to these other currents.

Notwithstanding these objections, this is a very good book. As one who has spent most of his life trying to live a spiritual Jewish existence and to educate and encourage others to do so, it is a breath of fresh air to feel the tangible Presence in these essays. Their autobiographical style forcefully brings home the spiritual potential of cross-traditional study and practice.

For a cross-traditional experience with Islamic sufism and Christianity, see Yossi Klein Halevi, At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden, *William Morrow- Harper-Collins: 2001; reviewed by Blumenthal in* Reviews on Religion and Theology, *forthcoming. The bibliography is also very helpful.*

Footnotes

1. H. Kasimow, J. and L. Keenan, *Beside Still Waters: Jews, Christians, and the Way of the Buddha*, (Sommerville, MA: Wisdom Publications: 2003), pp. 115.
2. Kasimov and Keenan, *Beside Still Waters*, pp 202-03.
3. Kasimov and Keenan, *Beside Still Waters*, p 50.
4. Kasimov and Keenan, *Beside Still Waters*, p 255.
5. Kasimov and Keenan, *Beside Still Waters*, pp 259-60.
6. Kasimov and Keenan, *Beside Still Waters*, pp 162-63.
7. Kasimov and Keenan, *Beside Still Waters*, p 170.
8. *Psalm* 83:5.
9. Blumenthal, David, *Facing the Abusing God: A Theology of Protest* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press: 1993).

Book Review

India's Jewish Heritage: Ritual, Art and Life-Cycle

Reviewed by Ruth F. Cernea

Shalva Weil, editor, *India's Jewish Heritage: Ritual Art and Life-Cycle* (Mumbai: Marg. 2002), 124 pages, ISBN 81-85026-58-0.

The splendid photograph of the Paradesi synagogue in Cochin that spans two pages in the beginning of *India's Jewish Heritage: Ritual Art and Life-Cycle* by Shalva Weil is also a splendid metaphor for the goals — and considerable successes — of this book. The photograph places the reader inside the building, as though stepping onto the blue willow tiles in an approach to the podium, the heart of the community. So the book places the reader "inside" the world of Indian Jewry, a world well-known to scholars of the subject but still remote, obscure to the majority of Jews and others throughout the world. Indeed, five of the contributors are "insiders," native Indian Jews, while the other five contributors are scholars with long experience in India.

It is a delicate task, to present a book that looks like a "coffee table" book with its large size and interesting, often beautiful photographs and watercolors, and yet provide a text that is just detailed enough, just long enough, just varied enough to entice the owner actually to read it, as well as to provide the variety of information necessary for an accurate, well-rounded introduction to the subject. This anthropologist and editor Shalva Weil does admirably, in her own essays, through the perspectives of architects and historians, as well as in the memoirs of Bene Israel, Cochini and Baghdadi Jews. We are presented with the landscapes and landmarks of Jewish India, the structure of the synagogues themselves, and then with the rites, rituals, and colorful costumes that filled the buildings and the communities with meaning, joy and memory.

The peaceful experience of Jews within India is the underlying theme of this book, and is celebrated in all the essays. Jewish tradition guided and maintained each of the groups, as it has for other Jews throughout the world, but unlike in many other countries, Jews were also free to partake, enjoy and contribute — while remaining identified Jews — to Indian life. Joan Roland's essay on notable Jewish Indian personalities documents this happy fact. More marginal Jewish groups, such as the Shinlung, the Teluga Jews, and the transient European Jews, who have not accommodated or contributed to the dominant Indian culture, are mentioned but not included in the discussions.

Weil's introductory essay locates the three communities within Jewish and Indian history, and describes their differences. The next chapter, "The Jewish Presence in Bombay," by Sifra Samuel Lentin of Mumbai, opens with a wonderful photo showing the bust of David Sassoon before the statue of Prince Albert in the Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Byculla. As with the photograph of the Paradesi synagogue, this image serves a thematic purpose by encapsulating the close relationship of the Sassoons and the British Empire. It also serves as a visual background for the description of the Sassoons' prosperity and their legacy to Bombay. Bene Israel landmarks are also discussed, but Bene Israel history and culture are more fully treated later in the book.

Two chapters detail the architecture of India's synagogues. The first, by Jay A. Waronker, is also a guide to the Jewish presence in India, for many of the buildings mentioned are long abandoned and decaying. In addition to details about construction, Waronker provides useful information about the social and financial organization of the synagogue, which had an impact on the dynamics within the community itself. The practice of deriving income from the rental of outside or attached buildings, which is also true in Burma, is often misunderstood by visitors today, and yet it has kept the synagogues viable as the communities declined. Ilana Weil discusses the architecture of the Paradesi synagogue in Cochin with schematics and insights about its spacial placement: "The Paradesi synagogue ... (is) first and foremost ... a sacred meeting place for Jews. Its location next to the maharaja's palace is indicative of the excellent relationship that the Jews enjoyed with the local Hindus. Furthermore, its location at the end of Synagogue Lane indicates the end of the commercial, materialist, and secular world and the beginning of a religio-spiritual experience." She thus sums up the inner world of the Jews in India. Both chapters are illustrated by beautiful watercolors by Jay Waronker and by additional photographs.

In contrast to the more formal chapters by scholars, the four chapters on customs and costumes by members of the native Jewish communities are full of personal asides as well as interesting facts. My favorite is in the chapter on Bene Israel costumes by Esther David, who wonders why the Bene Israel woman feels compelled to wear shoes on her wedding day, given that she may never have worn shoes before. "I am sure by the end of the evening, the bride must have had shoe-bites!" because she is usually barefoot or in sandals or chappals.

Many of the rituals and customs, also described by Samuel H. Hallegua in "The Marriage Customs of the Jewish Community of Cochin," by Galia Hacco in "The Ritual Cycle of the Cochin Jewish Holidays," by Shalva Weil in "Bene Israel Rites and Routines," and by John and Judy Cooper in "The Life-Cycle of the Baghdadi Jews of India," are the same as those of Jews worldwide. But also, like Jews everywhere, Indian Jews adopted local practices that were compatible with Jewish meanings, such as bedecking the Torah with jasmine flowers during Simchat Torah in Cochin, and walking the Torah on procession around the Cochin synagogues, similar to Hindu deity processions. The symbolic meaning of many of the local customs is apparent, such as the egg yolk and sugar frosting on the Bene Israel wedding cake, or the seemingly pragmatic role of children — who are pure by nature in Jewish thought — in cleaning the home before Pesach, thus also helping to purify it. Other meanings are less apparent. Although perhaps too much for the purposes of this book, these fascinating customs cry out for analysis, as another avenue into the understanding of Indian Jewish experience. A glossary of terms specific to Indian Jewry also might have been useful.

The very useful bibliographies at the end of each chapter suggest the limited circle of scholars and others intimately involved with documenting the Indian Jewish experience. As that population ages, emigrates, assimilates, and forgets, a book such as this becomes even more important. With few exceptions, the books and articles Weil recommends are not readily available to the general reader. This fact alone makes *India's Jewish Heritage* all the more valuable as a presentation of the fading Jewish experience, especially for the Baghdadi and Cochini populations.

Book Review:

India and Israel against Islamic Terror: Old Nations, New Leaders

Reviewed by Dinesh Kumar

Brig. B. N. Sharma, *India and Israel against Islamic Terror: Old Nations, New Leaders* (New Delhi: Manas Publications, 2003), 365 pages, ISBN 817049169X

India And Israel: Leading Nations In The Clash Of Civilizations

Amid the U.S.-led global war on terrorism, the debate on Professor Samuel P. Huntington's thesis, "The Clash of Civilizations," has further intensified. Has the civilizational clash really begun, especially after the events of September 11, 2001? What kinds of alignments or realignments of major powers or civilizations of the world are shaping up? Is the clash inevitable? If so, what would be the nature and direction of this clash in the coming decades and which civilizations would ultimately prevail?

While Western and Islamic scholars and leaders are still grappling with these complex questions, this book on a similar theme by Indian author, Brigadier P. N. Sharma, could not be more timely. Broadly subscribing to Huntington's framework, the author emphasizes that the, "expanding fundamentalist and violent Islam" poses a serious threat to other major civilizations of the world: Western, Judaic and Hindu. In the apparent clash of civilizations, he predicts that in the end, Hindu and Judaic civilizations will prevail and lead the world in the 21st century and beyond.

At the very outset, not many would agree with such a sweeping proposition, at least at a time when India and Israel — two nations representing the Hindu and Judaic civilizations respectively — are still facing numerous challenges to their national identities and securities. However, after reading the book, one cannot help acknowledging that by adding many new interesting dimensions and insights to the already heated debate, the author offers more than just a discussion on the original thesis.

The book opens up with an important query: how and why did only two ancient civilizations, Hindu and Judaic, manage to survive the onslaught of history and time?

Military power and material richness can certainly build empires, but to sustain them along the continuum of civilization requires something more, deeper and divine. A nation's faith in its core cultural and spiritual values as well as the resilience of its people ultimately determines the longevity of a civilization. This proposition, according to the author, remained central to the continued existence of

Hindu and Judaic civilizations, despite many efforts to eliminate them throughout the ten millennia of recorded human history.

In support of his argument, the author draws heavily from the historical experiences of both the Hindus and the Jews. Highlighting many similarities between the Hindu and Judaic civilizations, and given the richness of their core values, the author predicts that India and Israel will overcome the current threats among different civilizations and will play a leading role in the 21st century.

By focusing on major events and important personalities in Jewish history in the first two parts of the book, the author presents a lucid picture of the challenges faced by the Jewish people and the Israeli nation in forming their civilization. In the next part, as he underlines various strengths and weaknesses of Hinduism, the author rebuts various "misconceptions" about Hinduism and Hindutva, which are promoted by "colonial, Marxist, and secularist" historians. Denouncing the existing "distorted and parochial" approach, the author offers an alternative perspective for understanding Indian history.

The title of the book, *India and Israel: Against Islamic Terror*, clearly suggests that Brigadier Sharma has a great deal to say about Islam. Terming it a totalitarian religion, still grounded in the principles formulated by its prophet in the eighth century, he argues, "Islam has lost its true spirit and the profound thought of divinity and human virtues." The stronghold of Ulema and the vested interest of Ummah have led to the, "fossilization of Islam into a rigid time warp."

Carrying forward Professor Bernard Lewis's proposition that the failure of modernization process has contributed to fundamentalism in the Muslim world, the author warns that today Islam is on the march and poses a very real threat to the entire liberal democratic world. Ever since the Oil Crisis of 1973, which significantly altered the balance of power between the Islamic civilization and others, the Muslim world is re-inventing itself by falling back on strict Shariat and adopting a confrontational posture toward non-believers. The author points out that there is a growing belief in the Muslim world that after 200 years of Western domination, the future belongs to Islam.

Indisputably, secularism is on the retreat in the Muslim world and Islamic fundamentalism is rapidly filling its space. The substitution of globalism for nationalism has further spawned the twin evils of rampant authoritarian Islam and Neo-Nazism. The renewed phenomenon of pan-Islamic fundamentalism is gaining strength where demographic expansion and terrorism have emerged as successful political weapons. The violent Palestinian intifada against Israel, the rise of armed insurgency in Kashmir, the growing number of conflicts between Muslims and non-Muslims in different parts of the world as well as increasing Muslim antagonism toward the West are some of the reflections of this trend.

Since Islam regards violence as legitimate means of gaining political ends, the author stresses that the only capacity Islam respects in an unbeliever is the capacity to be stronger than it is. The Muslim in general and the Arab personality (with its "lone wolf mentality") in particular prefer to be feared than loved. Against this background of spreading menace of Muslim fundamentalism and the belated efforts of the liberal world to fight it head on, "Islam versus others" has emerged as the major fault line of the clash of civilizations in the first quarter of the 21st century.

"Islam and West cannot co-exist: if the West is to flourish, Islam has to be suppressed and vice versa," says the author, further contending that the America-centric West is incompatible with a likely Confucian-Islamic axis, though he did not explain how and why. Reminding readers of the Hobbesian proposition that a pacific or soft state cannot enjoy peace, as the world does not respect a weak nation, he strongly justifies the use of organized force to defeat the Jehadi enemy.

Given their historical and geographical proximity to Islam, India and Israel are the two vital frontline states in this clash of civilizations, both in their own capacities as well as in their roles as allies of the Western world. Israel stands as a strong wall for the Western defense against the Islamic threat emanating from the Middle East, while India could contain any Pakistani nuclear misadventure and also stem "Chinese hegemonic aspirations." Thus, any challenge from the Confucian-Islamic civilization necessitates formation of a Washington-Jerusalem-Delhi strategic triangle. At the same time, close cooperation in fighting Islamic terror also provides a solid platform for the convergence of Indo-Israeli strategic interests.

The book's most powerful argument is that the longevity of a civilization does not depend merely on its material wealth, its military might or the strategic alliances it enters into, but also on the infinite capacity of its people, institutions and values to withstand adverse weather. In this respect, the author sees a gloomy future for the Western (Christian) and Islamic civilizations. Amid its endless craving for material gains, declining family values, falling demographic curve and growing spiritual void, the author warns that the Western civilization is slowly moving toward "terminal decay." And, Islam's insistence on uniformity, lack of rationalism and advocacy of violent means, the author believes, will lead the Muslim world to schism and instability, which ultimately will burn out Islam.

Against this background, the author concludes that only three civilizations — Hinduism, Judaism and Confucianism — would possibly be able to defy time and hostile surroundings. Since Hinduism and Judaism have a sounder and longer-lasting edifice of the thought and value systems necessary for their civilizations to endure, the author projects that India and Israel are not only "bound to outlive" the clash of civilizations, but are also "destined to lead all the civilizations" of the world. "They will write the next script of history and decide the future fault lines of civilizations."

A book so wide in its scope and so profound, even controversial, in its arguments is bound to have shortcomings. First and the foremost, too much emphasis on the historical background leads a reader to deviate from the central theme of the book. Secondly, despite rich historical data, the comparison between Hindu and Judaic civilizations remains vague. More significantly, given the author's many bold statements and contentious conclusions, the book's absence of precise references will remain a serious flaw. The author will draw criticism for following a "backward looking" approach. A brief discussion about the emerging strategic alliance between India and Israel and how could that complement their pursuit of triumph in the unfolding drama of the clash of civilizations would have given added significance to the book.

As a whole, this frank, persuasive book has significant potential to generate interest among both its admirers and its critics. The thought-provoking issues raised by the author certainly deserve further discussion and research, which will enrich the ongoing debate about the theory of clash of civilizations. And, therein lies the real value of the book.

Obituary

Professor J.B. Segal (1912 - 2003)‘

By Shalva Weil
Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Judah Benzion Segal, professor of Semitic languages and head of the department of Near and Middle Eastern studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), was a renowned academic who wrote a definitive work on Cochin Jewry. He was also a famous British Intelligence officer and recipient of the Military Cross.

The youngest son of Professor M.H. Segal (1876-1968), the first professor of Bible Studies at the Hebrew University and of Semitic languages at Oxford University, and the brother of Lord Segal of Wytham, J.B. Segal pursued a highly distinguished career. As an undergraduate at Cambridge University in 1932, he won three scholarships as well as the prestigious Mason Prize. In 1939, he received his D. Phil degree from Oxford University. After the Second World War, he took up an appointment at the SOAS, where he expanded the traditional study of Semitic languages to include several Ethiopic languages and Akkadian. In 2000, the British Museum asked him to catalogue their collection of Aramaic and Mandaic incantation bowls.[1] Recently, he published a scholarly book on diacritical points and accents in Syriac.[2] His academic publications were numerous; *The Hebrew Passover* is particularly notable.[3] His extraordinary knowledge of Aramaic and Syriac brought him to excavate five mosaic floors with inscriptions from the first and second centuries C.E. in Edessa (Urfa),the ‘blessed city’ in south-east Turkey in the 1950’s, to research texts in North Saqqara, and to study the Talmudic *lingua franca* of the Kurdish Jews.[4] This expertise also brought him indirectly to write his succinct yet superb history of the Jews of Cochin in the area of Kerala, where some Christian communities, such as the Cnanite (Cnanaaya) Christians, trace their descent from Edessa and pray in Syriac.[5] Segal wrote, “Significantly, Shingli melodies and pronunciation bear close resemblance to those of Mesopotamian Jewry — and here a parallel may be found in the use of Mesopotamian Syriac by the South Indian Christians of St. Thomas, especially among the Cnanaya, the so-called Jewish Christians of Kerala.”[6]

Ben, as he was simply known, was interested in the Cochin Jews for many years before he wrote his meticulous oeuvre *A History of the Jews of Cochin.*[7] He visited Cochin on four separate occasions. He developed a particular friendship with Satto Koder, the head of the Paradesi Cochin Jewish community. In 1968, when the Paradesi Jews celebrated their synagogue’s quartercentenary, Prof. Segal was one of the few foreign guests to be invited, along with Indira Gandhi.[8] A year later, he published “The Jews of Cochin and their Neighbours” as an essay presented to then Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie.[9] In 1983, he published an article in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* on the controversy between the White and Black Jews in Cochin.[10] *A History of the Jews of Cochin* is a brief account of Cochin Jewry, yet its scope is widespread. It skillfully transports the reader from the time of Solomon through the Shingli principality to the Portuguese and Dutch periods, on to British and post-independence India, and finally, to emigration to Israel. The book is recognized by students and researchers of Indian Jews as a major text on the congregation of Jews on the Malabar Coast.

In 1985, Segal was appointed Honorary President of Leo Baeck College, sponsored by the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain.

Ben was also recognized as an outstanding military figure. In 1939, he visited Sudan, where the Anglo-Egyptian Government based in Khartoum offered him a post. In 1942, fluent in Arabic, he was assigned to the General Headquarters of the Middle East Forces in Cairo, where (after a brief visit to Beirut) he was commanded to carry out a secret operation. With the help of local Arabs, Ben, working with a British officer and a Sudanese radio operator, single-handedly seized the North African Libyan town of Derna, which lay about 500 kilometers behind Rommel's lines and ahead of General Montgomery's Eighth Army. Sewing his handkerchief and some other colored rags into a red, white and blue Union Jack (which was displayed in London's Imperial War Museum), he flew the British flag from the townhall window. In turn, he was awarded the Military Cross for bravery. In 1943, he returned to Derna where he was appointed Tribal Affairs officer and recorded Bedouin history. He met his wife Leah in Palestine, where his parents resided, and in 1946 they married. The wedding took place in Jerusalem, but with special permission from the British Army because he was British and she was Palestinian.

With all these achievements and attributes, Ben, my father's cousin, epitomized a man of absolute modesty. He is survived by his wife Leah and two daughters, Miriam and Naomi.

FOOTNOTES

1. Judah Benzion Segal, *Catalogue of the Aramaic and Mandaic Incantation Bowls in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 2000). "http://www.countrybookshop.co.uk/books/index.phtml?whatfor=071411145"

2. Judah Benzion Segal, *The Diacritical Point and the Accents in Syriac* (NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003).

3. Judah Benzion Segal, *The Hebrew Passover* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963).

4. Judah Benzion Segal, *Aramaic Texts from North Saqqara* (Egypt Exploration Society, 1983). Judah Benzion Segal, *Edessa: The Blessed City* (NJ: Gorgias Press, 2001).

5. Shalva Weil, "Symmetry between Christians and Jews in India: the Cnanite Christians and the Cochin Jews of Kerala," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 16:2 (1983): 175-196.

6. Judah Benzion Segal, *History of the Jews of Cochin* (London, Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 1993), p. 20.

7. Segal, *History of the Jews of Cochin*.

8. P.S. Velaydhan, et al., *Commemoration Volume*, Cochin Quartercentenary Celebrations (Cochin: Kerala History Association, 1968).

9. Judah Benzion Segal, "The Jews of Cochin and their Neighbours," an essay presented to the then Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie, London, 1969.

10. Judah Benzion Segal, "White and Black Jews at Cochin and their Neighbours: Story of a Controversy," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2 (1983): 228-52.

Obituary
Professor M. L. Sondhi

P. R. Kumaraswamy

Professor Manohar Lal Sondhi had the rare distinction of being a career diplomat, committed academic, renowned scholar and, above all, a rare politician who believed in principles and values. His experience in the world of politics, bureaucracy and academia molded him to be doggedly independent until his very end.

Born in the industrial city of Jalander in the province of Punjab on December 14, 1933, Professor Sondhi pursued his initial education in his hometown before heading for the Delhi School of Economics and, then, the London School of Economics for higher studies. He also studied at Balliol College in Oxford and Charles University in Prague. He was married to Madhuri, a writer of considerable standing and the daughter of a well-known freedom fighter. They both pursued an active public life that stretched over four decades.

In 1956, Professor Sondhi topped the all-India civil service examination, joined the prestigious Indian Foreign Service, and served in Indian missions in Prague and the United Nations. In 1962, he resigned from the Foreign Service to become a faculty member at the New Delhi-based Indian School of International Studies, the forerunner of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). Subsequently when the School merged with the JNU, he became a professor of international politics.

Professor Sondhi's quarter of a century association with JNU marked a fine period in his career because it gave him an opportunity to pursue his passion: to interact with, enlighten, and enrich the student community. The priority he placed on students' welfare often placed him at odds with the University's administration and at times resulted in personal hardships. At the height of the infamous 1983 student agitation, he decisively sided with the students and in the process stepped on the toes of the establishment. He guided and supervised scores of theses and dissertations, and passionately worked on conflict management. Following his retirement from JNU in 1998, he was recognized as a Distinguished Scholar.

He made his electoral debut in 1967, when he successfully contested the prestigious New Delhi parliamentary constituency on the Jan Sangh platform. Even though his career in parliamentary politics did not continue beyond 1971, until the very end, he remained a member of the Jan Sangh and, later, the Bharatiya Janata Party and he occupied senior positions.

The 1967 Lok Sabha (the lower house of the Indian parliament) elections were a watershed in Indian politics. Compelled by electoral reversals and diminished parliamentary support, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi accepted support from the Communist Parties and, in the process, brought India closer to the then Soviet Union. Professor Sondhi emerged as one of the strongest critics of Indira Gandhi's foreign policy, especially her policy on the June war. He was unable to comprehend — let alone support — the official policy, which was virulently critical of Israel's pre-emptive strike against the Arab armies. On June 8, 1967, in a speech to the Lok Sabha, Professor Sondhi lamented that India was behaving like the "fourteenth Arab state."

For decades, Professor Sondhi remained the staunchest advocate for normalization of diplomatic relations with Israel. Until full relations were established in January 1992, he remained a main reference point for Indo-Israeli diplomatic contacts and parleys. Beginning with his maiden visit to Israel in 1963, when he met David Ben-Gurion, Professor Sondhi visited the Jewish State on numerous occasions and met many important Israeli personalities, including Moshe Dayan, Golda Meir, and Yitzhak Rabin.

Likewise, Professor Sondhi strongly advocated the Tibetan cause and was highly critical of what he considered to be India's abandonment of its historic responsibility toward the Tibetan people. Through his academic works as well as his public activism, Professor Sondhi constantly championed the Tibetan cause in India and outside the country. He remained a close personal friend of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and was an Indian nominator of the Dalai Lama for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

Unlike most of his contemporaries, Professor Sondhi was widely traveled. At the height of the Cold War, he was often seen on both sides of the ideological divide. In 1956, he was elected as a Rhodes scholar and he served as a visiting scholar at a number of well-known international institutions, such as the Research Institute on Communist Affairs at Columbia University in New York in 1964, the Research Institute of International Affairs in Warsaw, the Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security in South Korea, and the Harry S Truman Research Institute for the Advance of Peace in Jerusalem. He also served on innumerable international bodies and organizations. He was one of the advisory members of the *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* and was actively interested in promoting Jewish and Hebrew studies in India.

He authored and edited scores of academic works. His writings include *A Peace Agenda for Indian Foreign Policy (1995)* and *Non-Appeasement: A New Direction for Indian Foreign Policy (1971)*. He also edited or co-edited scholarly works, including *US and India Changing Strategic Parameters; Hinduism's Human Face; Towards a New Era: Economic, Social & Political Reforms; Nuclear Weapons and India's National Security; Terrorism and Political Violence A Sourcebook; Democratic Peace; Vajpayee's Foreign Policy: Daring the Irreversible* (1999); *Beyond Perestroika* (1989); and *Foreign Policy and Legislatures: An Analysis of Seven Parliaments* (1988). He also wrote scores of scholarly articles and chapters on such diverse issues as conflict management, international relations, regional cooperation, and nuclear proliferation.

In 2000, in recognition of his public service, Professor Sondhi was appointed Chairman of the esteemed Indian Council of Social Sciences Research (ISCSSR), the highest authority in India that supports research in social sciences. He disproved his critics, mainly from the Indian left, who alleged he would transform the ICSSR into an extension of the ruling BJP and impose its ideological baggage. He fought for the institution's autonomy and independence, and refused to yield to official pressures to run the ICSSR along narrow ideological dictates. This maverick and independent position did not endear him to party bosses and as a result, in July 2001, Professor Sondhi was unceremoniously removed from his position.

Professor Sondhi never bothered about political correctness and popularity. Despite being an active member of the governing Bharatiya Janata Party, he was appalled at the communal violence in the western Indian state of Gujarat in 2002 and co-edited a volume aptly called *Black Book on Gujarat*. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Professor Sondhi never comprised on his principles. He never hesitated to take on the establishment, institutions and, above all, his own political party in defense of his principles.

Following a brief illness, Professor Sondhi passed away on November 24, 2003. May his soul rest in peace!

Notes on the Contributors

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NATHAN KATZ, co-founder and co-editor of this journal, is Professor of Religious Studies at Florida International University. His recent book, *Who Are the Jews of India?* (University of California Press, 200), was a Finalist for the National Jewish Book Award in Sephardic Studies, and was awarded the 2004 Vak Devi Saraswati Award. More recently, he published *Kashrut, Caste and Kabbalah: The Religious Life of the Jews of Cochin* (with Ellen S. Goldberg, Manohar, 2004).

DINESH KUMAR, formally Research Fellow at the Truman Research Institute at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, is currently working as Security Analyst with *Jane's Intelligence Digest*. Besides having written widely on India-Israel relations, he specializes in the early warning analyses of impending political and security crises in different parts of the world.

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FRANK JOSEPH SHULMAN, a professional bibliographer, editor and consultant for reference publications in Asian Studies, is the author of twelve book-length bibliographies and scholarly guides on East, Southeast, and South Asia and a contributor to several journals and edited volumes. Among his areas of longstanding scholarly interest is the history of the Jews and the modern Jewish communities of China, India, and Japan.

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SHALVA WEIL is Senior Researcher at the NCJW Research Institute for Innovation in Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Her publications on Indian Jewry include articles on religious leadership and secular authority, names and languages among the Bene Israel, symmetry between Cochin Jews and Cnanite Christians, conversion among the Shinlung, and more. She is the editor of *India's Jewish Heritage: Ritual, Art and Life-Cycle* (Mumbai, Marg Publications, 2nd ed. 2004). She is the founding Chairperson of the Israel-India Cultural Association, and serves on the editorial board of several Indian scientific journals.