

# SAMVIT



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[ Knowledge that leads to enlightenment ]



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# SAMVIT

स नो बुद्ध्या शुभया संयुतवतु ।

MAY He endow us with good thoughts.

*Shvetashvatara Upanishad III 4*

## Universal Prayers

य आत्मदा बलदा यस्य विश्व उपासते प्रशिषं यस्य देवाः ।

यस्य छायामृतं यस्य मृत्युः कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥

He who is the giver of self-knowledge and strength, whom the world worships, whose command all deities obey, whose shelter is immortality, whose shadow is death, He it is to whom we offer our prayers.

*Rig Veda X.cxxi.2.*

• • •  
अम्बकं यजामहे सुगन्धिं पुष्टिवधनम् ।

उर्वारुकमिव बन्धनान्मृत्योर्मुक्षीय मामृतात् ॥

We worship the Lord of Transcendental Vision, emitting fragrance, the giver of prosperity. May I be free from the bonds of death like a ripe cucumber (which separates itself from the binding stalk). May I never be deprived of immortality.

*Shukla Yajur Veda III.60.*



## REFLECTIONS

### The Guide-line

WHEN SWAMI Vivekananda first thought of founding a spiritual Order, his idea was twofold. First, to declare to humanity the boundless, all-embracing idea of universality as lived and preached by Sri Ramakrishna, 'the reformed and remodelled manifestation of all the past great epoch-makers in religion'. Secondly, to utilize the Order as a lever to lift man from the quagmire of *samsara* into which he had fallen. In order to give this form to his monastic organization, he broke the age-old traditions of Indian monasticism.

Traditionally, the *sannyasin* desiring *moksha* cut himself off from the world, stood aloof from the sorrows of the world and moved away from them. He became a recluse; he aspired only to remain immersed in the bliss of God. But the new guide-line that Swamiji gave was—'For the sake of the liberation of the self and for the good of the world.' (आत्मनो मोक्षार्थं जगद्धिताय च). His monastic brother-disciples heard for the first time that the central theme of the *sannyasin's* life should be his humanity, his concern with human suffering. Apparently it was a new idea to his brother-disciples who were then deeply involved in the traditional values of spiritually secluded lives. As it is said :

संसारमेव निःसारं दृष्ट्वा सारदिदृक्षया ।

प्रव्रजन्त्यकृतोद्वाहाः परं वैराग्यमाश्रिताः ॥<sup>1</sup>

'Seeing the worldly life to be without any essence, and desirous of seeing the essence or the Ultimate, without being entangled in marriage, they take to *sannyasa*, renunciation being their sole refuge.'

Swamiji's hope was to see the strong points of this orthodox view, reinforced by the strong points of the modern age. His brother-disciple, Yogananda, could not accept his ideas immediately. He frankly asked him :

'You are doing these things with Western methods. Do you mean to say Sri Ramakrishna left us any such instructions?'

Swamiji replied :

‘Well, how do you know that all this is not on Sri Ramakrishna’s lines? He had an infinite breadth of feeling; and you dare to shut him up within your own limited views of life! I will break down these limits and scatter broadcast over the earth his boundless inspiration.’

‘You think you understand Sri Ramakrishna better than myself! You think Jnana is dry knowledge to be attained by a desert path, killing out the tenderest faculties of the heart. Your Bhakti is sentimental nonsense which makes one impotent. . . . Who cares for your Bhakti and Mukti? Who cares what the scriptures say? I will go to hell cheerfully a thousand times, if I can rouse my countrymen, immersed in Tamas, and make them stand on their own feet and be Men, inspired with the spirit of Karma Yoga.’

On another occasion he said :

‘He alone is a child of Sri Ramakrishna who is moved to pity for all creatures and exerts himself for them even at the risk of incurring personal damnation. . . . Whoever, at this great spiritual juncture, will stand up with a courageous heart and go on spreading from door to door, from village to village, his message, is alone my brother, and a son of His.’

The greatest triumph of Swamiji was this—the conversion of the great spiritual giants, his brother-disciples, into accepting his lead, his new guide-line. What a spiritual force it added to Swamiji’s work!

#### The Origin of This Idea

It was Sri Ramakrishna’s teachings that set this ideal of service through renunciation before Swamiji. Long before, in 1884, Sri Ramakrishna was one day seated with devotees in his room at Dakshineswar. Swamiji was also present. Sri Ramakrishna was discussing the different tenets of Vaishnavism—the taste for God’s name, compassion to all beings, and worship of the Vaishnavas. No sooner had he uttered the words, ‘compassion for all beings’ than he went into *samadhi*. Regaining partial consciousness he said, ‘Talk of compassion for beings? Will you bestow compassion on beings? You wretch, who are you to bestow it? No, no; not compassion to *jivas* but *service* to them as Shiva.’

These words went unnoticed by the others, but the light of their hidden import fell on Swamiji. He went out of the room and in



ecstasy told a brother-disciple :

'Ah! What a wonderful light have I got today from the Master's words! In synthesizing the Vedantic knowledge, which was generally regarded as dry, austere and even cruel, with sweet devotion to the Lord, what a new mellowed means of experiencing the Truth has he revealed today! . . . From what the Master in Bhavasamadhi said today, it is gathered that the Vedanta of the forest can be brought to human habitation and that it can be applied to the work-a-day world. . . . As embodied beings can never rest for a moment without work, it goes without saying that it is only the work of the service of *jivas* as Shiva that should be performed and action done in that spirit will enable them to reach the Goal sooner than otherwise. If the divine Lord ever grants me an opportunity, I'll proclaim everywhere in the world this wonderful truth I have heard today. I will preach this truth to the learned and the ignorant, to the rich and the poor . . .'

God did give him the opportunity, and he satisfied his desire by setting up machinery—in the form of this spiritual Order—to bring noble ideas to the door of everyone.

#### Renunciation and Service

Swamiji epitomized his ideal in two words—renunciation and service. Again and again he said :

'The national ideals of India are renunciation and service. Intensify her in those channels and the rest will take care of itself.'

Viewing religious life as a whole, Swamiji did not make a distinction between the monastic and lay members of the Order. With equal sternness he exhorted both the monastic and the lay disciples. To the monastics he said :

'The *Sannyasin* is born into this world to lay down his life for others, to stop the bitter cries of men, to wipe the tears of the widow, to bring peace to the soul of the bereaved mother, to equip the ignorant masses for the struggle for existence, to accomplish the secular and spiritual well-being of all through the diffusion of spiritual teachings and to arouse the sleeping lion of Brahman in all by throwing in the light of knowledge.

'Our life is *आत्मनो मोक्षार्थं जगद्धिताय च*—(for the liberation of the self and the welfare of the world)—so what are you sitting idle for? Arise, awake; wake yourselves up and awaken others. Achieve the consummation of human life before you pass away—"Arise, awake

and stop not till the goal is reached!''

To the lay disciples he said :

'Go, all of you, wherever there is an outbreak of plague or famine, or wherever the people are in distress, and mitigate their suffering. How many small insects like you and me are born and die in the attempt—what of that? Die you must, but then it is better to have a great ideal to die for. Die with a great ideal in life.'

Swamiji did not say that liberation was higher than service, nor did he minimize the importance of liberation. To him both were identical. The essence of service was renunciation; and service well done led to liberation. He said that if this was understood, if the dharma of service was practised in the real spirit, then—मुक्तिः करफलायते—liberation would come as a fruit in the very palm of one's hand.

#### References

1. Vishveshvara Sarasvati, *Yatidharma-Sangraha* (Pune 1928), 4.

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*From highest Brahman to the yonder worm,  
And to the very minutest atom,  
Everywhere is the same God, the All-Love;  
Friend, offer mind, soul, body, at their feet.  
These are His manifold forms before thee,  
Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God?  
Who loves all beings, without distinction,  
He indeed is worshipping best his God.*

Swami Vivekananda



रामकृष्णं भजाम्यहम्  
देवकी मेनन

त्रेतायुगे दशरथात्मजरामचन्द्रः  
जातोऽस्यनन्तरयुगे वसुदेवपुत्रः ।  
अस्मिन्युगे तु भगवान् कलिना गृहीते  
त्वं धर्मरक्षणपरः क्षुदिरामसूनुः ॥

भागीरथीलालितपञ्चवट्याम्  
पद्मासनस्थं परमं पवित्रम् ।  
विश्वेश्वरीध्याननिमग्नचित्तम्  
सच्चित्सुखाभं गुरुमाश्रयेऽहम् ॥

संसारतापशमने सुखदः पयोदः  
भक्तेष्टदानसमये मुरकल्पशाखी ।  
कारुण्यसिन्धुरसि बन्धुरबान्धवानाम्  
भक्त्या नमामि भगवन् भवदंघ्रिपद्मे ॥

पापमादाय दुष्टानां मुक्तास्ते येन किल्बिषात्  
पुण्यं स्वतपसो दत्त्वा जीवसेवापरायणम् ।  
अहेतुककृपाम्बोधिं सर्वधर्मस्वरूपिणम्  
अवतारवरिष्ठं तं रामकृष्णं भजाम्यहम् ॥

# **I Worship Ramakrishna**

**DEVAKI MENON\***

You were Rama, Dasharatha's son in Treta  
Then, as Krishna, son of Vasudeva, in Dvapara,  
Today, in the Age of Kali,† you are born to Khudiram,  
All for the sake of saving Dharmal  
Truth, Consciousness and Bliss,  
Upon whom shed their lustre,  
In him of Supreme purity, I take refuge!

Near the sacred trees of Panchavati  
Fed by the flowing river Ganga,  
He who sits in the lotus posture, lost in Mother's thought,  
In him I take refuge!

Master! You are the cooling cloud  
That quenches the anguished earth's thirst,  
Kalpavriksha‡ to your eager devotees,  
Reservoir of kindness,  
I bow before you.

You wiped their sins and freed them,  
You gave up accumulated virtue and saved them,  
You who bestows compassion without cause,  
You, Ramakrishna! in whom all religions meet,  
It is *You* whom I worship.

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\* Translated by Kamala Ratnam

† Satya or Krita, Treta, Dvapara and Kali are divisions of the time-cycle according to Hindu mythology. The first three have already elapsed, while Kali is that in which we live.

‡ A wish-fulfilling tree in Hindu mythology.



## A Glimpse of Advaita through Sri Ramakrishna's Eyes

A. G. KRISHNA WARRIER

A FAITHFUL study of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings is bound to demonstrate that Advaita has acquired altogether fresh and inspiring dimensions through them. Life- and world-negation had been too long deemed to be the logical implication of classical Advaita as interpreted by Shankara in his commentaries on 'the triple texts', namely, the Upanishads, the *Brahma-Sutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Advaitic dialecticians like Sureshvara, Prakashatman, and Madhusudana Sarasvati had conferred on it the characteristics of an intellectual exercise, making it a novel kind of 'modification which is merely a verbal distinction, a name'\* and driving its followers to a precipitate flight from life into the seclusion of monasteries and forests. It came to lose touch with human life and its vexing problems and ceased to minister to the needs of the common man and guide him in his groping search for regeneration, solace and security. What Ramakrishna achieved through his *sadhana*, realizations and ministrations is a total transformation of this desolate picture; he created a new way of life that gave it a spiritual orientation and goal—a way open to all sincere seekers alike.

Many are the spiritual affirmations of Ramakrishna which have the authenticity and authority of revelations or Shrutis because they embody his original experiences of God in all His phases. Veritably echoing the ancient claim, 'I know the mighty Spirit',† Ramakrishna affirms: 'There is something special here. God talked to me. It was not merely His vision. Yes, He talked to me . . .'<sup>1</sup> This entire passage of self-certifying veracity, which by no means stands alone in the corpus of his utterances, reveals a living source of light on the nature of God.‡ Whereas 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'<sup>2</sup> has been sought to be inculcated against a background of His total transcendence and man's inherent sinfulness, Ramakrishna seeks to discover the golden links of trust, affection and intimacy between

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\* वाचार्म्भणं विकारो नामधेयम् । *Chandogya*, VI. 1. 4.

† वेदाहमेतं पुरुषं महान्तम् । *Shvetashvatara*, III. 8.

‡ Contrast with St. John, 1.18, 'No man has seen God at any time.'

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God and man. To the remark that God is compassionate as he gives us food and takes care of us, Ramakrishna's 'priceless' response is : 'Why should that surprise you? God is the Father of us all. Who will look after the child if the father doesn't?'<sup>3</sup> And precisely because of this natural intimacy between God and man, there is no fear of antagonizing Him, and driving Him to primitive measures of eternal damnation or annihilation in the quenchless fires of hell.

'Suppose a man has several sons. The older boys address him distinctly as "Baba" or "Papa", but the babies can at best call him "Ba" or "Pa". Now, will the father be angry with those who address him in this indistinct way? The father knows that they too are calling him, only they cannot pronounce his name well. All children are the same to the father. Likewise, the devotees call on God alone.'<sup>4</sup> In these simple, homely words is revealed for the first time an aspect of God worthy of the infinite Being, at once powerful and loving. They make all fanaticism ridiculous, and make all approaches to God—all religions—equally worthy of respect. Not tolerance, but acceptance of all religions is what follows from a sincere recognition of the truth that informs Ramakrishna's words.\*

The Advaitic core and basis of Ramakrishna's spiritual experiences and teachings are dramatically revealed in his insistence that God alone is real. In the course of a conversation with Keshab, he asked : 'Why do they (the Brahmos) dwell so much upon the glory of God's works? "O Lord! Thou hast made the sun, the moon and the stars!"† Many are they that are charmed with the beauty of the garden—the glorious flowers and sweetest odours—few seek the Lord of the garden! Which is the greater of the two—the garden or its Lord? Verily the garden is unreal so long as Death stalks in our midst; but the Lord of the garden is the one Reality.'<sup>5</sup> This sole Reality of God, as the Upanishads tirelessly emphasize, consists in being nothing but *chaitanya* or contentless Consciousness. *Vide* : 'She showed me that everything was full of Consciousness. The Image was Consciousness,

\* cf. Dr. Toynbee in his foreword to Swami Ghanananda's *Sri Ramakrishna and His Unique Message* : 'Yet even the strongest and most respectable utilitarian motive is only a secondary reason for taking Ramakrishna's and Gandhi's and Ashoka's teaching to heart and acting on it. The primary reason is that this teaching is right and is right because it flows from a true vision of spiritual reality.'

† cf. पाराममस्य पश्यन्ति न तं पश्यति कश्चन । *Brihadaranyaka*, IV. iii. 14.



the altar was Consciousness, the water-vessels were Consciousness, the door-sill was Consciousness, the marble floor was Consciousness—all was Consciousness.\* Of course, this Consciousness is indistinguishable from Bliss in Ramakrishna's experience and elucidates Upanishadic utterances like 'Truth, Knowledge, Infinitude is Brahman',\* 'Experiential Knowledge, Bliss is Brahman'.† 'I found everything inside the room soaked, as it were, in Bliss—the Bliss of Satchidananda.'<sup>7</sup>

Here is the marrow of Ramakrishna's Advaitic stance : the sole, non-dual Reality is God. He has become the world, animate and inanimate. When the ego, the principle of individuation, disappears or is effaced by God, what remains—the Reality in Itself—cannot be expressed in words.‡ In Ramakrishna's characteristic style the matter may be put thus : 'What Brahman is cannot be described. All things in the world—the Vedas, the Puranas, the Tantras, the six systems of philosophy—have been defiled, like food that has been touched by the tongue. . . . Only one thing has not been defiled in this way, and that is Brahman. No one has ever been able to say what Brahman is.'<sup>8</sup>

Why is Reality (Brahman or God) beyond the range of words and thought? Because words are designed to express what is objectively experienced and Brahman—'I', writ large—refuses to be objectified. As Shankara has put it : 'The cleverest acrobat cannot mount on his own shoulders.'<sup>9</sup> As Yajnavalkya asks : 'Whereby would one know the knower?'§ Words and thoughts are related to empirical categories like substances, qualities, actions, relations, and so on. Where these do not exist—where there is no objective content—discursive thought must cease and with such thought, words.

That contentless Consciousness or God is essentially identical with the real 'I' follows from the fact that it does not admit of pluralization. 'I' has no plural. 'We', the false plural of 'I', does not mean 'I' and 'I' unlike the plural expressions for terms denoting objects in space-time. 'Books' means 'book' and 'book', while 'we' does not

\* सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म । *Taittiriya*, II. 1.

† विज्ञानमानन्दं ब्रह्म । *Brihadaranyaka*, III. ix. 28.

‡ यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते अप्राप्य मनसा सह । *Taittiriya*, II. 9.  
नेति नेति । *Brihadaranyaka*, II. iii. 6.

§ विज्ञातारं धरे केन विज्ञानीयात् । *Ibid.*, IV. v. 15.



mean 'I' and 'I', but 'I' and 'you' or 'I' and 'he', because the content of 'I'—pure Consciousness—is timeless and spaceless; it is the same as the essence of God.\*

Ramakrishna's answer to the question how the transition from Brahman to the objective manifold is effected reveals a vital aspect of his dynamic Advaita. God or Brahman has His power, Shakti, known in Advaita as Maya, consisting of the three constituents *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* and referred to by Ramakrishna as Kali, the Power of the Absolute. 'One cannot think of Brahman without Shakti or of Shakti without Brahman.' The Primordial Power is ever at play. She is creating, preserving, and destroying in play, as it were. This Power is called Kali. Kali is verily Brahman, and Brahman is verily Kali.<sup>10</sup> This concept of the identity of Shakti and Brahman is as integral to Ramakrishna's vision of Reality as it is to Shankara's.

Commenting on the *Brahma-Sutras*, Shankara affirms: 'The (postulated) causal power is neither different from the cause nor imaginary; it is the very essence of the cause and the effect is the very essence of the power.'<sup>†</sup> In these pregnant terms Shankara is affirming the position stated above as Ramakrishna's own. But it has to be noted that the view of the identity of Power and that which has power is contingent on the perception of the two terms, cause and effect.<sup>11</sup> Maya is postulated to account for the observed facts of movements towards God and liberation on the part of some *jivas* and movements in bondage away from Him. Ramakrishna refers to these movements as *vidyamaya*, the illusion of knowledge, and *avidyamaya*, the illusion of ignorance. Through the help of the former are cultivated virtues like the taste for holy company, knowledge, devotion, love and renunciation, whereas the latter promotes life on the sense plane which makes one forget God. Why this contrariety of forces in what constitutes God's own Shakti? That is His play, Ramakrishna says. The glory of light cannot be appreciated without darkness. Happiness has no sense without misery. Knowledge of good is possible only through the knowledge of evil. 'Maya in its aspects of *vidya* and *avidya* may be likened to the skin of the mango'<sup>12</sup> without which there will be no ripening and no sweetness of the fruit.

Time and again, Ramakrishna affirms the Advaitic doctrine that

\* cf. 'Never forget the glory of human nature! We are the greatest God... Christs and Buddhas are but waves in the boundless ocean which I am.'—Vivekananda.

† शक्तिश्च कारणस्य . . . कल्पमाना नान्याऽस्ती वा . . . तस्मात्कारणस्यात्मभूता शक्तिः शक्तेश्चात्मभूतं कार्यम् । *Brahma-Sutra-Bhashya*, II. i. 18.



the world is the *lila* of God\*—a game entailing joy and sorrow, virtue and vice, and so on.

'Out of a hundred thousand kites,  
At best but one or two break free;  
And Thou dost laugh and clap Thy hands,  
O Mother, watching them.'

But this play of God is man's death! Ramakrishna bids man discover who he *really* is. He is emphatic that God alone has become all this.† 'As the snake I bite, and as the charmer I cure.'<sup>13</sup> *Sadhana* in its threefold form of *karma*, *bhakti* and *jnana* is the process inspired, guided and led to fruition by God as immanent and transcendent.‡ Both Ramakrishna and Shankara are equally emphatic that only through the grace of God may the *sadhaka* attain the goal.§ The human teacher, to the extent he is helpful, is but a representative of God, the sole and real Teacher.\*\*

Advaitic *sadhana* or spiritual practice, of course, presupposes on the part of the earnest seeker after God, or perfection, what is called the fourfold equipment†† that constitutes eligibility or *adhikara*. Ramakrishna agrees that in this age of Kali most people will find it hard to acquire it. But he has a disarmingly simple solution and rationale for it. God has the nature of a child; let the seeker after Him be also child-like.<sup>14</sup> The guileless child knows nothing but his mother. Weep for God, who is at once mother and father, with earnest love. What keeps the child away from God is his preoccupation with cheap toys—*kamini-kanchana*—lust, greed, anger.‡‡ Fling these

\* cf. लोकवत्तु लीलार्कवत्यम् 'But (Brahman's creative activity) is mere sport, such as we see in ordinary life.' *Brahma-Sutra-Bhashya*, II. i. 33.

† cf. *Brahma-Sutra-Bhashya* II. i. 18. 'Thus like an actor, the primordial Cause alone, in the guise of all effects including the very last, becomes the basis of all empirical usages.' cf. also *Gaudapada Karika*, II. 12.

‡ cf. *Brihadaranyaka*, I. iii. 28, 'From the unreal lead me to the Real, from darkness lead me to light, from death lead me to Immortality.'

§ *Brahma-Sutra-Bhashya*, II. iii. 41. 'But from the highest (Lord) there result bondage and release because Revelation declares it. 'We must therefore assume that final release also is effected through knowledge caused by the grace of the Lord.' *ibid.*, III. ii. 5, 'But by meditation on the highest (Lord) that which is hidden (the equality of the Lord and Jiva) becomes manifest, for from Him are Jivas' bondage and liberation.'

\*\* cf. *Shvetashvatara*, VI. 23.

†† साधनचतुष्टयसम्पत्तिः । cf. *Brahma-Sutra-Bhashya*, I. i. 1.

‡‡ cf. *Bhagavad Gita*, XVI. 21.



away, not in words only but in action, so that one is led from the unreal to the real, darkness to light and death to immortality.<sup>15</sup> Serve God in man as a cure for indolence, vanity, and spiritual blindness.\* Passion for truth gets attested through passion for self-less and dedicated service. Thence is born fitness for God's grace which alone confers the crown of spiritual success. This crown may be the experiential knowledge of the Absolute or Brahman, beyond words and thought; or it may be perpetual association with the God of love—'the eating of sugar rather than becoming it'.

How are we to envisage and reconcile these bewildering possibilities? Analogies meant to clear up this paradox, this riddle, set the seal on Ramakrishna's unique status as a teacher of life-affirming Advaita. 'Do you know what I mean? Think of Brahman, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, as a shoreless ocean. Through the cooling influence, as it were, of the *bhakta's* love, the water has frozen at places into blocks of ice. In other words, God now and then assumes various forms for His lovers and reveals Himself to them as a Person. But with the rising of the sun of Knowledge, the blocks of ice melt. Then one doesn't feel any more that God is a Person, nor does one see God's forms. What He is cannot be described. Who will describe Him? He who would do so disappears. He cannot find his 'I' any more.'<sup>16</sup> Who can describe what one feels in one's pure Consciousness about Brahman? The salt doll seeking to measure the ocean's depth is dissolved. What the Upanishads say and what Ramakrishna has endorsed about Brahman being unpolluted by words turns out to be literally true.

Rightly, therefore, has Romain Rolland claimed : 'The angelic Master had instinctively resolved all the dissonances of life into a Mozartian harmony, as rich and sweet as the Music of the Spheres.'<sup>17</sup> In the words of Vivekananda the fact is : 'He came, the living spirit of the Upanishads, the accomplishment of Indian sages, the sage for the present day.'<sup>18</sup>

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\* cf. Ramakrishna's comment on the exhortation to be kind to all creatures : 'Kind? Are you not ashamed, insignificant insect? Who are you to show mercy? No, no; serve them as if they were Shiva.' Vivekananda interpreted these words in the light of the doctrine of service which reconciled the love of God with beneficent activity.

## References

1. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras 1974), 815.
2. Psalms III : 10.
3. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, op. cit., 425.
4. *ibid.*, 39.
5. *The Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta 1937), No. 396.
6. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, op. cit., 290.
7. *ibid.*, 291.
8. *ibid.*, 28.
9. *Brahma-Sutra-Bhashya*, III. iii. 50.
10. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, op. cit., 64.
11. अविद्याकल्पिते नामरूपे 'name and forms' (causes and effects) are postulated by nescience, *Brahma-Sutra-Bhashya*, II. i. 14.
12. cf. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, op. cit., 151.
13. *ibid.*, 389, *passim*.
14. *ibid.*, 108; cf. *Brihadaranyaka*, III. v. 1, 'Therefore let a Brahmana become disgusted with learning and desire to live as a child.'
15. *Brihadaranyaka*, I. iii. 28, cf. The parable of the wood-cutter, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, op. cit., 35.
16. *ibid.*, 78.
17. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel* (Calcutta 1931), 326.
18. *ibid.*, 327.

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*The Self is not attained through discourses, nor through intellectuality, nor through much learning. It is gained only by him who longs for It with his whole heart. For to such a one the Self reveals its own nature.*

Mundaka Upanishad



## Lalla-ded, a Mystical Genius

B. N. PARIMOO

THAT LALLA-DED was a unique mystical genius is amply borne out by tradition, history and, more than anything else, the body of her verse, called, in Kashmiri, *Lalla-vakh*. There cannot be a greater and more reliable testimony to the fact that she had experienced the Universal Being and attained cosmic consciousness than that of Sheikh Nur-ud-Din (Vali), her younger contemporary and himself a saint of a high order, who sang in one of his long prayers :

'Thou hast been gracious, O God, to Lalla of Padmanpore,  
Who drank nectar in long draughts.  
She has been a cherished Avatar for us too.  
May thou, Lord, bestow a boon like that upon me!'

The Sheikh, popularly called Nunda-ryosh, hails her as an incarnation of God and a close study of her verse sets the seal on this assertion. It is not for nothing that her memory remains as fresh in our minds today as ever. When we study her *vakyas* or quatrains in a particular order,† we are convinced that she sang of the spiritual evolution, or flowering, of her soul. The passage of more than six hundred years has not dimmed the prismatic glow of her verse.

It is generally agreed that Lalla-ded was born in the first quarter of the fourteenth century, and brought up at Sempore, a village near Pampore or Padmanpore, in the house of a Kashmiri Pandit. Little is known about her parents and less about how she spent her childhood. However, tradition has it that she was married at a very early age, as was the custom in those days, and as it continues to prevail to this day in some parts of the country. Her new home also was the house of a Kashmiri pandit.

That Lalla-ded had a hard time at her in-laws' has become proverbial. Her mother-in-law tortured her in various ways and gave her no respite. She even went to the extent of starving her. Once, a round stone was placed in her bowl and the stone was covered with

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\* *Tas Padmanporachi Lalle, Yemi gale amrit piva*  
*So sani ti avtar lole, Tyuthuy me var dita diva.*

† For a detailed discussion of Lalla-vakhs, *The Ascent of Self* by the writer may be consulted.

cooked rice to give it the semblance of a big heap of food. This story has become a folk-tale which has been preserved in the *vakh* :

'Whether they kill a large ram or a small one,  
Lalla will always have the round stone as her fare.\*

#### Despair and Hope

However, Lalla's unfortunate domestic life does not seem to have deflected the needle of the compass of her will, which was pointed to the spiritual path. From what we learn from the Indian scriptures, particularly the *Bhagavad-Gita*, we can infer that the momentum of her past lives in the form of *samskaras* and *vasanas* led her on, and domestic antagonism was not an insurmountable hurdle in her way. Besides, she may have been encouraged to proceed with her penance and prayers by her family guru, Siddha Srikantha, a yogi of perfect attainment.

Nevertheless, we have evidence from her *vakhs* that Lalla-ded had moments of stark despair, not so much because her social environment was uncongenial as because she felt that the sands of time were running out fast and her precious human life was going to waste. Her frustration is evident from the following *vakh* :

'I am towing the boat (of my life) across the ocean  
with an unspun thread.  
May my Lord ferry me across!  
(My efforts are going in vain) as water is absorbed  
in an unbaked earthen pot.  
How I long to go back home!†

Lalla-ded had an all-consuming desire to attain God, the eternal home of the yogi. But the *vakh* indicates that her efforts were not as yet yielding any tangible results. She does not seem to have made any headway on the path. Her moments of self-examination gnawed at her vitals. Another *vakh* runs like this :

'I came by the straight path, but do not return by the same.  
In the middle of the embankment, I find the day coming to a close!  
Searching my pocket, I find not a penny there!  
Alas! What shall I pay the ferryman to carry me across?‡

\* *Hond maran ya kath, Lalli nilavath tsali na zanh!*

† *Ami pane sodaras navi chhes laman, Kati bozi Dai myon meti diyi tar  
Amen taken poni zan shaman, Dil chhum braman gara gatshaha.*

‡ *Ayas vate gayas na vate, Suman sothimanz lusum doh.  
Chandas vuchhum to har na ate, Navi-tiras dima kyah hoh.*



Human life being a means to an end, Lalla-ded seems to have become anxious that she was no nearer her goal. Her mind seems to be in the doldrums at this stage of her spiritual evolution. Perhaps the ferryman is the preceptor who demands payment, not in terms of temporal currency but in terms of the aspirant's own potential to receive guidance.

### The Guru and the *Mantra*

For a sincere devotee, the dark clouds of despair are surely lifted at last, provided the aspirant prays fervently for God's grace. 'At the end of many births the man of wisdom takes refuge in Me, realizing that Vasudeva is all. Rare, indeed, is that great soul!'<sup>\*</sup> And Lalla-ded was doubtless a rare soul. The following *vakh* points to her complete surrender to God's will :

'O fickle mind, do not harbour fears;  
The Beginningless, Himself, worries for you.  
How can you know when He will satisfy your (spiritual) hunger?  
Do wait only for His divine call to ferry you across'†

When God's grace (*anugraha*), is appealed for, He does not leave the seeker in the lurch. Assessing her ardent desire and spiritual progress, her guru did come forward to lead her to the bliss of salvation. He transmitted the spiritual initiation, (*shakti-pat*), through the Word, and Lalla-ded acknowledges the fact with joy and gratitude.

'The guru gave me only one Word :  
He asked me to enter into "myself" from the outer world.  
The guru's precept came as God's word!  
That is why I started dancing nudel'‡

The guru's word brought a spiritual metamorphosis in her. Perhaps she had been carrying on her penance and prayers and religious ritual or some esoteric practices secretly. The guru's transmission of *shakti* worked as a mystical talisman. Joy welled up in her mind and her fear of public exposure was cast to the winds. '*Nangay natsun*' (dancing nude) need not be taken literally.

\* *Bhagavad-Gita*. VII. 9.

† *Tsal tseta vondas bayi mo bar, Chon tsinth karan pana Anad  
Tse kava zananiy khyod hari kar, Kival tasunduy taruk nad.*

‡ *Goran vonanam kunuy vatsun, Nebra dopanam andaray atsun  
Suy gav Lali me vakh ta vatsun, Tavay me hyotum nangay natsun.*



In the Gospel of St. John we read : 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' In her guru's words, Lalla-ded found the key to the mysteries of spirituality, and hard practice ensued. She declared with conviction that *Om kara*, the *Bija-mantra*, works as the Open Sesame to the gate of the Elysian treasures of spiritual recognition and bliss. She says :

'One who fixes his mind upon *Om kara* at the navel,  
With retained breath, makes a bridge right up to the *Brahmanda*.  
To one who repeats only that *mantra*,  
A thousand other *mantras* are of no use.'\*

### Enlightenment

How long she carried on the practice, nobody can tell. But she does tell us how she functioned on the esoteric plane. She says :

'Closing fast the doors and windows of the house of my body,  
I caught hold of the thief, *Prana*, and barred him in.  
Tying him hand and foot inside the closet of my heart,  
I lashed him hard with the whip of *Om*.'†

In this *vakh*, the discipline of yogic practice has been described with graphic imagery and without any reserve. The *prana*, subtle life-force or the *elan vital* of the universe, was caught in the chamber of her heart. The apertures of the body, the sources of sense perception, were closed fast. And then the recalcitrant *prana* was broken-in, like a chariot-horse, with the repetition of the *mantra*, *Om*. *Kumbhaka* or the regulation and control of breath, was another aspect of her spiritual practice. This concentration on *Om kara* at the *nabhi-padma*, the navel-lotus, in a state of breath control, under the constant and vigilant guidance of her guru, made Lalla-ded find her Self, the resplendent Lamp within. She says :

'For a moment I suppressed the bellows of respiration;  
lo and behold!  
The lamp within blazed up and I recognized my Self.  
The light within sparkled out,  
And in the enveloping darkness I clutched at It I'‡

\* *Akuy Omkar yus nabi dare, Kumbay brahmandas sum gare  
Akh suy matra tsetas kare, Tas sas mantra kyah kare.*

† *Dihachi lari dari bar troparim, Prana-tsur rotum ta dyutamas dam  
Hradayichi kuthari andar gondum, Omaki chobuka tulimas bam.*

‡ *Damah dam kormas damanhale, Prazalyom daph ta naneyam zath  
Andaryum prakash nebar tshotum, Gati rotum ta karmas thaph.*

The direct apprehension of Self was achieved. She became conscious of the nature of the Self. But Lalla-ded had to go many miles yet to her goal, to merge her individuality with the Universal Self, the Transcendental Being. That was the acme of yoga which she yearned for. There is evidence in her *vakhs* that she carried on her spiritual practice and ultimately succeeded in attaining bliss. She says :

'By constant practice, the manifest being was dissolved (in the transcendental).

The qualified being merged with the *Akasha* (the unqualified).

The void melted away and the Pure Being remained.

That is the lesson, O learned man!'

This is an unequivocal assertion of the perfection of yoga, in which the duality between the *Purusha* and *Prakriti* melts away. The immanent and the transcendental are recognized and experienced as one homogeneous whole. It is not a region of pure knowledge only, but one of ineffable experience which only yogis can explain, if at all it can be explained. The ascent of spiritual effort had culminated in a supramental state of consciousness. The experience of non-duality, the Advaita, or monism, in which all the attributes of Being disappear and the *That* of the Upanishadic teaching is realized, was what Lalla-yogeshwari had attained. She says :

'(In such a state) word, thought, *kula* (*muladhara*), *akula* (*sahasrara*) cease to exist.

Neither silence nor yogic postures have any relevance there;

The consciousness of Shiva and Shakti as separate conceptions does not remain there.

What remains is *That*. This is the lesson.'

Lalla-ded had ferried across the ocean of existence; she had become a *jivan-mukta*, a truly emancipated soul.

### Her Teachings

Over the centuries, Lalla-ded has remained an open book of mystical knowledge and positive guidance for aspirants. Her teaching is simple and clear. The greatest stress is laid on the intense desire

\* *Abyasi sva-vikas layi vothu, Gaganas svagun myul samitsratah  
Shuny gol anamay motu, Yohoy vopadish chhuy bata.*

† *Vakh, manas, kval, akval na ate, Tshvapi, Mudri ati na pravish  
Razan Shiv—Shakt na ate, Motiyay kunh to suy vopadish.*



of the aspirant, and on his will to attain spiritual knowledge and exalted experience. If the aspirant evinces that, his salvation is assured. No half-hearted efforts and dabbling are of help here.

'Spontaneous realization of God does not need self-control and continence so much as the self-consuming desire to attain, which opens the gates of release.'\*

A few points of her teaching may be noted. On the moral plane, the individual aspirant must rise above the vices of greed, lust, anger, and pride. These are the waylayers on the spiritual path. One should not think this to be a difficult thing to do. It is not necessary to leave one's hearth and home in search of God. 'He is nearer to you than your jugular vein', as the Quran says. On this point, Lalla-ded says :

'Do not think it hard to subdue the demon of greed  
Or to remember the Lord spontaneously.  
He is close to you; try not to seek Him far away.  
The void dissolved in the Void!†

There is no end to Lalla-ded's exhorting the aspirant to control the steed of the mind which roams away in the twinkling of an eye. She does not advocate fasting nor does she see much sense in remaining nude or over-clothed or wearing sackcloth as a sign of extreme renunciation. Food and clothing are meant to keep the body fit. But the greatest lesson of all is her categorical stress on developing the state of consciousness in which 'duality' is left behind. She says :

'He who recognizes another and himself as equals,  
Who deems the day (of joy) and the night (of sorrow) alike,  
Whose mind has become free from duality,  
Will surely see the Lord, the Chief of gods.‡

When we read the *vakyas* of Lalla-ded in depth, we are spiritually raised to a sublime plane of thought where the petty differences between man and man on the basis of caste, creed and colour disappear, the walls of discrimination tumble down, and where bigotry and prejudice have no scope.

\* *Sahazas sham ta dam no gatshe, Yatshi pravakh mukti dvar.*

† *Lub marun, sahas vetsarun, Drog zanun artsun trav  
Nishi chhuy tay dur mo garun, Shunes shunyah milith gav,*

‡ *Par tay pan yemi som mon, Yemi hyuh mon den kyoho rath  
Yemisay advai man sanpun, Tamiy dyunthuy Sura-Gurunath.*



# Samvit

ROMA CHAUDHURI

SAMVIT IS apparently only a simple, single, small word, but really it contains within itself the very core of Indian philosophy. It is a synonym for Jnana or knowledge and for Satya or Truth. Satya or Truth is the bedrock of the entire edifice of the Indian view of life. That is why the benign and benevolent Rishis of India, the seers of Truth (सत्यद्रष्टा) and revealers of Truth (सत्यप्रकाशक) expressed that Truth in the form of very short, yet profound, sacred formulae or *mantras*. They declared joyfully and gratefully, with firm faith and undying hope, right at the very golden dawn of human civilization :

‘Truth alone triumphs, never untruth.’\*

The same refrain rings forth and reverberates throughout the ages in India, never losing its charm, gaining on the contrary, new grandeur with its every repetition. Listen to the magnificent voice of India in the *Mahabharata*:

‘There is no religion like Truth Itself.  
There is nothing that is superior to Truth.  
There is nothing on earth, all around—  
That is baser than untruth.’†

Now, the question is: what is this great and glorious Satya or Truth? Satya has the same etymological meaning as another word, Tattva, viz., ‘Sat-tva’ or ‘Tat-tva’: the very existence (सत्त्व) or the very ‘thatness’ (तत्त्व) of a thing as it really is, above all appearances, illusions, delusions, doubts and deceptions.

What is this treasure-trove of the highest knowledge, deepest devotion and purest activity? That is, what is the real nature of the numerous things that we see around us daily, of the numerous individuals whom we meet daily? Go to the sciences and you will get experimentally verified, most carefully arrived at, most wonderful results, breath-taking in their heroic endeavours, astounding in their

\* सत्यमेव जयते नानृतम् । *Mundaka*, III. 1.6.

† नास्ति सत्यं समो धर्मः न सत्यात् विद्यते परम् । न हि तीव्रतरं किञ्चिदनृतादिह विद्यते ॥

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perseverance, inconceivable in their energies. Who would deny that the modern world of ours is justly a proud world of unimaginable achievements, unbelievable improvements, undreamt-of benefits?

Yet, has our fundamental question regarding the real nature of a thing, just as it really is, apart from all appearances, been fully and finally answered? 'No', say our great saints, 'No; this is not the final say. There is something more to be said, something much more.' And what is that? 'That is the one Truth, one Reality, one Existence behind everything on earth.' Apparently there are many; apparently they are numerous. Science itself is trying to reach the one Supreme universal principle present in all, enlivening, guiding all. The sum of philosophy and religion in India is that Satya or Truth behind all, is one and one only, viz., Brahman, which is Existence, Consciousness, Bliss (सच्चिदानन्द स्वरूप) and everything on earth, living or non-living, is a manifestation of His eternal Existence, eternal Consciousness, eternal Bliss.

But how? Is it ever possible for the gross, material, unconscious, unknowing, impure, imperfect Brahmanda, or the universe, to be, even for a moment, the ever-subtle, ever-spiritual, ever-conscious, ever-pure, ever-perfect Brahman? Again, how is it ever possible for the sinful and sorrowful, puny and panicky, feeble and foolish *jiva*, or the individual soul, to be the all-virtuous, all-blissful, all-great, all-poised, all-powerful and all-knowing Brahman, even for a moment? How can these two, Brahman and the *jiva* or the *jagat*, both be conceived of as true or real? This question is unashamedly asked, not only by ordinary people, but by theologians and philosophers alike. A good example of this inquiry took place in the famous Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago, U.S.A., in September 1893. There, when Swami Vivekananda of immortal fame, first echoed the eternal message of India to that august gathering of devotees, scholars, philosophers and theologians from all over the world, everyone was astounded by his sublime proclamation made on 19 September 1893:

' "Children of immortal bliss"—what a sweet, what a hopeful name! Allow me to call you, brethren, by that sweet name—heirs of immortal bliss—yea, the Hindu refuses to call you sinners. Ye are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls, immortal, spirits



free, blest and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies, matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter.'

This most unique historic statement burst forth as a bomb-shell in that gathering of hundreds of great and good people of the world, and two kinds of reaction were produced:

There was anger. The angry ones asked vehemently: 'What right had India to try to act as a Messiah and teach the world an altogether vain, ambitious and daring theory that God and the world, God and the Soul, were identical and that even very common, very ordinary individual souls, were all God Himself? Is that not mere blasphemy, wholly unpardonable and unacceptable?'

And there was astonishment. The astonished ones were less vocal, less vehement, yet equally unconvinced. They pointed out that the identity of God and the world and the individual soul is an impossible theory, there being so many well-known and incontrovertible differences between God on the one hand and the soul and the universe of matter on the other.

The indomitable Swami, equally unperturbed by angry shouting and astonished murmuring, put forward certain age-old arguments, couched in new forms, suitable to modern taste and intelligible to ordinary minds.

The age-old argument of the age-old question is this: of what nature, really, is the material universe which we daily see around us? The first question regarding anything on earth is that regarding its cause or ground. If we admit that the universe of soul and matter does exist, what, then, is its cause? There are two main theories of causation in the Vedanta philosophy:

*Vivarta-Vada* or the doctrine of apparent creation, formulated by the Advaita school of Vedanta, or the strict Monism of the great Shankaracharya; and

*Parinama-Vada* or the doctrine of real transformation of the creation of the Vishishtadvaita school of Vedanta led by the great philosopher, Ramanuja, and practically of all the remaining Vedanta schools.

Thus, according to Shankara, Brahman being the only Reality the universe of souls and of matter is false and not actually created by Brahman. The well-known couplet sums up this Advaita Vedantic doctrine:

'Brahman is Real, the individual soul is false.



The individual is Brahman alone and nothing but Brahman.\*

According to the first line of the couplet, negatively, the universe is taken as false if separated from Brahman. But, according to the second line, positively, the universe is Brahman Itself, if taken as one with Brahman. Ordinarily, Advaita Vedanta is judged only according to the first line, negatively, and so stigmatized as *Jagat-Mithya-Vada*, the doctrine of falsity of the entire universe of souls and matter; and the second line, which according to many is far more important, is practically ignored. But this is the real point of the Advaita Vedanta—not the negative falsity, but the positive oneness of Brahman with the soul and the world. We may say with firm conviction that according to the view of Shankara and other Advaita Vedantins, the universe is Brahman in essence (ब्रह्म-स्वरूप).

Let us come to the second view, the more intelligible and more acceptable one: the well-known *Parinama-Vada* or doctrine of real creation or transformation. As the very name implies, according to this doctrine, the cause creates the effect by being actually transformed into the effect, and so it follows that the cause and the effect are essentially identical in स्वरूप or nature. Take a very common example: a lump of clay (मृत्पिण्ड) is the cause and a clay jar (मृत्पय-घट) is the effect. How does the cause, the lump of clay, produce the effect, the clay jar? There is one and only one way, viz., *Parinama* or transformation. That is, the cause, the lump of clay, is actually transformed into the form of the clay jar, and in this way alone, does the cause, the lump of clay, produce the effect, the clay jar. Then, it has to be admitted that the cause, the lump of clay, and the effect, the clay jar, must be identical in nature or essence. For evidently, in the cause there is nothing but clay and in the effect, too, there is nothing but clay. Thus, it is quite clear that the cause and the effect are identical in nature or essence. That is why from a lump of clay you cannot get a gold jar or a silver jar, a copper jar or a jar of any other nature—but only a clay jar. This is obvious and incontrovertible.

Now, apply the same logic to the cause of world creation. Here, Brahman creates the universe of souls and matter by actually transforming Itself into the form of the universe of souls and matter. Hence, Brahman is Brahman in nature and essence and so is the Brahmanda, i.e., all individual souls and material objects—whether

\* ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या । जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः ॥

you are angry at the conclusion or whether you are astounded, is not relevant here. The only relevant fact here is that, as the cause itself is transformed into the form of the effect, there is absolutely no way to avoid the inevitable conclusion, viz., that the cause and the effect are identical in nature or essence.

Hence, as the essential identity of Brahman and Brahmanda is a philosophically proved theory, the following soul-stirring *mantras* are literally true, not mere pedantries of scholars, not mere emotional outbursts of poets, not wishful imagination or delusions, but in every sense, true:

'All this is verily Brahman.'  
 'Brahman is all this.'  
 'Thou art That.'  
 'This Soul is Brahman.'  
 'I am Brahman.'\*

This is *Samvit*, this is *Jnana*, this is *Upalabdhi*, realization. To know all material objects or individual souls, as mutually distinct is *ajnana* or *avidya*. But to know all as Brahman and Brahman alone is *Jnana* or *Samvit*, knowledge or vision.

Listen to the grave warning of the ancient Rishis regarding ignorance:

'He has to be seen by the mind alone.  
 There is no "many", forsooth.  
 He gets death after death  
 Who sees "many" here, in truth.'†

Again, listen to the fiery invocation by Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest educators the world has produced, regarding *Samvit*, *Jnana*, and regarding what constitutes real Knowledge:

'Therefore know that thou art He; thou art the God of this universe. . . . What makes you weak? What makes you fear? You

\* सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म । *Chandogya*, III. xiv. 1.  
 इदं ब्रह्म, इदं सर्वम् । *Brihadaranyaka*, II. v. 1.  
 तत्त्वमसि । *Chandogya*, VI. viii. 7.  
 अयमात्मा ब्रह्म । *Brihadaranyaka*, II. v. 19.  
 अहं ब्रह्मास्मि । *ibid.*, I. iv. 10.

† मनसैवानुद्वष्टव्यम्, नेह नानास्ति किञ्चन ।  
 मृत्योः स मृत्युमाप्नोति च इह नानेव पश्यति ॥ *ibid.*, IV. iv. 19.



are the One Being in the universe. What frightens you? Stand up then and be free. Know that every thought and word that weakens you in this world is the only evil that exists. Whatever makes men weak and fear is the only evil that should be shunned. What can frighten you? . . . Stand as a rock; you are indestructible. You are the Self, the God of the universe. Say—"I am Existence Absolute, Bliss Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, I am He", and like a lion breaking its cage, break your chain and be free forever.

'Silly fools tell you that you are sinners, and you sit down in a corner and weep. It is foolishness, wickedness, downright rascality, to say that you are sinners! You are all God. . . . You are the Soul of the universe. You are the sun, moon and stars, it is you that are shining everywhere. The whole universe is you. Whom are you going to hate, or to fight? Know then, that thou art He, and model your whole life accordingly.'<sup>1</sup>

#### References

1. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Mayavati 1945) II.236,237.

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*O Supreme Being, Thou art the immutable and supreme light. Thou art the saviour, the Brahman; and there exists nothing but Thee.*

Sanatkumarasamhita

## Conversations that Inspire

*YAJNAVALKYA, THE ancient Rishi, had two wives, Maitreyi and Katyayani. Of these, Maitreyi used to discuss Brahman with him, while Katyayani had then an essentially worldly outlook. In old age, Yajnavalkya, with a view to embracing the life of a recluse, said to Maitreyi:\**

**Yajnavalkya :** Maitreyi, my dear, I am going to renounce this householder's life for monasticism. Allow me to put an end to the relationship that existed between Katyayani and yourself through me, by dividing my property between you two.

**Maitreyi :** Sir, if indeed this whole earth full of wealth be mine, shall I be immortal through that, or not?

**Yajnavalkya :** No, your life will be just like that of people who have plenty of things, but there is no hope of immortality through wealth.

**Maitreyi :** What shall I do with that which will not make me immortal? Tell me, sir, of that alone which you know to be the only means of immortality.

**Yajnavalkya :** You have been my beloved, even before this, and now you have increased my love for you. If you wish, my dear, I will explain it to you. As I explain it, meditate upon its meaning.

It is not for the sake of the husband that he is loved, but for one's own sake that he is loved. It is not for the sake of the wife that she is loved, but for one's own sake that she is loved. It is not for the sake of the sons that they are loved, but for one's own sake that they are loved. It is not for the sake of wealth that it is loved, but for one's own sake that it is loved. It is not for the sake of the animals that they are loved, but for one's own sake that they are loved. It is not for the sake of the Brahmana that he is loved, but for one's own sake that he is loved. It is not for the sake of the Kshatriya that he is loved, but for one's own sake that he is loved. It is not for the sake of the worlds that they are loved, but for one's own sake that they are loved. It is not for the sake of the gods that they are loved, but for one's own sake that they are loved. It is not for the

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\* *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, IV 5.1-6, 13-15.*



sake of the Vedas that they are loved, but for one's own sake that they are loved. It is not for the sake of the beings that they are loved, but for one's own sake that they are loved. It is not for the sake of all that all is loved, but for one's own sake that it is loved. The Self, my dear Maitreyi, should be realized—should be heard of, reflected on and meditated upon. When the Self is realized by being heard of, reflected on and meditated upon, all this is known.

As a lump of salt is without interior or exterior, entire, and purely saline in taste, even so is the Self without interior or exterior, entire, and Pure Intelligence alone. The self comes out as a separate entity from these elements and this separateness is destroyed with them. After attaining this oneness it has no more particular consciousness. This is what I say, my dear.

*Maitreyi* : Just here you have led me into the midst of confusion, sir, I do not at all comprehend this.

*Yajnavalkya* : Certainly I am not saying anything confusing. This self is indeed immutable and indestructible. Because when there is duality, as it were, then one sees something, one smells something, one tastes something, one speaks something, one hears something, one thinks something, one touches something, one knows something. But when to the knower of Brahman everything has become the Self, then what should one see and through what, what should one smell and through what, what should one taste and through what, what should one speak and through what, what should one hear and through what, what should one think and through what, what should one touch and through what, what should one know and through what? Through what should one know that owing to which all this is known? This self is That which has been described as 'Not this, not this.' It is imperceptible, for It is never perceived; undecaying, for It never decays; unattached, for It is never attached; unfettered, for It never feels pain and never suffers injury. Through what, O Maitreyi, should one know the Knower? So you have got the instruction, Maitreyi. This much indeed is the means of immortality.



## Two Boys in the Company of a Saint

PRAVRAJIKA ATMAPRANA

IT IS said that the glance or touch of a holy man has the power to change a person. What to say, then, of those who have the opportunity to stay with and be loved by a saint? Here are the wonderful stories of two young boys who became saintly themselves by coming in contact with a holy man.

### A Wandering *Sannyasin*

It was the year 1897. Murshidabad and its surrounding areas were in the grip of famine. On his way to the Himalayas, a wandering *sannyasin* went there by chance. He first saw the terrible, all-devouring form of famine when he met a young Muslim girl in the village of Dawoodpur. She was weeping by the roadside, and a broken water-pot lay near her. The kind-hearted one asked :

‘Child, why are you weeping?’

‘Father, famine is stalking through our land, and we have nothing to eat. Over and above that there was only one water-pot in the house. We have no other vessel for fetching water. I am crying because now my mother will beat me.’

The *sannyasin* searched his pockets and found a four-anna piece. He bought for her a water-pot and a little puffed rice. As the shop-keeper was returning his change, twelve or fourteen emaciated children came running towards him saying :

‘Father, father, give us something to eat also.’ He bought puffed rice for all of them—and then, penniless, moved on. He walked from Dawoodpur to Napukur, to Beldanga, to Bhabata, and as he went he witnessed grim scenes of human suffering. Resting in a shop at night in Bhabata, he thought of the quiet, joyous, contented days he was going to spend in the Himalayas, away from the struggles of life which the worldly-minded faced every day. But three times during that night he heard a voice saying :

‘Where will you go? You have a lot of work to do here. On the bank of the Ganga yonder, there is a village. You will get alms there. You will have to stay here.’



He was perplexed. The vision of the Himalayas receded from his mind; and in its place stood this land of the poor and the hungry. The next day he met some people and one of them invited him to Mahua, a village nearby, where they were performing the worship of Annapurna, the Goddess of Food and Plenty. The thought came to his mind : 'The worship of Annapurna in this famine-stricken place! Was it She who wanted me to stay here to serve the poor?'

Yes, it was She. For he who went to Mahua to attend her worship for one day had to stay there till the end of his life, serving the sick and the hungry, the orphans and the homeless. In famine and flood, epidemic and earthquake, the people had this *sannyasin* to turn to, although he possessed nothing but the staff in his hand. He stayed with them; he shed tears when they cried; he gave up food when they could not eat; when they were stricken with cholera, he cleaned and served them; and, when there was need, he cremated them. They called him, affectionately and reverently, 'Dandi-Thakur', the saint with a staff. Who was he? He was Swami Akhandananda, a brother-disciple of Swami Vivekananda, and the first to put into practice Ramakrishna-Vivekananda's ideal of शिव ज्ञाने जीव सेवा, service of the *jivas* looking upon them verily as Shiva.

### An Orphanage

One of the heart-rending results of a famine is that the number of homeless and parentless children increases. Akhandananda saw them in Mahua and his heart bled for them. But what could he do for them? He himself had nowhere to stay, no means of maintaining himself. What was he to do? He remembered his sole guide, philosopher and friend, Swami Vivekananda. When others had doubted that a lone, penniless *sannyasin* could do famine-relief work, Swamiji had encouraged him: 'Bravo! Accept a hundred thousand embraces and blessings from me. . . . Work, work, work even unto death! . . . If in the attempt to carry morsels of food to starving mouths, name and possessions and all be doomed even—thrice blessed art thou! It is the heart, the heart that conquers, not the brain.'

So Akhandananda wrote to Swamiji about starting an orphanage, and quick came the reply : 'Your wishes about the orphanage are very good.' 'We must certainly have the orphanage, no hesitating in that. We must not leave the girls in the lurch either. But then we must have a lady superintendent for an orphanage of girls. . . . You must admit Mohammedan boys too, but never tamper with their



religion. . . . Teach them so that they may be moral, manly and devoted to doing good to others. This indeed is religion.'

### Bahadur

Akhandananda's plans for the orphanage gradually became known and boys, and sometimes even a girl, came and took shelter with him.\* The mind of the all-loving *sannyasin* had become so tender that whenever he saw a hungry or dirty child on the road, he brought him to the Ashrama, bathed him, dressed him and fed him. To him it was not social service, it was not an act of compassion. It was the worship of the divine.

In April 1898 he was in Darjeeling with Swamiji. One day their hostess brought two Nepali orphan boys to him and asked him to take them with him. They were only eight or nine years old. Sometimes they had been seen begging, or earning a few rupees by carrying visitors' loads or by breaking stones where roads were being made. The younger boy was Bahadur, a Gorkha by birth, whose father, a soldier, had died fighting. He had a very sweet voice, and his memory was excellent. He knew the history of Nepal by heart, and he also knew how his country was administered and what were the laws of punishment.

Coming to the Ashrama in Mahua, these boys became strong and healthy. They made the Ashrama ring with their laughter. Bahadur had lost an eye when he was very young, but, strong and courageous as he was, he made up for this handicap by doing a lot of hard work. Twice he rescued younger children from drowning. He had a generous heart. Whenever 'father' took him to sing in the houses of local landlords he got a lot of presents; but he always shared them with everyone in the Ashrama.

In the Ashrama, besides studies, the Swami gave them simple lessons and also taught them gardening and other useful things. Morning and evening they all sang prayers together. The Ashrama assistant, Dinanath Chobe, cooked for them. Later an Industrial Section was added to the Ashrama where the children learnt crafts such as weaving and carpentry. They sold the things they had made at local fairs. Bahadur participated in all these activities, but his eye trouble was a handicap. The Civil Surgeon told the Swami one day : 'Swamiji, do not allow Bahadur to study. Teach him music.'

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\* The facts in this article are from *Swami Akhandananda* by Swami Annadananda.



But Bahadur said : 'Swamiji, all the boys of my age are studying. Will I remain a fool? I will not tolerate that.' So, arrangements were made for him to study during the daytime, but in the evening, when the others had their study-hour, he would sit with 'father' and learn by talking to him. His desire to know more and more was never satiated. The ten-year-old would ask question after question. 'The sky has no colour, then why does it look blue? From where do the stars receive their light? When a man dies his body is destroyed, then how can he be born again?' Thus he used to go on. His questions on religion were sometimes so deep that the Swami had to say :

'Bahadur, you will not understand the answers now. When you grow up I will tell you.' He would return after two days and say : 'Father, have I grown big enough now? Will you give me an answer to that question today?'

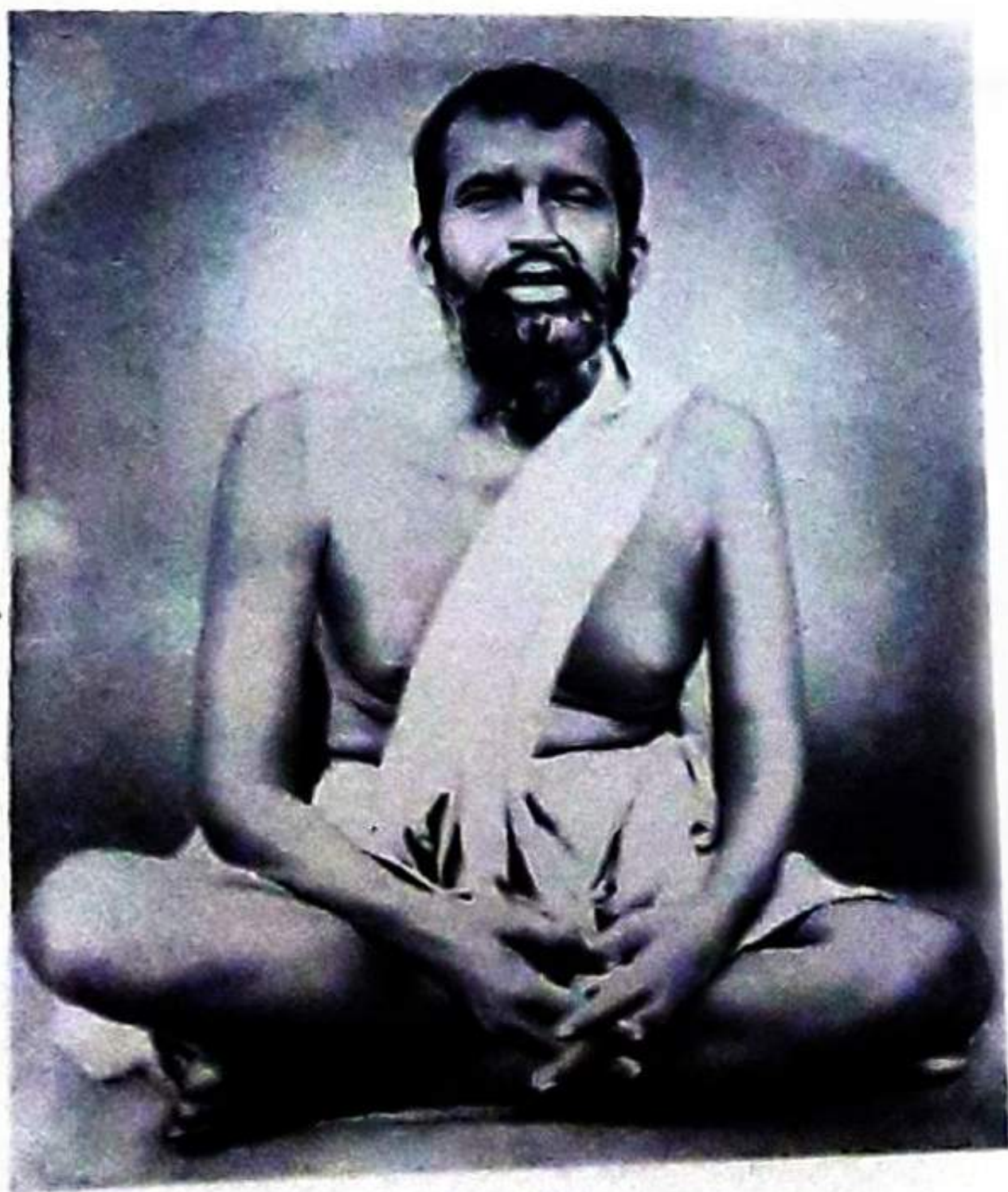
Three more years passed and Bahadur was now thirteen years old. He who had no one to call his own, now had a loving father who cared for him and guided him. The boy had become thoughtful and responsible. One night while the other boys were studying and he was with his 'father', he suddenly looked up and said :

'Swamiji, I know that when all these boys grow up, they will go away. None of them will stay in the Ashrama. But when I grow up I shall stay with you and serve you. In order to give you peace and rest, I will find out ways and means by which our Ashrama will prosper.'

The austere and detached *sannyasin* was touched by these words. He was hopeful that some day Bahadur would use his talents to serve the poor and the needy. But who knew what was in store? After some time when the Swami had gone elsewhere on Ashrama work, Bahadur fell ill. He did not respond to any treatment, and in six months the strong boy became only skin and bones. The doctor declared that he had tuberculosis, which was incurable in those days. Yet, lying in his sick bed, Bahadur radiated joy and peace. One day he held the Swami's hand and said :

'When I am holding your hand I feel that my burning body is cooling down.'

Bahadur was brave in life, and so was he in death. Two days before his death, Chobe was standing by his bedside, and tears were rolling down his cheeks. Bahadur, who had once wanted to know



Sri Ramakrishna





Swami Akhandananda with Ashrama workers and orphan children—1919. Bhavananda in back row centre behind the Swami.

*Courtesy : Udbodhan Office*

about the secret of life and death, looked up at him and said :

'Chobeji, why are you crying? My body will pass away, but I will not die. Don't you know that?'

The next day he said : 'I will go to Thakur's temple, to the temple at Belur Math. Keep the *Gita* near my pillow.' Slowly his mind soared to a higher state; he started speaking about the images of gods and goddesses that he was seeing. On 17 January 1902, as the sun was setting, he said :

'The Atman is immortal. Lord, O Supreme Lord!', and then he died. The touch of the saint had taken Bahadur to the land of the immortals.

#### Babar Sheikh

Many boys came and went, but another exceptional character was Babar. One day in 1899, a policeman arrived at the Ashrama with two young boys, aged seven and eight. He had a letter for the Swami from the Magistrate asking that these two boys be kept in the orphanage for a year. Their case was this. While very young they had both been kidnapped from their homes by the notorious dacoits, Golap-Sa and Bothan-Sa. These two dacoits with their gang had now escaped from the Hyderabad jail and had been arrested in this district. The case against them was making counterfeit money. Thus it was that Babar Sheikh came in contact with the Swami.

He welcomed the two boys with open arms. They stayed with the children in the Ashrama and studied with them. They were sent to a Mohammedan landlord's house to learn the tenets of their religion. In the mornings and evenings, when the other boys recited their prayers, these two offered their prayers in their own style. A year later the dacoits were released from the Berhampore jail and they immediately demanded the custody of the two children. The police authorities wrote a letter to the Swami to that intent and he immediately brought the boys to Berhampore. On seeing the dacoits, however, the boys hid behind their loving 'father' and started crying loudly and piteously. Seeing that they were very frightened and were not at all willing to leave the *sannyasin*, the hearts of the dacoits melted, and they told the police that the boys could stay with the Swami in the Ashrama. They would, however, like to see the place for themselves. They went to the Ashrama, stayed there for two days and left the boys there for good. During the one year the dacoits were in jail,



the children were always afraid that they might some day try to take them back. So now they felt happy and free, and did their work with added zest.

In 1913 Babar, now twenty-one years old and affectionately called Bubi, took the vows of *brahmacharya*. From that time he was known as Brahmachari Bhavananda. Seeing the remarkable turn his life had taken, and the dedication with which he served the Ashrama in various capacities, the Swami often said: 'Bubi's life is a miracle! From going about with a gang of dacoits, see how he has now taken refuge at the feet of the merciful Lord.'

For Bhavananda, too, death was wonderful. It reminded one that the right to scale the heights of greatness and reach the highest goal in life was not the prerogative of any person because of his class, creed, or country.


In April 1932, a temple of Sri Ramakrishna was dedicated at the Ashrama on the Annapurna Puja day. It was on this same holy day that thirty-three years earlier Swami Akhandananda had taken the decision to stay there for the good of the many, for the happiness of all. On the pinnacle of the temple were written the words 'Jai Ramakrishna'. In December 1932 Bhavananda fell ill. On the last day, in the morning, the Swami sent him some breakfast. He had no fever that day. He slowly walked over to the passage and sat in the sun. The Swami saw him there and said affectionately: 'Bubi, repeat the name of the Lord'. And Bubi sat there doing his *japa* and looking intently at the pinnacle. After half an hour another Swami noticed that Bhavananda's head had tilted on one side. They all rushed to his side and saw that while his fingers were still in the position of doing *japa*, his spirit had left its mortal coil and gone to its eternal home.

# The Tantras

K. N. DHAR

THE TANTRAS and the Vedas are the two main aspects of Indian culture, and they are the bed-rock on which the whole gamut of Indian thinking is based. From time immemorial these two aspects have provided adequate temporal and philosophical sustenance to the socio-religious fibre of Indians. They are the first milestones from which the Indian mind started its journey towards self-education and consequent self-realization. Their importance therefore cannot be over-emphasized in the day-to-day life of Indians. It has been said, 'the Veda is an idea, Tantra is an ideology, the Veda is religion, Tantra is a cult. The Veda is philosophy, Tantra is science'.<sup>1</sup>

## The Antiquity of the Tantras

The origin of Tantra is shrouded in mystery. Excavations made at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa testify eloquently to the prevalence of Tantric worship in these prehistoric cities. Baked clay tablets bearing impressions of Tantric symbols like the swastika  and the figure of Lord Shiva 'with plaited hair and no holy thread' have been unearthed there, corroborating this assertion.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the *linga* (phallus) and *yoni* (womb) were also popular objects of worship with these non-Aryan tribes (not un-Aryan). The word *anarya* (अनार्य) has been mischievously construed to mean 'degenerate people', although its direct and unambiguous purport is 'not of Aryan stock'. It has now been established that there were many races inhabiting India prior to its occupation by Aryans. These pre-Vedic tribes had a highly evolved culture and civilization, as is evident from the excavations made at these twin cities.<sup>3</sup> The main dilemma regarding the existence of a culture anterior to the Vedic was solved by the excavations furnishing irrefutable evidence which annihilated the preposterous theory woven around this word *anarya*. It has become patently clear therefore that the Tantras emanated from tribes other than the Aryans. Hence the Tantras have an advantage over the Vedas in respect of their antiquity.<sup>4</sup>

The fountainhead of the Tantra cult is Lord Shiva.<sup>5</sup> He has been invoked as the Primal Preceptor or Adi Guru. Therefore Shiva may

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well have been a non-Aryan deity. To accommodate his irresistible popularity and also to bring about a synthesis between the old and the new, he was acknowledged by the Vedic pantheon. Shankaracharya has also conceded that the Tantra cult in Dravida culture owes its origin to 'the compassion of the Devi who allowed her Dravida child to partake of a portion of her essence of wisdom, enabling him to become the laureate full of mature wisdom.'<sup>6</sup>

### Place and Time of Origin

Some scholars have tried to prove that Tantric worship was imported into India. Hara Prasad Shastri contends that Tantra was brought here by Islamic invasions.<sup>7</sup> The cult of Tara, on the other hand, seems to have flourished in Tibet, and Tara is a name of the Devi often used in the Tantras.<sup>8</sup> Some Tantras, for example the *Rudra-Yamala*, *Brahma-Yamala*, and even the *Devi Bhagavata*, refer to an episode in which the sage Vashishtha had to go to China to be initiated into Tantric *sadhana*. However, this theory is not tenable in the face of the irrefutable evidence to the contrary contained in the Tantras by and large. The sage Vashishtha was himself a great teacher of Tantra even before going to China. This allusion to Vashishtha's going to China can only mean that the expedition was undertaken to exchange notes with the masters of the Tantric cult there. Such two-way cultural traffic has been in vogue in India from very ancient times. The *Rajatarangini* records the give and take enjoyed by the Tantrics of Kashmir and Kamarupa (Assam), extending as far as Trivishthub (Tibet).<sup>9</sup> In this context Winternitz says: 'Their original home seems to have been in Bengal, whence they spread throughout Assam and Nepal, and even beyond India to Tibet and China through the agency of Buddhism.'<sup>10</sup> This observation is furthermore confirmed by the following verse:

\*'This Tantric knowledge took its birth in Gauda and was reinforced by the Maithilis, some of it survived in Maharashtra, but it became extinct in Gujarat.'<sup>11</sup> The *Padma Purana* also fosters this view, thus:

'(This mode of worship) was evolved in the Dravida region, was replenished in Karnataka; existed in some places in Maharashtra, but

\* गौडे प्रकाशिता विद्या मैथिलैः प्रबलीकृता ।

स्वचित् स्वचिन्महाराष्ट्रे गुजरे प्रलयं गता ॥

fell into oblivion in Gujarat.\* In addition, Jayaratha, the erudite commentator on the *Tantraloka* of Abhinavagupta, asserts that the Tantras were born in Kamarupa (Assam). All this goes to substantiate without any doubt that the Tantras are indigenous to India.

The Tantras were not composed and compiled at a particular time with one stroke of the pen or one flash of imagination. They cannot be the work of one individual. They are a vast canvas, evolved, thread by thread, over a span of centuries. Perhaps it is because of the difficulty in ascertaining their authorship that they are silent about it and ascribe it to Lord Shiva. As the Indian tradition goes, the number of Tantras is legion. However, Shankaracharya restricts them to only sixty-four.<sup>12</sup> The exact number of Tantras cannot be ascertained as most of them are still unpublished. The comprehensive list compiled by Stein acts as an eye-opener even though these Tantras belong only to Kashmir.

The earliest Tantras, as already discussed, might have been composed in the pre-Vedic period. They are a compendium of immense spiritual and mental drill and discipline, and they mark man's quest, from the dawn of civilization in India, for self-education and self-realization. In such a spiritual journey the ideal is always elusive; it is essentially a sign-post to a further ideal. The ideal, as it is expressed, presupposes refutation and consequent improvement, and also the introduction of new ideas which extend the dimensions of spiritual attainment. It is this dynamic character of the Tantras that justifies their being made up to date with the passing of time. Tantras are known to have been compiled in Kashmir even up to the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

#### The Connotations of the Word Tantra

In Sanskrit the word *tantra* has many shades of meaning. It connotes a warp, a loom, a model, or a type. It is possible that the masters of esoteric knowledge wove their experiences on this spiritual warp, and so gave the name *tantra* to it. Inherent in the word *tantra* is the meaning that it protects one from the fetters of ignorance. *Ta* (त) is the *bija-mantra* (acoustic root) of ignorance, and *tra* (त्र) stands for *trayate* (त्रायते), protects. That mental discipline which keeps

\* उत्पन्ना ब्राह्मिणे साहं बुद्धि कर्णादिके गता ।

स्वचित् स्वचिन्महाराष्ट्रे गुर्जरे जीर्णता गता ॥ Uttara Khanda, 193.51.



ignorance at arm's length can thus be one aspect of the meaning of this word. Some scholars derive the word from the root *tan* (तन्), meaning 'to expand'.\* It can be construed as the spiritual discipline which expands the horizons of perceptive knowledge. But the most acceptable definition of *tantra* is 'that which procures emancipation from the shackles of obdurate Maya.'†

Tantra deals with both the theoretical and practical aspects of life. The former is known as Nigama and the latter as Agama. 'The Tantra is regarded as a Shruti, or Agama, 'revelation', as opposed to a Smriti, or Nigama, 'tradition'. It is thus classed with the Vedas. It is actually described as (श्रुतिशास्त्राविशेष), a particular branch of the Vedas.<sup>13</sup> However, this observation does not seem palatable in view of the fact that the Tantras and the Vedas are two different currents of Indian cultural life. As has been mentioned, Tantra is a cult and the Vedas are a philosophy. Tantra pertains to the salvation of the soul; the Vedas to the enrichment of the mind.

According to the mystic definition of the word *tantra*, Agama is the esoteric content of the Tantra which is primarily concerned with the awakening of the *kundalini*, known as पुरुषचरणक्रिया, and meditation. It is the *sadhana* part of Tantra. It connotes the elevation of the soul. The most apt and pregnant definition of Agama is:

‡ 'The awakened recognize the Agama as the inherent perception of the objects around as the expansion and salvation of the soul.'<sup>14</sup>

It follows from this that Tantra preaches an equation between matter and spirit. It does not stand for negation of life, but for its affirmation.

Nigama constitutes the doubts in the mind of Shiva's consort, Parvati, regarding the cosmos, theology, *sadhana* and the perfection of the soul, for which she seeks clarification from her spouse. It is the dialogue part of the Tantra in which Shiva and Parvati are often addressed as Bhairava and Bhairavi. Tantra has adopted this *modus operandi* for unfolding its occult teachings. Usually these begin with an enquiry from the Bhairavi and subsequently the Bhairava allays

\* तन्वते बिस्तारयते ज्ञानं घनेन इति तन्त्रम् ।

† तत्र यं ध्रुवत् तारयेत् यस्तु स तन्त्र परिकीर्तितः ।

‡ आशावस्तु समन्तात् च गम्यन् इत्यागमो मतः ।

तनुते ज्ञायते नित्यं तन्त्रमित्यं विदुर्बुधाः ॥



her misgivings and unfolds the secret knowledge in abundance. Tantra is nothing but applied psychology. The science of psychology of mind and human behaviour is of comparatively recent origin and still in the formative stage; so the Tantra, the most developed form of applied psychology, has not been fully understood, interpreted and appreciated. Moreover, being replete with symbols defying exact comprehension, it requires a depth of erudition to unravel them.

### The Teachings of the Tantras

The acme of Tantra philosophy is the identification of self with super-Self, which is called Paramashiva. This supreme Reality is pure consciousness, self-luminous and all pervading.<sup>15</sup> Tantra treats this world as real because it is an aspect of the supreme Reality. From the Tantric point of view this whole creation of animate and inanimate objects is simply a reflection of Reality (अभास). The most eminent exponent of Tantra in India, Dr. Gopinath Kaviraja, explains this phenomenon in these words:

'The peculiar metaphysical position of the Tantra consists in the theory of *abhasa* (अभास), which is consistent with this position. It rejects Vivartavada (विवर्तवाद)\* of Neo-Vedanta because the world is not originally a false appearance due to error. It is real in the same way as an image is real, but it has no existence apart from the medium in which it is manifested.'<sup>16</sup>

It follows from this that self-realization is both enjoyment and liberation. So *bhoga* is a positive preamble to yoga.

Paramashiva, the Absolute of the Tantra philosophy, is unaffected by the limitations of time, space, and causality.<sup>17</sup> He is unchanging, eternal, infinite and both transcendent (विश्वोत्तीर्ण) and immanent (विश्वमय). Shiva is the transcendental form and Shakti is the immanent aspect of Paramashiva. As these two co-exist in Him, the collective appellation for Shiva and Shakti is Paramashiva. This duality (भेद) at the initial stage finally consummates in non-duality (अभेद), and, in the idiom of Abhinavagupta, the two are 'as identical as salt with sea-water'.<sup>18</sup> It can then be safely inferred that the Tantric concept of the absolute makes a happy compromise between microcosm and macrocosm, monism and dualism, and mind and matter.

\* A Vedantic belief meaning the apparent or illusory form of objects due to ignorance (*avidya*)



The very first aphorism of Acharya Vasugupta's *Shiva Sutras* lays down unambiguously that the 'Self is consciousness', (चैतन्यात्मा). This consciousness of the limited-self (मात्मान्) is to be fused with the superconsciousness (परं चैतन्य) of Paramashiva, the Absolute. The whole gamut of the Tantra, as also the monistic Shaivism of Kashmir, prescribes a mental discipline to attain this equation.

Shiva and Shakti merge into one undivided unity of transcendence. The former represents *prakasha*, illuminating discernment, and the latter, *vimarsha*, activating cause and effect. These are as far apart and as near each other under one sheath of Maya as two seeds in a grain under one coating. Remove this sheath of Maya (hence called the *yonī* or the womb) by which obduracy is sown. It is the chief reason why a *bija-mantra* (acoustic-root) is always predominant in Tantric or Shaiva rituals.

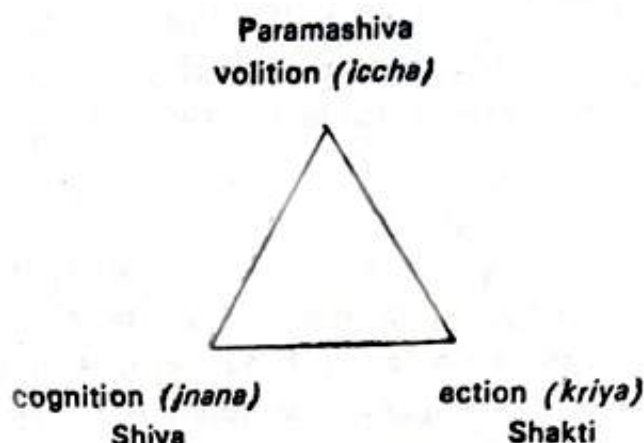
Shiva is lifeless (नृप) without Shakti.<sup>20</sup> Their identification with each other is not only complete but also harmonious. Sir John Woodroffe<sup>21</sup> and J. C. Chatterji<sup>22</sup> have misconstrued Shakti to represent Negation, *nishedha*. In this context, Dr. L. P. Singh has very cogently remarked:

'The principle of Negation as explained by Spinoza and Hegel is a logical dichotomy in which "Being and non-being" live together in unholy alliance. "Being and non-being" are psychic concepts and have nothing to do with the mystic and metaphysical principle'.<sup>23</sup>

Shakti, representing *vimarsha* in no way negates cosmic consciousness in the western sense of the word. This female Principle translates the desire of Shiva to create the universe of action. Both these scholars, Woodroffe and Chatterji, have somehow or other confused two technical terms often used in Tantra as well as in monistic Shaivism, *nishedha* and *vikshepa*, meaning, the veiling and projecting aspects of Kriya-Shakti, the Power of action. These are poles asunder from the principle of Negation. Creation presupposes the equilibrium of the three powers of desire, perception and action. In the disparity, no creation can take place; hence, it is obvious that the two extremes are inherently one, because both of them conjointly are the cause and effect of the creation.<sup>24</sup> The distance between the two is apparent rather than real.

The super-will, *iccha*, of Paramashiva goads Shiva on to cognition, *jñāna*, and Shakti on to consequent action, *kriya*. This can be illustrated more succinctly by this diagram:

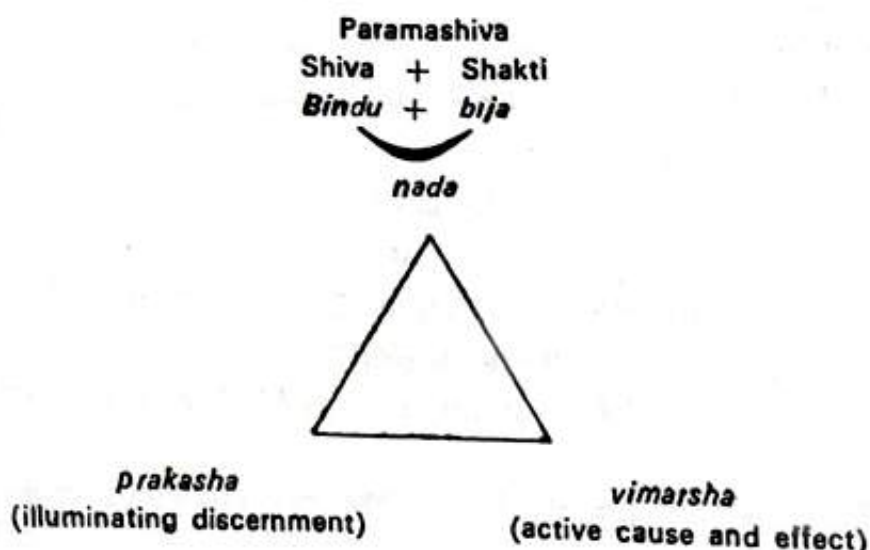
## The Tantras



Shiva is the cognitive element, while Shakti is the creative ingredient of the process of creation, subservient to the volition of Paramashiva. It is an amalgamation of thought, perception, and action, culminating in super-Bliss, or Paramananda.

Kashmir's monistic Shaivism, as also the Tantra, holds that this entire creation is essentially threefold, hence the creative aspect of it is called Tripura or three bodies.<sup>25</sup> Shakti is the expression of the contemplative cognition of Shiva. It is action, reaction, and interaction in one indivisible agency. It is the receptacle in which the seed of immanence (बीज) is contained. The idea of Negation in this context seems preposterous.

Shiva is also called *Bindu*, a dot which has no magnitude but only position. Shakti is the seed and their mutual relation is represented by *nada*, sound. According to Tantra, *nada* or *shabda* is the first expression of creation;<sup>26</sup> therefore, it has been said that, 'In the beginning there was nothing but the Word and the Word was God'.<sup>27</sup> So we might attempt to illustrate graphically this terse mental and psychic exercise by this diagram:





According to Tantra as well as the monistic Shaivism of Kashmir, *svatantrya* (स्वातन्त्र्य) is the zenith of self-consciousness, *chaitanya* (चैतन्य). It is often termed *samvit*. This mental state connotes complete identification of the self with the super-Self, with *pashu*, the animal state (पशु), and with the state of the pure Consciousness of Shiva. Such a realized person attains emancipation even during his lifetime and is aptly called *jivanmukta*, literally, one liberated in life.<sup>28</sup> At this stage, such a *sadhaka* realizes the whole of the universe as his own body, replete with innate bliss. He simultaneously partakes of the super-Bliss with his own nectarine rapture.<sup>29</sup> In this context, the *Kularnava Tantra* has explicitly said:

\*'A sentient being is Shiva, Shiva is a sentient Being, and that sentient Being is Shiva, pure and simple. It is to be remembered that in bondage it is a sentient Being (*jiva*) and without bondage it is Shiva.'<sup>30</sup>

Tantra holds that Maya and Shakti are identical; the only difference between them is that Shakti, merged in Shiva, does not get full scope to manifest herself due to the density of consciousness. She is therefore called, *Mula-Prakriti*, Primeval Nature. Primeval Nature is composed of three *gunas*: *sattva* (sentience), *rajas* (mobility) and *tamas* (inertia) in equilibrium. At this stage, Shakti is the operative principle which remains unmanifested. When this equilibrium is disturbed due to the inherent discord among the *gunas*, Shakti, the Primordial Force, becomes Maya, the Creative Principle, heralding the eve of creation. Hence, Tantra calls this, the Great Cosmos (*mahamaya*). If the sentient force *sattva* predominates, Shakti is called *Vidya Maya*, and when *tamas* gains ascendancy, it is called *Avidya Maya*:

'She is *Vidya-Shakti* when she is revealed in the animal state of the *atman*, the true nature of self-dependence but when she screens it she is called *Maya*.'<sup>31</sup>

Hence, Abhinavagupta correctly says:

'Maya is the unmixed part of that transcendental Self which engenders the shade of distinction (*bheda-avabhasa*) in His self-dependent power which needs no aid.'<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, She is the seductress (*vimohini*) who drives us away

\* जीवः शिवः शिवो जीवः सः जीवः केवलः शिवः । पाशबद्धः स्मृतो जीवः पाशमुक्तः सदाशिवः ॥

from the uniform essence of the creation to its multiform and heterogeneous expression, presenting the unreal as if it were real. This is the reason the whole creation has been alluded to as *Maya*: the one indivisible primordial Force becoming the many in terms of the multifarious creation, and this is the actual purport of *Maya* according to Tantra. It is actually one, but appears as many, hence it is also termed delusion or obscurity.

#### Tantra Is above Distinctions

Tantra does not recognize caste. It abhors distinctions between man and man. The most infallible barometer for measuring the merit or demerit of a man is his thirst for knowledge, the intensity of his urge to attain equality with the Supreme Consciousness. The *Kularnava Tantra* has emphasized this point in these words:

\*'A twice-born, having been initiated after the low-born, is definitely inferior to the latter. This is the considered view of the *Shastra*.'<sup>33</sup>

Tantra is emphatically averse to renunciation, denying the good things of life to the sense-organs. Therefore, for the Tantra, the body has a utility and a meaning. It is neither to be starved nor suffocated for want of the sustenance palatable to it. Only a sound and healthy body can be a fit medium for uniting with the Ultimate Spirit. *Bhoga* is an inevitable preamble to yoga, the union between self and super-Self, immanence and transcendence. As an unerring corollary to this, Tantra does not prescribe a menu or diet for the aspirant on the path of self-realization. Abhinavagupta has analyzed the futile exercise of prescribing do's and don'ts for eating. He says:

'A body, like a building, may be built with any material. Our prime concern is for those who dwell in it. Since the *atman* is a dweller in the body, it does not admit of any change. Whatever is eaten will not affect it.'

Perhaps this very injunction of the Tantra has prompted Kashmiri Brahmins to eat mutton, whereas it is strictly forbidden for this caste throughout the rest of India.

We conclude that the Tantras are the most rational treatises on the dignity of man and his spiritual elevation. They hold a mirror to

\* द्विजो यो दीक्षितः पश्चादन्त्यजः पूर्वदीक्षितः । द्विजः कनिष्ठः स ज्येष्ठ इति शास्त्रार्थनिर्णयः ॥

The twice-born refers to the members of the first three castes whose second birth takes place at the sacred-thread ceremony.



the happy synthesis of mind and matter, body and soul, animality and spirituality. They acknowledge the existence of man and his environment, not as illusory, but as a multiplicity born out of unity. It should be conceded, in all fairness to the content of the Tantras, that they are replete with radical and revolutionizing concepts. This indicates their capacity to be ever in tune with the times, and to foresee the demands their ever-changing outlook will make on the human mind and intellect in the future, for which it has most vigilantly provided in advance. It may be asserted that the Tantra holds the key to man's emancipation, in every sense of this word. Modern man has a tilt towards the head and away from the heart, and the Tantra, with its evergreen freshness and its ingenuity of the highest magnitude, shows him how to reclaim his lost soul.

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## **A Phenomenon**

**K. P. HATI**

**IT IS difficult to describe the power that guides but does not govern, the force which transforms but does not command, the spirit that inspires but does not drive. It is manifested in a subtle way that guides from within. This is the power of spirituality that supplies energy of thought and action arising from communion with that within us which rules the world. It is good for the liberation of one individual soul or the turning of a tool; it works with superhuman energy from within and can be directed for any purpose God desires for us and is sufficient for building a nation.**

**History does not keep adequate records of such workings, and Indians are accused of lacking a sense of history. If history is simply a record of material achievements and advancements this accusation seems to be true. Whatever few records existed of such happenings were destroyed by periodical ravages of man and nature, and very little has been recovered from excavations of the buried ruins of ancient days, or from the writings of Chinese and Persian travellers maintained in their countries.**

**But, in the classical sense, history is more than a chronicle of what happened in the past physical existence of a nation or people; it has also to give an account of the evolutionary process of the people and its civilization. Records of various branches of human endeavour mark the stage by stage progress of man in the realm of mind—in the fields of consciousness, imagination, and intelligence. Success in these fields has helped mankind to make progress on the political, economic, social, and technological planes as well. It is the realm of spirit that rules over the realm of matter and determines the ultimate destiny of man. The Indian sense of history not only depicts this fact but glories in it.**

**A Hindu divides time by ages, and somehow knows that there is an endless succession of such ages. It is true that a Hindu is prone to look at the achievements of man and technology as transient because he believes himself to be immortal. All that happens on his physical death is that his soul casts off an old shirt for a new**

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**K. P. Hati, who is well acquainted with the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, The Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda, is the author of several articles about them.**



one—is the common teaching to a Hindu. A people with this concept of life would naturally care little about their physical and material achievements. As a corollary to this view of life, even a *chakravartin* ruling over all the lands and seas was conscious of this insignificance of his material existence and renounced the world with ease. The Hindu epics, which, to the West seem to be nothing more than mythological and mystic compositions, afford many great examples of this view of history.

Revolutions are constantly taking place and political history is replete with their stories. With these, the evolution of the mind is also taking place, constantly and imperceptibly. This evolutionary process signifies the growth of mind which presupposes ever-increasing interaction with physical environments. The story of this interaction is the story of the dialectics of right and wrong, of dharma and adharma. It keeps no diary of dates but goes on endlessly according to a divine plan, as it seems. The needs of the time cause it. In India, the Vedic way of life of prehistoric days was replaced by the culture of Puranic caste and creed. Later, when the social fibre was threatened by its excesses, Buddhism came. With the decay of Buddhism, a revival of Vedanta was ushered in by Shankara in the ninth century and followed by Sri Ramanuja and Sri Madhva in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The Islamic onslaught in later days was resisted by the thoughts and preachings of Sri Chaitanya, Nanak and Kabir. Lastly, European incursions with all the glamour of Christianity aided by science and technology, had a tremendous impact on Indian life, but made only a big dent of inertia and decay. The need of the time demanded an equally strong voice of regeneration to fulfill the eternal saying of the *Gita*, 'Whenever dharma decays and adharma prevails, I manifest myself. I come into being in every age for the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked.'\*

Such a phenomenon does not happen frequently. The blossoms of Kamarpukur and Jayrambati gathered fragrance in the garden houses of Dakshineswar and Cossipur and spread their fragrance far and wide from the Baranagore and Belur monasteries. This is the latest story that started last century with the advent of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna.

Sister Nivedita has succinctly evaluated the impact of this 'tremendous spiritual phenomenon', the advent of Sri Ramakrishna thus :<sup>1</sup>

'The world could not bear a second birth like that of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, in five hundred years. The mass of thought that he has left, has first to be transformed into experience; the spiritual energy given forth has to be converted into achievement. Until this is done, what right have we to ask for more? What could we do with more?

'Religion always in India, precedes national awakenings. Shankaracharya was the beginning of a wave that swept round the whole country, culminating in Chaitanya in Bengal, the Sikh gurus in Punjab, Shivaji in Maharashtra and Ramanuja and Madhvacharya in the South. Through each of these a people sprang into self-realization, into national energy, and consciousness of their own unity. Sri Ramakrishna represents a synthesis in one person, of all the leaders. It follows that the movements of his age will unify and organize the more provincial and fragmentary movements of the past.

'Ramakrishna Paramahansa is the epitome of the whole. His was the great superconscious life which alone can witness to the infinitude of the current that bears us all oceanwards. He is the proof of the Power behind us, and the future before us. So great a birth initiates great happenings. Many are to be tried as by fire, and not a few will be found to be pure gold; but whatever happens, whether victory or defeat, speedy fulfilment of prolonged struggle, the fact is that he has been born and lived here in our midst, in the sight and memory of men now living, is proof that—

"God hath sounded forth the trumpet  
That shall never call retreat!  
He is sifting out the hearts of men  
Before His judgement seat;  
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him;  
Be jubilant, my feet!  
Our God is marching on!"

*Julia Ward Howe*

The message of the Master was to be carried far and wide with thundering voice, by his disciple, Swami Vivekananda :

... 'Sri Bhagavan Ramakrishna incarnated himself ... to show where amidst all its many divisions and off-shoots ... lies the true



unity of the Hindu religion . . . and above all, to hold up before men, for their lasting welfare, . . . his own wonderful life into which he infused the universal spirit and character of this Dharma, so long cast into oblivion by the process of time.'<sup>2</sup>

In one of his most animated letters, written to a devotee (Pramadadas Mitra) in 1890, during his period of wandering, Vivekananda said with anguish :

'I cannot disregard his (his Master's) behest. If it is in failure that the great sage laid down his life after having attained to super-human heights of Jnana, Bhakti, Love, and powers, and after having practised for forty years stern renunciation, non-attachment, holiness and great austerities, then where is there anything for us to count on? . . . I am Ramakrishna's slave, having laid my body at his feet "with Til and Tulasi leaves" . . . His behest to me was that I should devote myself to the service of the Order of all-renouncing devotees founded by him.'

The contemplated Order was yet to be formally established and the great Swami carried his Master's behest alone in his heart during this long period of wandering in India and around the globe. Not much is known about this period except through glimpses in letters to his friends and admirers. No records were maintained by him and very little contact was kept with others in the early period of his wandering which was for the acquisition of spiritual powers and knowledge.

So far, during this period, the plan of Swamiji's work was vague and idealistic. As years went on, it became more and more condensed and concrete. Towards the close of his great wandering, he wrote on 27 April 1896 from Highview, Caversham, Reading (U.K.) to his brother disciples in Calcutta spelling out a few details of the great mission that lay ahead. His purpose was 'to contribute to the great well-being of the world'. Broad outlines were given about organizing an Order 'to fulfill the purpose for which the Lord came'. Hints were also given about rules of management of the organization by a governing body with different departments about study of lessons on devotion, yoga, work, spreading ideas of the Order through teaching, study and religious practices.

In Swamiji's lifetime, Sister Nivedita was one of the few who had a clear understanding of his feelings and she recorded in *The Master as I Saw Him* :



'His own life had two definite personal purposes, of which one had been the establishment of a home for the Order of Ramakrishna, while the other was the initiation of some endeavour towards the education of women.'

The first one was achieved in his lifetime, in 1897, with the establishment of a Math at Belur, on the other side of the Ganga near Dakshineswar. His other desire was to have an institution for women which would grow up on the ideals set forth in the life and example of the Holy Mother and 'in the way the Master wanted to see it'. He did not live long enough to see it himself and, for various reasons, his wish—perhaps the one wish Swamiji did not realize in his lifetime—remained unfulfilled for many years.

A small beginning was, however made in establishing, in 1902, the Sister Nivedita Girls' School in Baghbazar, Calcutta. Ultimately, in the Holy Mother's birth centenary year, the authorities of the Belur Math decided that the time had come when Swamiji's idea of a Math for women could be brought into being. Accordingly, Sri Sarada Math was founded on 2 December 1954, on 'the Eastern bank of the Ganga' in Dakshineswar, placing it in charge of women who had already taken up the life of renunciation and service according to the ideals of the Ramakrishna Order. Later on, in May 1960, the trustees of Sri Sarada Math started the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission with the object of carrying on spiritual, cultural, educational and similar activities among women and children, irrespective of caste, creed or nationality. Sri Sarada Math and the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, though having separate legal status, are basically one with the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission.

Thus the prophetic vision of Swamiji is realized in full and the seed of 'the great religious order' which was sown in his lifetime, germinates on both sides of the Ganga—one a little to the south, and the other a little to the north, of the Dakshineswar Kali Temple, where Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi lived many long years of *sadhana* and from where they shower their blessings and inspiration on all.

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