RIDDLE NO. 21

THE THEORY OF MANVANTARA

The Brahmins had a theory of the Government of their country from Heaven. This seems to be the idea underlying what is called a Manvantara.

The idea underlying a *Manvantara* is related to the political Government of the country. It is founded on the belief that the Government of the world is entrusted to a corporation for a fixed period. This corporation consists of an officer called Manu and Saptarishis (seven Rishis) and one Indra conducting the affairs of the country from their seats in Heaven without consulting the people or ascertaining their wishes. The period of the reign by one corporation is called a Manvantara after Manu the premier authority in the ruling set. When the reign of one Manu is over he is succeeded by another Manu and so on. As in the case of the Yugas, the Manvantaras also move in cycles. Fourteen Manvantaras make one cycle.

The Vishnu Purana gives us an idea of these Manvantaras which is as follows:

> "Then Brahma created himself the Manu Swayambhuva, born of, and identical with, his original self, for the protection of created beings; and the female portion of himself he constituted Satarupa, whom austerity purified from the sin (of forbidden nuptials), and whom the divine Manu Swayambhuva took to wife.

Stopping here for the moment one might ask—What does this mean? Does it mean that Brahma was a hermaphrodite? Does it mean that Manu Swayambhu married his sister Satarupa? How very strange if this is true as the Vishnu Purana seems to suggest.

The Vishnu Purana proceeds to say:

> "From these two are born two sons, Priyavrata and Uttanpada, and two daughters, named Prasuti and Akuti graced with loveliness

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and exhalted merit. Prasuti he gave to Daksha and gave Akuti to the Patriarch Ruchi, who espoused her. Akuti bore to Ruchi twins, Yajna and Dakshina, who afterwards became husband and wife (again a case of a brother marrying his sister) and had twelve sons, the deities called Yamas, in the Manvantara of Swayambhuva."

"The first Manu was Swayambhuva, then came Swarochisha, then Auttami, then Tamasa, then Raivata, then Chakshusha; these six Manus have passed away. The Manu who presides over the seventh Manvantara, which is the present period, is Vaivaswata the son of the sun."

"I will now, enumerate, says the author of the Vishnu Purana, the presiding Gods, Rishis, and sons of the Manu Swarochisha. The deities of this period (or the second Manvantara) were called Paravatas and Tushitas; and the King of the gods was the mighty Vipaschit. The seven Rishis were Urja, Stambha, Prana, Dattoli, Rishabha, Nischara, and Arvarivat. And Chaitra, Kimpurusha, and others were the Manu's sons.

"In the third period, or Manwantara of Auttamin, Susanti was the Indra, the king of the gods, the orders of whom were the Sudhamas, Satyas, Sivas, Pradersanas, and Vasavertis; each of the five orders consisting of twelve divinities. The seven sons of Vasishtha were the seven Rishis; and Aja, Parasu, Divya, and others were the sons of Manu.

"In the period of Tamasa, the fourth Manu, the Surupas, Haris, Satyas, and Sudhis were the classes of Gods, each comprising twenty-seven. Sivi was the Indra, also designated by his performance of a hundred sacrifices (or named Satakratu). The seven Rishis were Jyotirdhama, Prithu, Kavya, Chaitra, Agni, Vanaka and Pivara. The sons of Tamasa were the mighty kings Nara, Khyati, Santhaya, Janujangha and others."

"In the fifth interval (Manvantara) the Manu was Raivata; the Indra was Vibhu, the classes of gods, consisting of fourteen each, were the Amitbhas, Abhutarasas, Vaikunthas, and Sumedhas; the seven Rishis were Hiranyaroma, Vedasri, Urddhabahu, Vedabahu, Sudhaman, Parjanya and Mahamuni; the sons of Raivata were Balabandhu, Susambhavya, Satyaka, and other valiant kings."

"These four Manus, Swarochisha, Auttami, Tamasa, and Raivata, were all descended from Priyavrata, who in consequence of propitiating Vishnu by his devotions, obtained these rules of the Manvantaras for his posterity.

"Chakshusha was the Manu of the sixth period in which the Indra was Manojva; the five classes of Gods were the Adyas,

Prastutas, Bhavyas, Prithugas, and the magnanimous Lekhas eight of each Sumedhas, Virajas, Havishmat, Uttama, Madhu, Abhinaman and Sahishnu were the seven sages; the kings of the earth, the sons of Chaksusha, were the powerful Uru, Puru, Satadhumna and others."

"The Manu of the present seventh Manvantara is the wise lord of obsequies, and illustrious offspring of the sun called Manu Vaivaswata and deities are the Adityas, Vasus and Rudras; their sovereign is Purandara; Vasishtha, Kasyapa, Atri, Jamadagni, Gautama, Viswamitra and Bharadwaja are the seven Rishis; and the nine pious sons of Vaivaswata Manu are the kings of Ikshwaku, Nabhanidishta, Karusha, Prishadhra, and the celebrated Vasumat."

So far the particulars of seven Manvantaras which are given by the Vishnu Purana relate to Manvantaras which had run out at the time when the Vishnu Purana was written. Whether the rule of the Manvantaras was an external one the Brahmins have been silent. But the author of the Vishnu Purana knew that seven more Manvantaras were to come. Below are given the particulars of these seven.

Sanjana, the daughter of Vishwakarman was the wife of the sun, and bore him, three children, the Manu (Vaivaswata), Yama and the goddess Yami (or the Yamuna river). Unable to endure the fervours of her lord, Sanjana gave him Chhaya as his handmaid, and repaired to the forests to practise devout exercises. The sun, supposing Chhaya to be his wife Sanjana, begot by her three other children Sanaischara (Saturn), another Manu (Savarni) and a daughter Tapati (the Tapti river). Chhaya upon one occasion, being offended with Yama, the son of Sanjana, denounced an imprecation upon him, and thereby revealed to Yama and to the sun that she was not in truth Sanjana, the mother of the former. Being further informed by Chhaya that his wife had gone to the wilderness the sun beheld her by the eye of meditation engaged in austerities, in the figure of a mare (in the region of Uttara Kuru). Metamorphosing himself into a horse, he rejoined his wife, and begot three other children, the two Aswins, and Revanta, and then brought Sanjana back to his own dwelling. To diminish his intensity, Vishwakarman placed the luminary on his lathe to grind off some of his effulgence; and in this manner reduced it an eighth; for more than that was inseparable. The parts of the divine Vaishnava splendour, residing in the sun, that were filed off by Viswakarma fell blazing down upon the earth, and the artist constructed of them the discuss of Vishnu, the trident of Shiva, the weapon of the god of wealth, the lance of Kartikeya, and the weapons of the other gods; all these Viswakarman fabricated from the superflous rays of the sun."

"The son of Chhaya, who was called also a Manu was denominated Savarni, from being of the same caste (Savarni) as his elder brother, the Manu Vaivaswata. He presides over the ensuing or eighth Manvantara; the particulars of which and the following, I will now relate. In the period in which Savarni shall be the Manu, the classes of the gods will be Sutapas, Ambitabhas and Mukhyas; twenty-one of each. The seven Rishis will be Diptimat, Gaiava, Rama, Kripa, Drauni; my son Vyasa will be the sixth and the seventh will be Rishyasringa. The Indra will be Bali, the sinless son of Virochana who through the favour of Vishnu is actually sovereign of part of Pataia. The royal progeny of Savarni will be Virajas, Arvarivas, Nirmoha, and others."

"The ninth Manu will be Dakshasavarni. The Paras, Marichigarbhas and Sudharmas will be the three classes of divinities; each consisting of twelve, their powerful chief will be the Indra Adbhuta Savana, Dyutimat, Bhavya, Vasu, Medhatithi, Jyotishaman and Satya, will be the seven Rishis. Dhritketu, Driptiketu, Panchahasta, Nirmaya, Prithusrava, and others will be the sons of the Manu.

"In the tenth Manwantara the Manu will be Brahma-savarni; the gods will be the Sudhamas, Virudhas, and Satasankhyas; the Indra will be the mighty Santi; the Rishis will be Havishaman, Sukriti, Satya, Appammurthi, Nabhaga, Apratimaujas and Satyaketu; and the ten sons of the Manu will be Sukshetra, Uttamaujas, Harishena and others."

"In the eleventh Manwantara the Manu will be Dharma-savarni; the principal classes of gods will be the Vihangamas. Kamagamas, and the Nirmanaratis, each thirty in number; of whom Vrisha will be the Indra; the Rishis will be Nischara, Agnitejas, Vapushaman, Vishnu, Aruni, Havishaman, and Anagha; the kings of the earth, and sons of the Manu, will be Savarga, Sarvadharma, Devanika, and others."

"In the twelfth Manvantara the son of Rudra-Savarni, will be the Manu: Ritudhama will be the Indra; and the Haritas, Lohitas; Sumanasas and Sukramas will be the classes of gods, each comprising fifteen Tapaswi, Sutapas, Tapomurti Taporti, Tapodhriti, Tapodyuti and Tapodhana will be the Rishis; and Devas, Upadeva, Devasreshtha and others will be the manu's sons, and mighty monarchs on the earth."

"In the thirteenth Manvantara the Manu will be Rauchya; the classes of gods, thirty-three in each, will be Sudhamanas, Sudharmans and Sukarmanas, their Indra will be Divaspati;

the Rishis will be Nirmoha, Tatwadersin, Nishprakampa, Nirutsuka, Dhritimat, Avyaya and Sutapas; and Chitrasena, Vichitra, and others will be the kings."

"In the fourteenth Manvantara, Bhautya will be the Manu; Suchi, the Indra; the five classes of gods will be the Chakshushas, the Pavitras, Kanishthas Bhrajiras and Vavriddhas; the seven Rishis will be Agnibahu, Suchi, Sikra, Magadha, Gridhra, Yukta and Ajita; and the sons of the Manu will be Uru, Gabhir, Gabhira, Bradhna and others who will be kings, and will rule over the earth."

Such is the theory of Manvantaras. We now hear of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. The Brahmanic theory was just the opposite of it. It was a theory of the Dictatorship over the Proletariat by the Heavenly fathers.

Be that as it may the question that primarily comes to one's mind is:

How these fourteen Manus who succeeded one another rule the people ? What laws did they make for the governance of the people ? The only place where one can get an answer is the Manusmriti.

Referring to the first chapter of Manusmriti we get the following answers:

Ch. I.1. The great sages approached Manu, who was seated with a collected mind, and, having duly worshipped him spoke as follows:

2. Deign, divine one, do declare to us precisely and in due order the sacred laws of each of the (four chief) castes (Varna) and of the intermediate ones.

3. For thou, O Lord, alone knowest the purport of the rites and knowledge of the Soul taught in this whole ordinance of the Swayambhu (Manu) which is unknowable and unfathomable.

Manu replies to them saying:

5. This universe existed in the shape of darkness unperceived, destitute of distinctive marks, unattainable by reasoning, unknowable, wholly immersed as it were in deep sleep.

8. Swayambhu Manu desiring to produce beings of many kinds from his own body, first with a thought created the waters and placed his seed in them.

9. That (Seed) became a golden egg, in brilliancy equal to the sun; in that Egg he himself was born as Brahman, the progenitor of the whole world.

34. Then, I, desiring to produce created beings performed very difficult austerities and thereby called into existence ten great sages, lords of created beings.

35. Marichi, Atri, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Prachetas, Vashishta, Bhrigu and Narada.

58. But he having composed these Institutes of the sacred law, himself taught them, according to rule, to me alone in the beginning: next I taught them to Marichi and the other sages.

59. Bhrigu will fully recite to you these Institutes; for that sage learned the whole in its entirety from me.

From this it appears that the only Manu who made laws was the Swayambhu Manu. According to Vishnu Purana, each Manvantara had its own Manu. Why did they not make laws for their own Manvantara. Or was it the laws made by Swayambhu Manu were to be Eternal. If so, why did the Brahmins have separate Manvantara.

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