



Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar (1922-1990)

Shabda Cayanika

On the 8th of September, 1985, Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, began an extraordinary series of Sunday lectures in his native Bengali that would eventually fill a total of twenty-six volumes over the next five years. The title he gave to this series was *Shabda Cayaniká*, which translates into English as “A Collection of Words”. The discourses begin with letter a and continue on alphabetically. What results, then, is neither an encyclopedia, nor a dictionary, but something unique to the fields of scholarship and literature.

The author uses the platform of the word as a point of departure to take the reader on a journey through all the varied landscapes of human knowledge – history, geography, medicine, science, art, religion, philosophy, etc. – and in the

process adds the indelible stamp of his own unique intellect, enriching our experience with new ideas and enabling us to see our human heritage in a way we have never been able to before.

Like most great authors, he is a consummate storyteller, using a seemingly inexhaustible supply of anecdotes, personal experiences and stories to capture the reader’s interest and lead him or her effortlessly through the garden of human knowledge. Along the way, the author enriches all modern descendants of Samskrta language such as Hindi, Bengali and others.

The following article is excerpted from *Shabda Cayanika Part 1*, Ananda Marga Publications.



From the Unmanifest to the Manifest

By Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar

AMONG ALL MUNDANE expressions, the sound a plays the chief role. In different layers, expressed or unexpressed, we find the a sound predominant. Just as one name of Prakṛti is Pradhána [Chief], so can we call the science of sound a *ádhárita* [based on a].

The sound a is the original seed of the creation. The mantra of creation, a, is gradually transformed into the mantra of preservation, u. And this mantra of preservation, u, gradually, with the passage of time, loses its momentum and sinks down into the final inertness [[of ma]]. But this is not the end of expression. Again, there is a new awakening, a new arising. That also happens through a; it is the play of that same a.

The seed of creation, a, is the first sound, the first letter of the alphabet. When we put together the first letter of the alphabet, a, and the last letter, kṣa, we get the akṣamálá [alphabet], also known as the varíamálá [garland of letters].

Akṣa means “to delineate”. That is why, in Sanskrit, we use akṣámśha for the English word “latitude”. One sound gradually gets lost and within the melody of that loss is born another sound. A is the hidden source of all words and all sounds in this elliptical expressed universe.

The creation had arisen, sound had permeated the firmament, but in the unit body, the unit mind, the vibration of sound had not yet come – there was such an age. In that age ideas

were expressed with the help of gestures; this still continues today in the case of mute creatures and insects for the purpose of channelizing their internal feeling and realization towards others through their rhythmic flows of acquired experience.

Even after the advent of language, gestures remained. They are there today and will remain forever. As thought proceeds step by step towards greater subtlety, the intellect evolves a sharper language and subtler and subtler gestures – and it will go on doing so. Even today, when we want to show that it is hot we move our hand in a fan-like motion. When we want to show we are thirsty, we cup our palms and use a water-drinking gesture. At one time this was indispensable because the support of language was missing.

Movement is the dharma of the universe, both of the unit and of the collective. The creation is sustained in the rhythm of movement. Thus one name for the play of creation is jagat (*gam + kvip = jagat*), “that whose nature is to move”; another name is saṁsára (*saṁ – sr + ghaiṇ = saṁsára*) or “that which gradually moves away”. In this movement is hidden the measure of life, the grandeur of existence. The more one’s existence is vibrant with noble deeds, the more that existence is unique and splendid. But it is important to note that the old root verbs for



“move” began with a vowel – either a or one of its closely related sounds. In the very ancient language, *ejati* was often used in place of *gacchati*; besides this, we also see the roots *yati* (*i-á-ti*), *átati*, and so on. Similar roots were *aj* and *an* – in both of these, movement and the possibility of movement were understood. The primordial phase (pre-embryonic stage) of creation was indicated by the root *an*.

The modern root *cal* originated much later, in the middle of the Vedic era. The root *cal* signifies “motion” – “advancement”. Thus, in differing circumstances it was used as both *parasmaepadii* and *átmanepadii*¹ (in modern Sanskrit its *átmanepadii* form has almost completely disappeared). Anyhow, when we add the suffix *shatr* to the root *cal* in *paraesmaepadii* we get the word *calat* which means “that which goes on moving”. And if the root *cal* is used in *átmanepadii* we get *calamána* (*cal* + *shánac*) which also means “that which is in a state of motion”.

The root *an* is more frequently used than *cal*. Its primary meaning is “to move” or “to come

and go”. When we add the suffix *ańdac* to *an* we get the word *ańda* [egg] which means “that which moves about unseen and becomes active when it comes into the open”. The suffix *ańdac* is commonly used to imply something whose nature is hidden.

Thus, the etymological meaning of the word *ańda* is “that which is on the path of movement or emergence or expression”. The Cosmic *citta* or done “I” of the Supreme Entity is dominant as the causal factor and subordinate as the effect, thus it is the creation’s primordial manifestation. That conscious entity imbibes both possibilities, that of cause and that of effect, and thus the second stage is indicative of equality, that is, the causal factor and the effect factor maintain a state of equipoise or harmony, and the final or supreme state is subordinate in cause and dominant in effect, that is, where the causal factor dissolves into the effect, the effect is imbedded in the causal *a*, this is the third stage, the state of supreme negativity. That manifestation, or movement which emerges from the Great, that is, the all-expressive *kaosikii*

¹Terminologies of conjugation in Sanskrit grammar.

bindu [primordial point] – is the first qualified stage of vibration of that Supreme entity. Thus *a* is the original sound, the first seed, and it is the first manifestation of alphabetic expression. The first letter of the alphabet is *a*.

When the Great Entity, Brahma, is bound by *a*, then the word *brahmá* (*brahma* + *a* = *brahmá*) is used. *Brahmá* is not a separate state from the trinity of *Brahmá*, *Viśnú* and *Shiva* – it is the first stage of expression of the Supreme Consciousness where the causal factor is dominant in that cognitive bearing and the effect factor is only mildly expressed.

In the world of living creatures, those beings which are hatched from eggs we call *añđaj* [oviparous]. This *añđaj* is conceptually analogous to the *brahmáñđaj* [the created universe, literally “the cosmic egg”]; they are small editions of the *brahmáñđaj*. The Sanskrit-derived form of the word *añđaj*, *añđá*,¹ is prevalent throughout north India. *Brahmáñđaj* (cosmic egg)

It is not possible for creatures of the reptile group, that is, those who move by supporting themselves on their chest or ribcage, to carry a developed fetus in the womb. For this reason they carry eggs in their wombs. Though birds are technically not reptiles, when they fly they use their wings to cut through the air thereby putting a great deal of pressure on their chest. Due to this it is also not possible for them to carry a developed fetus in the womb and so they also carry and lay eggs.

Once an egg is laid, the embryo starts developing under the impetus provided by the egg’s contact with air, light and heat from the environment. When the developing fetus is fully mobile it pierces its shell and emerges into the outside world where it needs more heat than is normally present in the environment, so the mother bird or mother reptile helps the fetus develop by supplying warmth from her own body. Of course, not all creatures hatched from eggs require this extra heat. In such cases the mother abandons the egg once it is laid. In accordance with nature’s law, it does not feel any instinctive affection for the egg. For those eggs which require extra heat, however, it is the law of

nature that the mother feels an instinctive affection for the egg. If someone comes and takes the egg she will often chase after them.

Because egg-producing creatures need their chest and ribs for labour, it is not possible for them to breast-feed their offspring. Thus oviparous creatures do not produce breast milk; this is the natural law. Exceptions to this can be found in certain creatures from an earlier era when reptiles were making the transition to non-reptiles, becoming creatures who moved by means of their hands and feet. During that time some creatures were in an intermediate stage; for several hundred thousand years they continued to lay eggs, but at the same time they used to breast-feed their offspring in small amounts. Later, when they stopped laying eggs and started bearing their young, the amount of milk they fed their offspring increased.

Among the creatures we are familiar with, the cow family produces the greatest amount of milk for their offspring. They are also comparatively more intelligent than other creatures and they show more affection for their offspring. Interestingly, they cannot run very swiftly, while the deer group, which produces very little milk and shows less affection for their offspring, can run extremely fast. The antelope family (*bharal* (*niilgái*), alpaca, black antelope) falls somewhere in between the deer and cow families in all respects, including their size, their horns and their tails, even their excretory systems.

Bear in mind that while the word *niilgái* is similar to *gái* [cow], it is not a member of the cow family, nor is it a member of the deer family. It belongs to the antelope family. We often fall into the error of thinking that certain animals are either in the cow family or in the deer family when actually they are part of the antelope family. We can use the word *go-harin* [cow-deer] for the antelope family.

That rare member of the cat family known as the duckbill, which is found in Southeast Asia and certain parts of Australia, is a nearly extinct prehistoric creature. Though this fast-disappearing creature lays eggs, it also breast-feeds its offspring. Because it uses its chest area more for locomotion and other activities in comparison with other milk-producing creatures, it continues to lay eggs. But in comparison with reptiles and birds, it uses its chest less, and so can still breast-feed its children. Proper efforts should be made to save the duckbill from extinction.

¹ *Añđaj* → *añđá*; *đimba* → *đimba* → *đim*. The one exception among the north Indian languages is Gorkhali in which *đim* [egg] is called *phul* [flower]. In spoken Bengali, that which takes shelter in the mother’s womb in creatures who are not produced from eggs, is also called *phul*. When the child is born, the flower blossoms.

Among the aquatic creatures, fish are oviparous, the reason being that the way fish cut through water when they move is somewhat similar to the way reptiles slither along the ground or the way birds cut through the air. Thus, in the broader sense, they can also be considered reptiles. They also use their chest and ribs a great deal and so are unable to carry developed offspring¹ in their womb or breast-feed their young. Thus, according to the law of nature, they produce eggs.

There are other aquatic creatures, such as whales, seals and walruses, which use their chests and ribs less in their movements than fish do. Most probably, the whale was also once a land animal like the dolphin. Later, under the pressure of circumstance, they took to the water. Like the hilsa and the shark, they are not ancient aquatic creatures. Though they live in water they are not a species of fish. To call a whale a fish is a gross error. Therefore such creatures bear their young, breast-feed their offspring and, according to the natural law, have more affection for their progeny.

In other words, we see that those egg-producing creatures which do not incubate their eggs, also show no affection towards them. Those which incubate their eggs show comparatively more affection, and those creatures which bear their young and breast-feed them will even, in certain cases, not stop at sacrificing their lives for their offspring.

The crocodile is a land reptile – an ancient species from the Cretaceous age. Generally speaking, all members of this family are terrestrial by nature and all are egg-producing. The crocodile, fish-eating crocodile (mechokumiir), iguana (Gosáp. In Sanskrit godhá or godhiká, in indigenous Bengali gohárgil, goh, gosáp), girgíti [a type of lizard], tíktiki [a small house lizard], takśaka [a poisonous snake] (the word guisáp is used in East Bengal), ánjuni [also a type of lizard] – all these egg-producing creatures have a similar nature; they differ only in their level of cruelty. The man-eating crocodile is extremely ferocious. The rest of these creatures are also ferocious with the exception, to some extent, of the iguana which, despite being a meat-eater, has a somewhat timid nature. When they see people they will flee if they have

someplace to run. The Indian iguana is predominantly of two types: the black iguana and the golden iguana, both of which share this timid nature.

While it is true that the otter (in Sanskrit, udbírála [water-lion]) goes into water to catch fish, it is a land animal like the crocodile. Otters live near ponds or other water reservoirs, and they are milk-producing, not egg-producing. The Bengalee otter is somewhat smaller than the South American otter but it is more active and highly intelligent. Because it is a milk-producing creature, not egg-producing, it is, according to the law of nature, relatively keen-witted.

Normally, we observe that the young of any species are not fully developed at the time of birth. Whether human, dog, or cat, all are born in a helpless state, unable to hear or see. This helpless state is even more pronounced in egg-producing creatures. When tadpoles are hatched they cannot move properly. They need a tail in order to adjust with their environment. After adapting to their environment the tail falls off. From this we can deduce that the ancestors of the frog had tails.¹

However undeveloped milk-producing animals may be, egg-producing animals are even more so; by comparison they also show significantly less affection as well as other sentiments. Many do not even recognize their own children; those who do not hatch their eggs feel little or no affection and tend to be much more malicious by nature. Crocodiles become extremely vicious at a very young age.

Another characteristic of the egg-producing animals is that some of them, such as the shark and hilsa fish, are completely carnivorous, while you will not find a single completely carnivorous milk-producing animal. Tigers may not eat uncooked rice but they will eat cooked rice or bread; they may not eat raw vegetables but they will eat them if they are cooked, while the shark, hilsa fish, vulture and some hawks and owls (especially the white lakśmii owl) are extremely carnivorous.

Another characteristic of the carnivorous egg-producing animals is that their bodies have a high fat content and give off a strong odour. Those who are familiar with the hilsa fish know how strong a fish-smell it has. The reason for this is that the hilsa prefers rotten meat to fresh meat.

¹ Shávak [offspring] + lá + u = shavakal, shavakal → shaoyál → cháóal cháliá → chele [boy]. The word chele is not a native Bengali word at all; it is a Sanskrit derivative.

¹ Vi-aunga = vyaunga [frog], the one whose limbs are loose. In Sanskrit its synonyms are bhek, mañdúk, dardur.



The shark is the same way. It also has a very strong fish smell. People who eat shark often remark that it is similar to hilsa. It also has a high fat content. In fact, shark oil is used as a medicine (bear in mind that the shark is a fish, not a crustacean like crab or shrimp). The vulture's nature is quite similar. It prefers decomposed flesh to fresh meat.

It is worth mentioning again that such egg-producing creatures do not, for all intents and purposes, feel affection. Many do not even recognize their own children and some of them eat their own eggs.

Before the fetus is created, milk-producing animals produce an ovum in the mother's womb. Rather than producing an egg, however, a fetus develops. In the world of egg-producing creatures, especially birds, there are exceptions to this. Some of them can produce fetus-less or unfertilized eggs. Some varieties of ducks, especially, frequently lay unfertilized eggs. With such eggs there is no possibility of offspring, even if they are incubated. Commonly such eggs take longer to spoil. Many people who have a weakness for eggs, but do not want to harm a living embryo, are partial to taking unfertilized eggs; they contend that this way they are not killing a fetus. They should keep in mind that while it is true that they are not killing a fetus, they are still at fault for taking non-vegetarian food, because these unfertilized eggs still contain the defects of non-vegetarian food.

Snakes lay a great many eggs at one time but because they eat their own eggs very few of them have an opportunity to hatch. The result of this is that there is a check or a limit to the number of snakes – this is nature's arrangement.

Among fish, those whose offspring remain helpless at the time of birth show an instinctive affection for their young and keep them nearby, often sheltering them in some part of their body.

It is quite normal for snake-mothers to eat their own eggs. It is not full meal for them, perhaps, but rather more like a light tiffin. Speaking of tiffin, that reminds me of a small story. It happened during British rule, when I was in my early twenties. I was taking the train from Jamalpur to Calcutta with a childhood friend, Suvimal Cakravartii (Bhondá) and his youngest sister, Rainjaná Cakravartii, alias Khendi.¹ Seated next to me was a gentleman travelling from Muzaffarpur to Calcutta. Beside him was a basket filled with Muzaffarpur's famous sháhii lichus. Suvimal's sister, Rainjaná, was a very good girl but she lacked a little common sense and had even less consideration of time, place, and person. At the time she must have been about nine.

Suddenly Rainjaná, alias Khendi, spoke up – "I... I... w-want a... a... l-lichu."

At first, Suvimal pretended not to hear and a few minutes passed. But when "I... I... w-want... a... a... l-lichu." started again, this time with added hand and foot gestures, in other words, when she began flailing her arms and legs and saying, "I... I... w-want... a... a... l-lichu,"

¹ In the construction of khendi [snub-nosed], i is used because someone can only be khándá or khendi by birth. Khándá's wife is never called khendi in this sense. If she was it would be written khendi. Because they are related by birth, didi [elder sister], mási [maternal aunt], pisi [paternal aunt] and similar words use i, while in-laws such as kakii [paternal uncle's wife] and mámi [maternal uncle's wife] use ii because they are not only feminine gender but feminine as well.

Suvimal found himself in a predicament. He told her: “You just had a full breakfast and you’re hungry again? Stop it. Be quiet.”

“I’m stopping, I’ll be quiet,” Rainjaná replied. “How can I say anything if I’m afraid of you! But I still want a lichu.”

Again Suvimal answered: “You stuffed yourself with breakfast and now you want to eat again!”

Rainjaná answered back. “No one gets stuffed at breakfast! Even if someone can eat sixteen nimkis [a salty snack], he never takes more than two or three for breakfast. Even if he wants to, he’s too embarrassed.”

Suvimal retorted, “And you’re not embarrassed at all?”

Rainjaná replied, “Why be embarrassed in front of people on a train? We see them today, then we never see them again. Why should I be embarrassed?”

“After an hour or two we’ll reach Bhagalpur,” Suvimal replied. “I’ll get you some khájá [a type of milksweet] there. After that comes Sahebganj. There you can have some kálákánd [another type of milksweet], okay? Now keep quiet.”

Rainjaná (meaning Khendi) said. “I said I’d be quiet. How can I say anything if I’m afraid of you. But I’m going to eat and I want lichus. I’ll eat some khájá in Bhagalpur and some kálákánd in Sahebganj, but now I’m going to eat lichus.”

Suvimal lowered his voice: “Lichus aren’t available in the railway station. Tomorrow morning I’ll get you some lichus when we arrive in Calcutta.”

“So what if they’re not available in the station,” Rainjaná replied. “They’re available right here in the train. This fellow here has some.”

When he heard this, Suvimal’s nose and ears started turning red from embarrassment. He did not know what to say.

When the gentleman who was traveling with us in the train saw how stubborn Rainjaná was, he took some lichus from his basket and put them in her hand saying, “Now my child, eat. That’s what food is for. What a nice girl you are! Most people would’ve been too embarrassed to open their mouth, but you weren’t embarrassed at all. What a nice girl, as if Mái Laksmii [the goddess of fortune] herself had left heaven and come down to earth. I have a boy myself; there’s a little difference in age between the two of you, but nonetheless I would be glad to have Mái Laksmii

in my house as my daughter-in-law. That would really be nice.”

Suvimal tactfully started making a few inquiries. When Suvimal heard his replies he realized that the large-hearted gentleman had meant to console Rainjaná but had just gone a little too far. This time I noticed that his neck as well as his nose, eyes, and mouth had become red.

Meanwhile Rainjaná was totally engrossed in eating the lichus. Finally she finished her lichus and began licking her fingers. Suvimal became even more embarrassed. After a few moments he said testily, “Enough, come wash your hands.”

“By the time I’m done licking my fingers,” Rainjaná replied, “we’ll be in Bhagalpur. There I’m going to eat khájá. And by the time I’m done eating the khájá we’ll be in Sahebganj and I’m going to eat kálákánd there. When I’m done eating the kálákánd I can go for all three washings at once.”

Suvimal became even more heated: “Stop being so greedy. Only a foolish girl can talk like that!”

Rainjaná replied, “You’re calling me foolish? Didn’t you hear that I’m going to be married soon? That fellow there said I was Laksmii herself. If the age difference wasn’t so much, I’d be married right here in the train.”

Suvimal got even angrier. “Where did all this foolishness come from? Nobody gets married in a train! Have you ever heard of it or seen it?”

“Why not,” Rainjaná answered. “I’m sure if you looked you could find a priest or two in the train. What would you say if the bridegroom was here? Just because someone is not here, does it mean that you don’t show them any respect? I bet you’re thinking that because there’s nobody to do ulu¹ then there can’t be a wedding! I know how to do ulu myself.”

At that moment Suvimal’s entire face became red. Even his chin had started turning a little red.

¹In Sanskrit the sound is hulu [a sound that Hindu women make during auspicious occasions]. I have heard certain pandits from Kerala use the word mukhavádyam also. The ancestors of Kerala’s Náyárs came to Kerala from Rarh in the year 534 BCE. Thus, like Bengal, the custom of making the ulu sound is also prevalent there as well. In some Bengalee villages the practise of doing ulu is also called jokár deoyá. In ancient Bengal, people used to make this sound during auspicious functions in order to protect against anyone present who might have been thinking harmful thoughts; in other words, it was used for all auspicious undertakings.

He was staring at the floor in embarrassment and I thought I could hear him muttering – “I would throw her out the window if it didn’t have bars.” I also thought I heard him mutter – “I wish the earth would open up and swallow me... how embarrassing!... how embarrassing!”

Seeing Suvimal’s condition, I could not keep quiet any longer. “Look, Khendi,” I said, “it’s getting late. Now stop!”

This time Rainjaná screamed, “You used my nickname in front of so many people! What will people think!”

“If people think something or say something, so what?”

“I’ll be embarrassed, that’s what!”

“So you also get embarrassed!”

“I don’t get embarrassed about food, but when it comes to my name I get embarrassed. I’ll teach you a lesson.”

“How are you going to teach me a lesson?” I asked.

“When we get back to Jamalpur I’m going to tell your grandmother everything. I’ll tell her that Dádá used my nickname in front of everybody in the train. And I’ll tell her that I was going to be married but after telling everybody my nickname I won’t be able to now. Then she’ll really scold you.”

“Do as you please,” I answered. “Now stop being so greedy. Put a lock on your mouth.”

“Do you see a keyhole in my mouth? Is there a lock hanging there that I can lock? What are you saying! I don’t understand you at all.”

Helplessly, I beat a retreat... I kept mum.

Now a word from much later, after independence. Suvimal is now a retired ICS officer. Rainjaná is a professor at a well-known college. She did her doctoral research on the use of the Bengali language in the Káchár Royal Court [now a district in Assam]. Dr. Rainjaná is now a very erudite woman. Though I rarely see her anymore, I still call her Khendi from old habit and she does not get angry. But I’m not divulging her secret nickname to strangers on the train either. If she does get angry, I have no reason to worry. To whom can she complain? My grandmother passed on many years ago.

Rainjaná’s husband, captain Basu, is a very sympathetic gentleman. For justifiable reasons, I would venture a guess that he feeds Rainjaná khájá and kálákánd regularly. And even if she does not ask, he does not forget to feed her lichus.

Rainjaná’s secret nickname, Khendi, has been hidden away from the public eye. I am also trying to forget it. And Suvimal is now justifiably proud of his sister. All’s well that ends well.

Oh yes, I forgot to mention one thing. At Rainjaná’s wedding, I gave her a pair of gold lichu earrings for her to wear.

Just as an egg matures by coming in contact with the earth’s light, heat and air, then gives way to a child that develops little by little in that same earth’s affectionate shade, and finally one day sinks down into eternal silence when its life-energy is spent, the brahmánda [Cosmic egg] emerges from the kaośikii bindu [primordial point] in the introversial phase (saiṅcara) as brahmá and is nurtured and grows in the affection and care of the universe where it finds no obstacle to its development. The one who provides that sweet touch every second and fraction-of-a-second, that preserving force is known as vaeśhnavii shakti or viśnumáyá. The seed of preservation is u. Just as a developed being reaches the end of its days and loses itself in silence, so will every molecule and atom of the created universe one day return from effect to cause. This return to its own original cause is called “death”. It is not destruction but a return to its cause. The force which effects this return to its cause is called shaevii shakti. The seed syllable (biija mantra) of shiva or “destroyer” is m. From the a of creation, the u of existence or preservation, and the m of dissolution, we get om. But it is perceived only in the expressed universe. Om emerges out of the unmanifest – this expressed universe is a finite island in an ocean of infinity.

There is no signifier for the unmanifest. Thus, only a point is used to indicate it. When this point of the unmanifest or nirguṅa state comes within the purview of the expressed universe, it is transformed into om. A crest is then used as the associated sign for this action of transformation. Thus, the point is the symbol of the unmanifest, the crest is the symbol of the movement from unmanifest to manifest, and om is the symbol of the expressed universe. Together they become ॐ. Thus it is not sufficient to say om. We should say ॐ.

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