

IV. FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTIONS OF THE INDIAN WORLD VIEW

1. NATURE IS MADE UP OF CLUSTERS OF PARTICLES.

- 1.1 All differentiated, manifest substantial forms evolved or devolved from a single, unmanifest, equilibrated substance.
- 1.2 The present manifest forms are made up of a great many 'particles' that have different properties such as hot-cold, and active-passive.
- 1.3 What triggered the 'first' movement (action or karmam) of the generative process is unknown, hence presumably there is an inner property, such as the codes of and for action that is 'written' into all substances. This is like the 'dissatisfaction' of the five elements that is often equated with desire, which replicates at a higher level of organization the inception of other disequilibrated entities.
- 1.4 Indian culture is person-centric. There is no dharma (code of conduct), no unit of time, no food or soil that is moral or good for all persons at all times. Everything is context specific.
- 1.5 One acquires one's 'substance' from ones 1) parents, 2) village, 3) house, 4) sexual encounters, 5) food one eats, 6) people one touches, etc. Through these one constantly is in danger of getting out of balance. Consequently, one must be careful of what comes into one's body at all times in order to maintain an equilibrium.
- 1.6 Different entities in the manifest world have different degrees of substantial equilibrium and disequilibrium.
- 1.7 As a result of disequilibration, humans and even gods must continue to strive to restore equilibrium to their bodily substance. This equilibrated state within the body is the key to health and well-being.
- 1.8 The search for states of equilibrium in everyday life are redimentary fascimilies of actions aimed at achieveing moksha - the ultimate equilibrated order that transcends all context. Actions such as pilgrimage can lead to a permanent release from the differentiated, manifest world and a total immersion in one's essence, which is the universal essence, the undifferentiated primoridal substance.

2. PURITY AND POLLUTION.

- 2.1 Equilibrium and spirituality lead to purity. Disequilibrium and anything that ties us to this world lead to impurity.
- 2.2 Impurity includes:
 - touching dead bodies or anything dead such as hair clippings. Consequently barbers, surgeons, and leatherworkers are defiled.
 - dealing with body excretias and dirt. Consequently washerman and village sweepers are defiled.
 - sexual contacts, especially with people of another caste, are defiling.

- spiritual ministries, on the other hand, are purifying. Consequently priests and especially household purohits are clean.

2.3 The community must maintain some people who are pure who can communicate with the gods in order to receive their blessings such as crops, children and welbeing. In order to do so, other castes must take their defilements and remove them. For instance, Barbers must take away the dead hair of priests, sweepers clean their yards, etc. If the community loses touch with the gods and their blessings, it will decay and die.

3. HIERARCY.

3.1 All life is one. Consequently we must treat all life with respect. To kill an animal is only to extend our own karma and transmigrations.

3.2 All life is also ranked along a hierarchy of purity and pollution.

3.3 The ranking is based not on the model of a ladder, but on degrees of exclusion from the pure. This involves the principle of 'encompassing' and 'encompassed'.

3.4 Each person and community of life (jati) has its own functions to do (dharma) in maintaing society. In doing these without complaint is to gain purity in this life, and a higher rank in the next.

3.5 The most stable relationships are 'patron-client' in which one is superior and responsible for the other, and the other is inferior and serves the first.

4. TIME.

4.1 Time is fundamentally linear, but overlaid by cyclical time.

4.2 Individual units are forever going through the cycles of samsara.

5. SPACE.

5.1 Space is particular in nature, so it has sacred-defiling characteristics to it just as do objects and beings. The terrain around a village is a microcosm of cosmic history of the gods and the ancestors.

5.2 There are other levels of space paralleling this one, including the world of the gods and the world of animals.

6. REALITY AND MYTH.

6.1 There is no sharp difference between reality and fiction, history and myth. This world is fundamentally *maya*.

6.2 However, for now we must deal with the world as real, for the only way out of it is to return to a basic equilibrium.

7. THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN THINGS ARE FUZZY.

7.1 Because everything is 'particular' in nature, and because everything is also in flux as particles are exchanged, there are no sharp boundaries, no eternally fixed entities. Everything is changing.

7.2 Therefore boundary maintenance is of high importance, otherwise one is constantly defiled.