



SAMVIT

[Knowledge that leads to enlightenment]



Sri Sarada Math, Dakshineswar, Calcutta-700 076

No. 14, September 1986

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म नो बुद्ध्या शुभया संयुनक्तु ।

May He endow us with good thoughts.

Shvetashvatara Upanishad III. 4.

Universal Prayers

ॐ भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः

भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।

स्थिरैरङ्गैस्तुष्टुवांसस्तनूभिर्

व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः ॥

Om. O Gods, may we hear with our ears what is auspicious. O Ye adorable ones, may we see with our eyes what is auspicious. May we sing praises to Ye all and may we enjoy with strong limbs and bodies the life granted to us by the Gods.

Rig Veda I.lxxxix.8.

REFLECTIONS

He is in You, He is in Me

THE POWERFUL king Hiranyakashipu of the race of demons was angry with his young son, Prahlad, because he was always extolling God. 'Where is your God?' he exclaimed in anger. Prahlad replied:

त्वय्यस्ति भगवान् विष्णुर्भयि चान्यत्र चास्ति सः ।

'Lord Vishnu is in you, He is in me, and He is everywhere.'

'If He is everywhere, is He in this stone pillar, too?' asked Hiranyakashipu. As he spoke he struck the pillar in anger, and immediately Lord Vishnu leaped from the pillar, assuming the form of Narasimha, half man, half lion.

The central theme of Indian religion is that in plurality is the One. As the *Bhagavad Gita* (XIII.36) says:

अविभक्तं च सूतेषु विभक्तमिव च स्थितम् ।

God the Immanent, the All-pervading exists in all creation—human beings, birds, beasts, plants and even matter. In the Highest Truth of Brahman, there is no variation, though He manifests Himself variously. This concept of the supreme spiritual unity of God is as old as the *Rig Veda* which declares (VIII.lviii.2):

एकं वा इदं वि बभूव सर्वम् ।

'That which is One has become the All'. On this central principle rest the tenets and beliefs of the different religions.

From time immemorial efforts were made to understand this principle by studying the manifold physical and visible world. The result was that the Absolute, the Transcendental, the Immanent, the inner Being was lost sight of and people perceived and presented only different aspects of the same truth. As Swami Vivekananda said: '... one fact stands out from all these different religions, that there is an Ideal Unit Abstraction, which is put before us, either in the form of a Person, or an Impersonal Being, or a Law, or a Presence, or an Essence.'

During the Vedic period was heard this note of unity underlying variety, for the wise concluded that it was the One Being which was contemplated in various ways:

एकं सत् विद्वा बहुधा वदन्ति ।

'Truth is One, the wise call It by different names.'

This vision of unity in the midst of variety has come to stay in India. It has lived down the centuries, and is our greatest spiritual heritage. We cannot deny, however, that in India the vision of this truth has been dimmed time and again. Many different religions—each receiving the imprint of its age and its people, many conflicting philosophies, and even sectarianism have found ground and the vision of their underlying unity has faded. Nevertheless, these variations have added to the vigour of India's spiritual life, for they include the whole range of thought and feeling which the human mind is capable of experiencing.

Swamiji emphatically said, therefore, 'Variation is the sign of life, and it must be there.' 'Just as we have recognized unity by our very nature, so we must also recognize variation. We must learn that truth may be expressed in a hundred thousand ways, and that each of these ways is true as far as it goes.'

We cannot, therefore, reject any path as untrue. Though names and goals are different, the inner content of all the religions is the same. They all point to the one aspiration of the human soul—to know the truth—the Religion of Truth. They are conscious, on the one hand, of the Supreme Reality, and, on the other hand, of the anguish of entanglement in the meshes of matter, for that entanglement makes them struggle for freedom. They desire to give up the plane of matter and rise to a higher sphere; they seek a deeper expression of the Infinite, and union with the Absolute. This struggle is 'the germ of religions' Swamiji says. The Vedic *rishi* of yore prayed for the same integral vision:

हिरण्ययेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् । तत् त्वं पूषन् अपावृणु सत्यवर्माय दृष्टये ॥

'The face of Truth is hidden under the golden orb; O Thou Nourisher of the world, please remove it, so that I may realize It—I who am devoted to Truth.'

This struggle to enter a state of beatitude by transcending the limitations of the world brings the understanding that 'Religion is realization; not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they

may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing or acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes. That is religion.'

Exemplars of Divine Life

From the lives of seers and saints we understand that realization is not an abstraction; it is real, much more real than this world is to our senses. It brings us in direct contact with spiritual facts. Rare indeed are those to whom Reality has been revealed as the Absolute.

For Prahlad, God manifested Himself in a stone pillar; for Narsimha Mehta, his Damodar Krishna had to break open a locked temple door and come out; for Jnaneshwar, a passing buffalo had to finish the recitation of the half-uttered *Purusha-sukta*; for Ramakrishna, Bhavatarini Kali had to burst forth as a sea of consciousness.

True that these great ones are exemplars of the Divine Life, and that *they* have made India a fascinating ground for spiritual experiences. Not only through the religions which grew in the native soil has spirituality flourished here, but also through those religions which were implanted in the country by foreign conquerors over a long period of history.

In this holy land, the idea of the immanence of God has so deeply penetrated into the collective consciousness of the people, that one does not necessarily need to be a prophet or a saint to experience this state of blessedness in life. Proof of this is found in the interesting story of Subedar Ali, of Corbett National Park, the well-known wildlife sanctuary. Having heard the story, and attracted by his one utterance of this supreme faith, the present writer interviewed him. This is the story:

God is Immanent

On 15 February, 1984, 26-year-old Subedar Ali, a fodder collector rode his she-elephant, Gomati, into the jungle in Corbett Park to collect fresh leaves for her. He chained Gomati to a tree near a canal and having walked about ten feet, climbed a tree and cut the foliage. He then walked back to Gomati, placed the fodder near her, and sat beside her, smoking. His eyes suddenly fell on some more fresh leaves on a lower branch of the same tree. He went back, climbed up the tree and cut down the leaves, but before he could collect them a man-eating tiger, who had been hiding in the thick undergrowth of the Sal forest,

jumped up into the tree and caught him from behind by the left shoulder. The beast and the man both fell down, the man landing on the tiger's left side. The tiger then threw him to the ground and mauled him. His scalp was torn off till the skull bones were visible; both his eyelids were torn open, though the eyes were not hurt; the right temple and the neck below were pierced by his teeth, but the jugular vein was not cut; his right jaw was fractured and his chin was slashed. During this encounter Subedar Ali courageously put his right hand in the tiger's mouth and pulled his tongue, and even brashly bit his nose. The tiger chewed his first two fingers. It was at this time that Subedar Ali, with blood streaming down, folded his hands and prayed to God in the form of the tiger. He asked the tiger not to kill him.

I first meet Subedar Ali in hospital in Delhi in May 1984, but at that time he was still not well. I was keen to meet him again, so the following September I met him at the house of Sri Brijendra Singh, honorary wild-life warden of Corbett Park, where Subedar Ali was recouping. This time I asked him some questions :

Ques. : Were you fully conscious all the time?

Ans. : Yes.

Ques. : How did you pray to God then?

Ans. : I prayed : Whoever you are, Allah, Bhagawan, Ishwar, Kalu Saheed, Siddhabali*—whoever you are, I pray to you, do not kill me; let me live. I have done no wrong, why do you want to kill me? If I have done any wrong, forgive me.

These words were not uttered by a devotee sitting comfortably in a shrine or a mosque or a church or a synagogue. They were addressed with folded hands by Subedar Ali to a ferocious 300 kg. tiger, a man-eater, sitting on his right thigh, and snorting in rage.

Ques. : You prayed to God in the form of a tiger! Do you believe, then, that God is immanent, that He is even in the tiger?

Ans. : Yes, I do. That is why I prayed to him with folded hands and asked for forgiveness for any wrong I may have done.

Ques. : But do you think the tiger-God listened to you?

Ans. : Yes, the tiger immediately stopped mauling me. He got up

* Names of deities in Corbett Park where small shrines dedicated to them are found in many places.

from my right thigh which he was pressing down hard, and went towards my outstretched feet five feet away. He pressed my right foot down—but lightly.

Ques. : Then?

For two minutes the man-eater and the man looked at each other. The devout Subedar thought his prayer was answered, but, it may be that the tiger was only watching his prey—as do all carnivorous animals, before enjoying a full feast! After some time the man-eater got up, gripped Subedar by the neck and dragged him some five-six feet away and sat down pressing his right foot again.

At that time Subedar shouted for another mahout, Qutab, who was also collecting fodder in the vicinity. On hearing his shout, Qutab came immediately. Seeing another man and an elephant, the man-eater left his prey, and moved away another ten-twelve feet and sat down. Qutab, standing between the tiger and Subedar, told him to roll down to the canal where Gomati was tied and unshackle her. Subedar did so, and Qutab ordered Gomati to lift him up. She bent down very low, Subedar caught hold of her ears, and Gomati lifted Subedar up in her trunk and onto his seat. Both the elephants then marched off. The prowler followed them for a kilometre or so, then disappeared into the thick jungle.

When taking leave of Subedar Ali, I asked him :

Ques. : Will you go back to Corbett Park?

Ans. : Yes.

Ques. : Do you fear or hate tigers now?

Ans. : No - no. I will be amongst them again.

Ques. : Do you think of Gomati?

Ans. : I want to go back to her and ride her.

* * *

The point in narrating this story is only this that in Subedar Ali's prayer and his belief in the immanence of God lies the most bright and refreshing feature of Indian spiritual thought. God is *Vibhu*, all-pervading. He is in you, He is in me, and He is everywhere.*

* Under Sri Brijendra Singh's able direction the man-eater was caged on 1 March 1984, and taken to the Kanpur zoo. In November 1984 Subedar Ali went back to Corbett Park as a fodder collector.



Subedar Ali in September 1984



The man-eater now in the Zoo, Kanpur

Courtsey : Smt. Dawn Singh



Sri Sarada Devi

Glimpses of Great Ones

PARUKUTTY AMMA GOVINDA PILLAI

MY EARLIEST recollection of seeing Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna's photograph was when I was a child of about six years. It was in the year 1902 when I was living with my parents at Neyyattinkara, a town about twelve miles from Trivandrum and where my father was Tahsildar-cum-Magistrate. On a wall in the big living room my father had placed two small photographs framed together, one of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna and the other of Swami Vivekananda and he used to burn incense before them every day. My father was given these two photographs by Swami Ramakrishnananda himself. He used to tell us that he was acquainted with a certain Bengali gentleman by the name of Kallipada Ghosh, a householder disciple of Sri Bhagavan, and who was an agent of a big firm at Trivandrum. In those days my father was very much attracted to the teachings of Keshab Chandra Sen and the Brahmo Samaj and he used to discuss them with Sri Ghosh. The latter, however, told him that a far greater man than Keshab Chandra Sen had some time earlier passed away in Bengal and that one of his direct disciples was staying in Madras. On hearing this, my father immediately took leave and proceeded to Madras to meet this disciple. He was none other than the Swami Ramakrishnananda. At this first meeting with Swami Ramakrishnananda, my father, later on said that when the Swami gripped his hand, he felt some kind of power passing from the Swami to him. It was on that occasion that Swami Ramakrishnananda presented him with the two photographs mentioned above.

An aftermath of that meeting was that my father, who used to behave rather harshly towards criminals and other wrong-doers, became much gentler and kinder in his attitude towards them. In those days Neyyattinkara was notorious for its rowdies and gangsters. The most notorious of them all was a gang of twenty-one rowdies nicknamed the 'Twenty-first-Company'. Several of its members came from good Nayar families. Their pastime was to terrorize the neighbourhood and indulge in all kinds of misdemeanours. Once, the Peshkar,

These are the reminiscences of Parukutty Amma Govinda Pillai as told to one of her children. A humble offering to Sri Sarada Math Journal 'Samvit' by her daughter Sister Kalyani, Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratisthana, Calcutta.

Sri Nagamiah, came to Neyyattinkara on official duty. While visiting a friend, the Peshkar had kept his horse-drawn phaeton outside the house. After the visit was over and on coming out of the house, he found to his great astonishment his carriage hoisted far aloft a tree and some members of the 'Twenty-first Company' nonchalantly seated inside it, playing cards. The Peshkar was terrified and fled Neyyattinkara in haste. On another occasion the gang removed the image from the local Ganapati temple, and, seating themselves right inside the Sanctum sanctorum indulged in their favourite pastime of playing cards. My father was a man of great courage. No other Government officer had, till then, dared to interfere with this notorious gang. But my father smashed it, and had the ring-leaders soundly thrashed and sent to jail. Rough-arm methods were no doubt needed in those rough times.

It was in 1902 at Neyyattinkara that I had my first meeting with Swami Ramakrishnananda. He was the first direct disciple of Sri Bhagavan whom I had the extreme good fortune of meeting. He was then on his way to Kanyakumari on a pilgrimage. I think he made part of the journey by bullock-cart which used to run in relays of twelve miles and thereafter change bullocks. The Swami would not stay in any private house and so my father arranged to put him up in the 'Musaveri' Bungalow, a place reserved for V.I.Ps. I accompanied my father to the Bungalow to see the Swami. I was then about six years old. We took with us two newly-made pillows for him. I recall the Swami as a person of stout build, clad in *Kavi* (ochre-coloured) clothes and cap. He stayed in Neyyattinkara for three or four days and delivered some lectures. My father invited him one day to our house for lunch. He graciously accepted the invitation. He was served on a big plantain leaf upon which the various items of food were arranged. After the Swami had seated himself, he took out from a small pouch that he was carrying, a photograph of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. He placed the photograph before the food, closed his eyes for a minute or two, offered the food to Sri Bhagavan, replaced the photo in the pouch, and only then started eating. Just then my father brought in the *ghee*, which item had been forgotten, but the Swami refused to take it, saying that he could not do so as he had not offered it first to Sri Bhagavan.

An interesting episode, I recall, during the Swami's visit to our

house, was that he advised me to perform a few *yogasana* poses every day. He demonstrated them to me, and when he found I could do them with ease, he was highly pleased.

I first met the Swami Nirmalananda at Trivandrum in December 1911, soon after my marriage. He was one of those who formed the first group of monks of the Order that had seen the Master. I was then staying with my father's younger and only brother, Dr. K. Raman Thampi. My uncle was then the President of the local Vedanta Society and the Swami was invited to address the members of his family. My father was away at Haripad, where he had already introduced the Swami Nirmalananda to the local population. It was at Haripad that the very first Ramakrishna Ashrama in Travancore was established. The site for the Ashrama was donated by a Brahmin devotee who later on took *sannyasa* and became Swami Chitsukhananda. He was popularly known as 'Doctor Swami'. The building was constructed through the munificence of a lawyer named Sri Subramaniam Iyer. I used to see these two gentlemen at my father's house in Haripad where they were frequent visitors. On the day of the installation of Sri Ramakrishna's shrine, a grand feast was given at which many different people sat down together, including our so-called untouchables, and participated in the function without any distinction whatsoever of caste or status. This was quite an event in those distant times when not only 'untouchability' but also 'unapproachability' was the order of the day, in that highly caste-conscious society. Incidentally, it was at Haripad that my father met the then Sri Shankaracharya of Sringeri Math with whom he conversed in Sanskrit. My father afterwards remarked that His Holiness, though surrounded with all the magnificence and trappings of his Order, was a person 'well-established in Yoga'.

In 1908 my father left for Madras to plead with the Swami Ramakrishnananda to give him *upadesha*, initiation. But the Swami told him that he was not in the habit of giving initiation to anybody. However he was good enough to give my father a letter of introduction to the Swami Brahmananda, recommending that he give Sri Thampi initiation. Armed with this letter, my father immediately left for Puri in Orissa where Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) was then staying. On reading the Swami Ramakrishnananda's letter, Maharaj immediately agreed to fulfil my father's heart's desire and accordingly initiated him. This was his first meeting with the Swami Brahmananda. When the great

Swami Vivekananda visited Trivandrum in 1892 my father was away at Madras where he appeared for his B.L. degree examination, and so missed what would no doubt have been for him a most unique experience. My father used to tell us that his missing the opportunity of meeting Swamiji Maharaj was a matter of great regret for him.

In 1916 the Swami Brahmananda was invited to lay the foundation stone of the Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama at Nettayam in Trivandrum. At that time, since my husband was away in England for higher studies, I was staying with my daughter in my father's house at Kottayam, where he was the District Superintendent of Police. Swamiji was given a rousing reception at Alwaye, and, en route to Trivandrum, he stayed for a few days at Kottayam. On this occasion Maharaj visited my father's house. He was accompanied by Swamis Shankarananda and Nirmalananda and others. The Swami Yatiswarananda, who was then a *brahmachari* and not yet initiated into *sannyasa*, was in the party but did not come to our house. I recall that Swami Brahmananda while in our house took my daughter, then a child of three years on his lap, and blessed her. My father and mother considered it their extreme good fortune that during the stay of the Swamis at Kottayam, they could minister to all their wants.

A curious incident involving a member of my family was associated with the Swami Brahmananda's visit to Kerala. My uncle, Dr. Raman Thampi, was then posted at Quilon. On his way back from Trivandrum, the Swami stopped at Quilon for some days. My uncle's wife, to her great sorrow, could not go and pay her respects to the Swami at the place where he was camping, on account of an accident she had suffered. She was then pregnant about eight months and had the misfortune of falling down a flight of stairs in that condition from the first floor of her house. As a result the protrusion in her stomach became misplaced to one side. It was even feared that the child she was carrying was hurt in the accident. Maharaj visited my uncle in his house, and when he saw my aunt's condition, he gently waved his hand over the swelling and blessed her. My aunt immediately felt great relief and, in course of time, she had a perfectly normal delivery.

In 1919 the Swami Virajananda, who later became President of the Mission and who was a *sannyasi* disciple of the Swami Vivekananda, visited Trivandrum and stayed in father's house where I was

also put up. He stayed in our house for two days and afterwards proceeded to Kanyakumari, Rameshwaram and so on. My husband was then away at Bangalore where he was employed. My husband had very early contacts, even before mine, with the Bangalore Ashrama which was then in the charge of Swami Nirmalananda. He was also acquainted, as early as 1917, with the Swami Yatswarananda who was living at the Ashrama.

My second meeting with the Swami Brahmananda was in 1921 at the Bangalore Ashrama. On that occasion my husband and I went to the Ashrama to pay our respects to him. During the Swami's stay at Bangalore one of its prominent citizens, Rao Sahib H. Channiah invited the Swami to his house for a *bhajan* party. My husband and I were also present in Sri Channiah's house that evening. I recall having sent an armchair from my house for Maharaj's use. Ever since, I could never bring myself to sit again in that chair in which Maharaj had sat. I also sent to the Ashrama several mangoes, then growing in the compound of my house, as an offering to the Swami. Later, the Swami Nirmalananda told us that Maharaj appreciated the mangoes very much. They were of a variety which, even when quite ripe, retained a green appearance on the outside. Commenting on this, the Swami Nirmalananda recalled Sri Ramakrishna's comparison of Swami Brahmananda to the green mango which to all outward appearance was unripe, but in reality was ripe and sweet. The Swami, he said, was like that: full of *brahma-jnana* inside, though nobody could gauge the depth of his greatness.

It was in 1923 or 1924 that my husband and I met Miss MacLeod, the woman follower of Swami Vivekananda, at the Bangalore Ashrama. Unknown to us then, she had noted down in her diary the particulars of our visit, including my husband's name, job, address and so on. Later on, after a lapse of several years, when Miss MacLeod was living in Calcutta, a group of my husband's students, accompanied by a tutor, visited Bulur Math and, incidently, met her. During the course of her conversation with them, when my husband's name was mentioned, she referred to her diary and read the particulars she had written down about us. She was pleased and sent to me through the tutor a copper coin, on one side of which was an engraved portrait of Sri Ramakrishna and on the other side, a portrait of Swami Vivekananda. I have since treasured this gift and have always worn it round my neck.

for more than forty-five years now.

I might mention here a story connected with Miss MacLeod's stay in Belur Math. It would appear that during those days whenever a senior monk of the Math passed away, the room in which he had lived, together with the various articles of his everyday use, was locked up. This had happened in the case of the rooms used by Swami Vivekananda and Swami Brahmananda. Miss MacLeod was reported to have observed that if the rooms of the deceased monks were thus continued to be locked up, very soon there would be none left for the living ones. Thereafter, it was said, this practice was discontinued. I do not now recall who told me of this incident.

It was in 1926 that I had the supreme good fortune of meeting, at the Bangalore Ashrama, the Swami Shivananda, called Mahapurush Maharaj by his devotees. I was at that time anxious to take initiation and had been pressing Swami Nirmalananda for it. But he used to put me off, asking me to wait. Then, one day, Mahapurush Maharaj came to Bangalore. Hearing the plea of Swami Nirmalananda, Swami Shivananda readily agreed to give me initiation. I was accordingly initiated by Mahapurush Maharaj and on the same day he performed my second son's *vidyarambha* ceremony. I considered this an utmost blessing, my having been able to receive initiation from so great a soul. I could meet Swami Shivananda only twice more during that visit of his to Bangalore, but he used to correspond with me. I might add that it was after the Swami's visit to Bangalore that women devotees first started partaking of *prasad* in the Ashrama. He expressed a wish that at least during the occasion of the birthday celebrations of the Holy Mother, women should be invited to participate in the function.

In conclusion I would like to say a few words about my parents. Were it not especially for my father's religious fervour and enthusiasm, I would perhaps not have had the opportunity of having these glimpses of great ones.

My mother was a typical Hindu housewife. She was very energetic by nature and deeply religious. I consider her to have been most privileged in that she had found ample opportunity of serving the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna whenever they visited Kerala.

In his younger days my father had displayed no great liking for religion and was practically an atheist. Notwithstanding this, he had

acquired a reputation for being truthful, courageous and fearless in the performance of his official duties, but he had little liking for Government service. He was without ambition and had no desire to earn money. He even resigned his post as Commissioner of Police of Travancore, well before the age of retirement, mainly with a view to engaging himself in spiritual pursuits. However, once he came into contact with the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, his transformation to the spiritual way of life was very rapid. He used to tell us of his meeting in Calcutta with 'M', Master Mahendranath Gupta, the celebrated chronicler of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. It seems when my father prostrated himself before 'M', to my father's great astonishment, 'M' prostrated in turn before him, such was the utter humility of that great soul. 'M' also told my father that Sri Ramakrishna used to say that, in course of time, men from the South, 'wearing earrings', would become his disciples too. My father at the time of his meeting 'M' was wearing large red earrings, as was the custom among the Nayars of his generation.

During the last days of his life my father became ill and was bed-ridden. On the night before his passing away, an attendant who was sleeping outside his room, afterwards said that he had a vivid dream in which he saw a group of *sannyasins* approaching him and telling him that they had come to take away the Swami Parananda (my father's monastic name). Who knows, those *sannyasins* might have been his beloved Gurus who had come for their disciple. In the last two days of his life my father was unconscious, but throughout that period he was murmuring continuously, 'Ramakrishna-Sarada, Ramakrishna-Sarada'. And so, let me end these brief chronicles, with my father's last words 'SRI RAMAKRISHNA-SRI SARADA'.

Concepts of Nature and Divinity in Sanskrit Literature

KAMALA RATNAM

'INDEED IT is I, Indra expressing myself in the cloud, in the expanding sea, verily I am Varuna and I am present in this wide earth. I permeate the impermeable sky. Heaven and earth, of excellent form, are but my reflection. Knowing this I, as Tvashta, bring into being the worlds together with the creatures. Heaven and earth are sustained by me.'

'I have sprinkled the waters falling from the Rains, I have held together the Heavens wherein the Sun and *Rita* are sustained. Verily I am that Aditya whom *Rita* begot as his son from the womb of Aditi. The three worlds consisting of the three elements are created for me!*

These are excerpts from the world's oldest book, the *Rig Veda*. The Vedas have conceived this world of multifarious phenomena as an extension of the Supreme Entity. 'All this is indeed Brahma' (सर्वं ब्रह्म इदं ब्रह्म), they exclaim. Further the Vedas declare, 'As light, He dwells in the luminous sky. As air, He inhabits the mid-space. As fire, He exists in the sacrificial altar. As a guest, He is present in the house. As life, He is in mankind. As *Rita*, (the Moral Order) He exists everywhere. As the Supreme Entity He exists, He shines in sacrifices, in the sky, in water, in light, in mountains and in Truth.'

Sanskrit literature carries with it the Vedic heritage of the immanence of Brahman in *Prakriti* or Nature. Human beings and Nature are one and interdependent. Human beings are creatures of Nature. Hence humanity can progress only in conformity with nature; confrontation with nature will lead nowhere. In consonance with this idea, the Vedas conceive of the various powers of Nature in human form. These are referred to as Devatas or Devas or, in other words, as (human) beings endowed with divine powers. Thus Agni, Yama, Indra, Vayu

* अहमिन्द्रो वरुणस्ते संहितोर्वीरौ रश्मिरे रश्मिर्वा सुमेके । त्वष्टेव विश्वा भुवनानि विद्वान्समैरय रोदसी धारय च ॥
अहमपो सवित्रमुलमाणा धारय दिवं दधन ऋतस्य । ऋतेन पुत्रो अदितेऋताबोत विश्वातु प्रवयहि भूम ॥

Rig Veda, IV.xli.3-4.

Kamala Ratnam was professor of Sanskrit at Kamala Raja College, Gwalior, and visiting professor at Tokyo, Canberra, Moscow and Mexico Universities. She was awarded the title 'Kalidasa Vidvan' by the Vikrama University, Ujjain, for her deep studies in Kalidasa literature. Among her published works are, *Ramayana in Laos*, *Luz Ocure*, (a collection of poems in Spanish) and *Kamala Devi*, a biography.

and Varuna are described as if they were men, and they behave accordingly. It has been noticed in primitive societies that owing to lack of intimacy, natural phenomena like the rain, storm, cloud and lightning are regarded as objects of fear. Hence the first task of the Veda is to familiarize people with these powers of Nature. The *rishi* Gritsamada of the *Rig Veda* introduces Indra in the following manner:

'He who from his very birth outshone the gods by his prowess and strength of mind, at whose breath Heaven and Earth tremble, O Ye mortals! due to the greatness of his strength that person became Indral

'He who steadied the agitated earth and brought the quivering mountains to a halt, he who found the limits of limitless space, and he who sustained the Heavens, know ye, that he was Indra.

'He who slew the serpent Vritra and released the seven streams from his grip, he who drove out the cows from the cave of Vala, he who begot fire between two stones, he who is the destroyer in every battle, know ye, he was Indral'

This is the wondrous, brilliant form of Indra, full of strength and vigour. Our Vedic ancestors adored power; they did so because they were themselves powerful. Standing at the dawn of creation they were full of boundless enthusiasm, strength and freshness. They were far removed from present day men whining and begging, and prostrating themselves before gods of their own creation. Their watchword was the Gayatri-Mantra which has become famous as the most powerful prayer, 'Let us meditate upon the energetic (aspect) of the Sun, so that He may kindle our intellect.' Here is no abjectness or inferiority, on the other hand there is strong determination to become as strong as the very powers of nature invoked. This attitude leads to gradual identification of the human being with the powers of nature.

Agni, the deity of fire, is the most favoured god in the Vedas. The greatest number of hymns are addressed to this radiant *devata*. However, our Vedic ancestor has no sense of fear in the presence of the terrible and fiery nature of Agni. He knows that he is in constant need of Agni's assistance in order to perform sacrifices and continue in his daily life. He therefore invites him as a friend and helper in his tasks. He has spread out a grass-seat for him near the sacrificial altar. The *rishi* of the *Sama Veda* sings to him thus:

'O Agni! Come, come and be my benefactor, come to receive my oblations. Come and sit down by my side on this seat which I have

spread for you!

Now it is obvious that these words are not addressed to the physical fire which would come enshrouded in hot flames and make short work of the grass-seed. On the contrary, the preceptor is invoking the spiritual Fire which gives shape and form to its terrestrial manifestation and whose friendship can help him to fulfil his tasks. In another Vedic hymn the poet addresses Agni as his father, kin, brother and life-long friend. It has to be especially noted here that in the beginning when the prime need was to establish civilized society, then our proud ancestors did not talk of taming or conquering Nature. They did not think that Nature was an alien or an enemy to be subdued. On the other hand, knowing themselves to be a part of Nature they maintained close proximity with her and expected every kind of assistance from her.

Surya, the deity of the Sun, is another important god of the Vedas. Our ancestors were familiar with hundreds of attributes of the Sun. They were well aware of the multifarious activities of the Sun, hence the Sanskrit language has as many names for the Sun as for his functions. The *Amarakosha* alone enumerates fifty-four synonyms for the Sun, when the powerful western languages do not possess a second parallel expression for this burning orb. Surya is *Sura* because he inspires, he is the cause of birth hence he is *Savita*, he removes darkness hence he is known as *Tamisraha*, and he possesses *rava* (speed) hence he is *Ravi*. He is *Surya* because he rises and sets daily. Apart from these, the Sun is also beautiful, therefore he is *Chitrabhanu*. Rishi Kutsa happened to see this beautiful orb rising above the horizon one day and soon he burst forth in song:

'Look! The bright orb, the beautiful face of the gods, has risen in the sky! He is the eye of Mitra, of Varuna and of Agni. With his radiance he has filled the heaven, the earth and indeed all space; Surya is the Atma (the very life-breath) of this whole creation, of that which moves and that which does not move!'

What a wonderful and grand conception of the Sun and its powers! Here he is not the mere corporeal sphere, *Martanda* revolving in the sky, on whom we train our telescopes and whom we make the object of our scientific investigations. This is the Sun within the Sun, its inner power. It is this Sun which transmits itself into us and feeds our sense of individual identity and capacity.

The beauty of the Sun leads the *rishi* to think of his role as a lover. Every morning he pleads his suit to Ushas, the lovely goddess of Dawn. Her lustrous form is resplendent in her delicate rose-pink raiment. Everything around her is transparent and full of light. She herself is the embodiment of light. The sun-god pursues her scintillating form like a young man seeking out a young woman. People on earth look upon the brilliant disc of the sun, rising higher and higher in the sky and are encouraged to engage in excellent deeds in company with their mates so good may come to all.

Rishi Vishvamitra has given an eloquent picture of Ushas. She is rich in abundance, brings wealth to all, ancient yet ever new, goddess immortal, riding her shining chariot. Verily, she is the banner of immortality flying before each one of us every morning.

While the Vedic seer is capable of perceiving the highest truth, he is not unmindful of the exuberance of nature around him. Simple homely creatures found everywhere are equally worthy of his attention. After a long, hot and dry summer, the rains have come. The heavens are letting loose their moisture in abundance. The attention of the *rishi* Vasishtha is drawn towards the frogs frolicking in a nearby pond and he forthwith joins them with his song:

'Like brahmins engaged in austerities, these frogs have passed through the summer season drying up in their skins; now with the advent of rain they have become excited and lift their voices. The small pond which had become dry in the long summer is now overflowing, It has completely covered their hot shrivelled bodies lying at the bottom. And their happy croaking voices resound in the atmosphere like the satisfied lowing of cows at the sight of their calves at end of day. In glee the wet and dripping frogs leap upward; some are green, some freckled and some grey. Together they call out and quickly answer back like school boys, repeating their lessons. As brahmins sit around the large brimming vessel offering the great Soma sacrifice and engage in conversation these frogs leap around the green pool, croaking and expressing their joy because the rains have come!'

* संबत्सरे जलयाता ब्राह्मणा वृत्तचारिणः । वाचं पञ्चैश्वरिन्वितां प्र मण्डूका मवादिषुः ॥

दिव्या प्रापो अग्निं यदेनवायन्दुति न शुष्कं सरसी जलानम् ।

गवामहं न मायुर्बत्सिनीनां मण्डूकानां वग्नुरक्षा समेति ॥

गोमायुरेको अजमायुरेकः पुमिरेको हरित एक एषाम् ।

समानं नाम विभक्तो बिरूपाः पुष्टा वाचं पिपितुर्बन्तः ॥ *Rig Veda*, VII.ciii.1-2, 6.

In the above description the human being is a spectator. The nature-damsel has transformed herself into this medley of frogs. Dripping wet, she is dancing and celebrating the advent of the rains; the human being has become one with her. The frogs have helped him to forget his separate identity and merge himself with the Supreme enjoying absolute bliss. However, the attainment of bliss through the contemplation of terrestrial beauty brings its own reward or penalty. Watching the daily phenomenon of the fleeting image of Ushas *rishi* Angiras is suddenly made aware of the poignant transience of life and he sings sadly:

‘Vanished and gone long since are all those mortals who looked upon the Dawn’s bright countenance in former ages. We now behold her light and they are coming who will see her in times to come. Dawn awakens every living creature; but him who is dead she wakes not from his slumer. . . . We have arrived at the hour of dawn where men prolong existence for a new day. . . . Shine then today, O Goddess, on him who lauds thee!’ The transience of life here does not embitter the enjoyment of life, but leads to the revelation of a new concept of Time. Time, Kala, now emerges as a mighty, eternal, self-sufficient entity Maha-Kala. By the time the *Atharva Veda* was composed Time was defined thus (XIX.I.iii):

‘Time is ageless, rich in seed. All worlds are his wheels. Time begot yonder heaven. Time also begot this earth. That which was, and that which shall be, urged forth by Time, spread out. Time created the earth, in Time the Sun burns. In Time are all beings, in Time the eye looks abroad.’

Knowing that Time was the unifying force behind the Universe, it was but a short step for man to realize the divine presence pervading the Universe. Rishi Prājapatya Hiranyagarbha sang thus in his hymn dedicated to Prajapati:

‘He is the giver of mental and physical strength, all created beings in the universe anticipate his command. Yes, even the gods are not outside his law. For Death and Immortality are but his shadow; to what god then should we bring our oblations?’

Prajapatya Hiranyagarbha’s words were further elucidated by *rishi* Parameshthi in his Nasadiya Sukta in *Rig Veda*, (X.129):

‘Then there was neither being nor non-being; nor space, nor air, nor earth nor the firmament beyond. Darkness was covered by

darkness. Death and immortality did not exist and there was nothing to distinguish night from day. The Wheel of Time stood still.'

And reaching that stage beyond words and beyond experience the Vedic *rishi* was compelled to state:

'Who knows and who can say with certainty whence all this came? Whose is this creation? Even the gods came after creation; Indeed, then, who knows the source of it all'

Then there came a time which was in-between, when one neither knew nor did not know. The *rishi* said truthfully:

'Whence came all this creation, was it created or not created? For he who exists in the blameless lustre of his own self, he who is the controller of all this, even he knows it or does not know it!'

Here we are confronted with a fiercely honest and fearless statement of truth. Only primeval man has the courage to admit his limitations. Churning the interior of the soul with the rod of intelligence, he discovered that 'being' is in 'non-being' and that existence emerges from non-existence. This discovery was the starting point for some of our early thinkers to delve deeper into the realms of metaphysical (Upanishadic) thought which later blossomed in the form of the Six Systems of Indian Philosophy and their numerous derivatives. Others, less abstract in their thinking turned their attention once again to the contemplation of the Natural phenomena. This was the beginning of the formal interpretation of the Powers of Nature. The Supreme and Absolute beginningless power was viewed in its three aspects, Creative, Preservative and Destructive, leading to the forms of the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshvara. Of these Vishnu and Shiva achieved the greatest popularity. With the passage of time Vishnu revealed himself progressively in the shape of the ten incarnations posing a correct parallel to the several stages of Nature's evolution. The fish, turtle, boar, man-lion and dwarf are the first five incarnations and they point unmistakably towards natural evolution.

How far Shiva has participated in the primal manifestation of Nature is now becoming increasingly apparent to modern physicists and atomic scientists. In his book *The Tao of Physics* Professor Fritjof Capra of Berkeley writes: 'Five years ago, I had a beautiful experience which set me on a road that has led to the writing of this book. I was sitting by the ocean one late summer afternoon, watching the waves rolling in and feeling the rhythm of my breathing, when I

suddenly became aware of my whole environment as being engaged in a gigantic cosmic dance. Being a physicist, I knew that the sand, rocks, water and air around me were made of vibrating molecules and atoms, and that these consisted of particles which interacted with one another by creating and destroying other particles. I knew also that the Earth's atmosphere was continually bombarded by showers of 'cosmic rays', particles of high energy undergoing multiple collisions as they penetrated the air. All this was familiar to me from my research in high-energy physics, but until that moment I had only experienced it through graphs, diagrams and mathematical theories. As I sat on that beach my former experiences came to life; I 'saw' cascades of energy coming down from outer space, in which particles were created and destroyed in rhythmic pulses; I 'saw' the atoms of the elements and those of my body participating in this cosmic dance of energy; I felt its rhythm and I 'heard' its sound, and at that moment I *knew* that this was the Dance of Shiva, the Lord of Dancers worshipped by the Hindus.'

The present writer had a similar experience which confirms this. In the Elephanta Caves near Bombay the writer saw the sacred *Shivalinga* emitting brilliant rays of light like the midday sun. The time was 11 o' clock in the morning and the sun's rays did not fall directly on the sacred symbol. Yet the whole piece of stone was a blaze of light. Just at the same moment, across the sea on the opposite coast, as if it were its counterpart rose the large round dome of Apsara, the Atomic Reactor of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre. Lord Shiva's symbol and the Atomic Reactor were face-to-face. One represented the grand design of modern physics while the other was a symbol of the subtle supra-physical reality described by the ancients.* Suddenly the realization came that these atomic domes are *Shiva-lingas* of the twentieth century, and the writer knew for certain the purpose of installing Shiva's symbols. The twelve *Jyotir-Lingas*, symbols of light, are not remnants of man's superstition, they are the study-centres of the inner core of the science of physics and they are deeply inter-related with Maha-Kala. It is our misfortune that we have become oblivious of the

* Later the writer was informed by the Director of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre that Professor Bhabha especially selected this particular spot for his laboratory as it was directly opposite to the temple of Shiva at Elephanta. He said, 'Elephanta is one ancient Temple of Science and this one will be our modern temple.'

knowledge of this, our most significant spiritual treasure.

Professor George Sudarshan of the University of Texas in the United States is of the opinion that the subtle electric charges moving in space are nothing but fast travelling particles of the Shiva element in Nature. Here in India we see Shiva in a grosser form. In the lower regions of the Himalayas, in the State of Garhwal, there are low mountain-ranges known as the Shivalik. These in fact are *Shiva-alaka*,—the locks of Shiva—which took upon them the first impact of the descending river Ganga and saved the earth from sinking. It is here that the river Ganga changed from Jahnavi, daughter of Jahnu, to Mandakini, the sedately flowing one. Thus the Vedic period had seen the end of the task of understanding and interpreting the various facets of nature and the place of the human being in it which was less than that of the most insignificant atom, *anoraniyan*, smaller than the smallest.

This understanding was expressed in later Sanskrit literature in a sense of deep and abiding friendship with Nature. It became so closely associated with people that it reflected their moods; in sorrow it shed tears with them, in happiness it bore them flowers. When Shakuntala, for example, leaves for her husband's home; the trees who are her *ashrama* companions, provide her bridal dress, the cuckoos voice their good wishes for her journey; but the lone baby-deer, an orphan who had been lovingly reared by Shakuntala, pulls at the end of her bridal robe. He cannot bear to part from her, his foster-mother, who had applied Ingudi oil to his tender lips, bruised by eating thorny grass.* And finally when Shakuntala start to walk sadly away from the *ashrama*, the whole hermitage, the peacocks, deer and tender creepers were plunged in grief.†

Further words are unnecessary. The myriad-splendoured infinite presence of nature is seen not only in the works of the master poet Kalidasa, but in the works of many poets writing in Sanskrit, even in modern times. Today when the reckless proliferation of modern machines and technology poses a serious threat to man's very existence

* श्रीमं केनचिद्विष्णुपाण्डु तरुणा माङ्गल्यमाविष्कृतं, निष्कृतश्चरन्तोऽभोगुणभो जागारतः केनचित् ।

अन्येभ्यो वनदेवताकरतलेरापर्वचागोत्थितैः वराग्याभरणानि तक्षितलयोद्गोषैव-प्रतिष्ठित्विभिः ॥

Abhijnana Shakuntalam, IV.6.

† उद्गमितवर्णकवला मूयः परिवसतस्तर्जना ममूराः । अयसूतपाण्डुवत्ता मूचन्वयभूणीव जताः ॥

Ibid., IV.12.

because of pollution, then the prophetic words of the Vedic *rishi*, invoking real universal peace, gain added significance:

‘May Agni with his shining face bring us peace. Mitra, Varuna and the two Ashvins be conciliatory towards us. Those who do good deeds, may they be conducive to peace, and this moving wind, may he encircle us peacefully. May heaven and earth, when we call out to them, bring us peace. May the sky grant peace to our sight. The herbs and the plants growing in forests, may they prove beneficial to us. And may the Rajaspati Indra, always victorious, desiring victory, be the protector of our tranquillity!’*

Modern science has today borne testimony to the fact that if we do not respect and protect the environment created around us by Nature, we ourselves will remain in danger and we shall not have peace.

* ऋ नो अग्निष्योतिरनीको अस्तु ऋ नो मित्रावरुणावश्विनाशम् ।

ऋ नः सुकृता सुकृतानि सन्तु ऋ न इषिरो अग्निं वातु वातः ॥

ऋ नो आवापृषिवी पूर्वहूतो शमन्तरितं दृश्ये नो अस्तु ।

ऋ न ओषधीर्वेदिनो भवन्तु ऋ नो रजसस्पतिरस्तु त्रिष्णुः ॥

Rig Veda, VII xxxv.4-5.

Away back, where no recorded history, nay, not even the dim light of tradition, can penetrate, has been steadily shining the light, sometimes dimmed by external circumstances, at others effulgent, but undying and steady, shedding its lustre not only over India, but permeating the whole thought-world with its power, silent, unperceived, gentle, yet omnipotent, like the dew that falls in the morning, unseen and unnoticed, yet bringing into bloom the fairest of roses—this has been the thought of the Upanishads, the philosophy of the Vedanta.

Swami Vivekananda

Mata Saraswati Sri Sarada

SHIV DHAWAN

Through the descent of Sita with Rama and Radha with Krishna we find,
Whenever Ishvara incarnates as an Avatara, Shakti follows for the
welfare of mankind.

That Pure Consciousness assumed the form of Ramakrishna, the
Dakshineswar sage,
While Sarada Ma, an embodiment of Shakti, provided succour to
millions in this age.

Ma, Thou art Saraswati, Goddess of wisdom, life-transcending Divinity,
a guide who leads to the flowering of the mind, and makes us free.
Saradamani Devi, Thou art mother, guru and deity,
reveal, oh please reveal thy grandeur to me.

As a mother your tenderness, compassion and effulgence are an
unparalleled sight,

as a deity you are the epitome of purity and glory bright.

As a guru you destroy clotted darkness and take on our sins too,
Divine Saviour, I bow again and again to You.

Self-revelation and Self-concealment are of your nature an
intrinsic part,
no mortal can cognize the Universal Mother unless they possess a
pure heart.

In consideration of our limited faculties, do not turn your face away,
from your children conceal yourself no more, O Mother reveal
thyself I pray.

Goddess Saraswati Sri Sarada, Eternal Light of the Universe,
Transcendental Entity,
I lay this at your lotus feet, Goddess of infinite mercy.

Akka Mahadevi

PRAVRAJIKA AMALAPRANA

SISTER NIVEDITA once remarked, 'India is, above all others, the land of great women. Wherever we turn, whether to history or literature, we are met on every hand by those figures, whose strength she mothered and recognized, while she keeps their memory eternally sacred.' From the very beginning of her history Indian women have distinguished themselves in every sphere of activity in society and, especially in the spiritual field, they have attained the highest. From the Vedic Age to the modern period, India has produced many women saints of great renown, whose very names are associated with spiritual bliss and peace.

The medieval period all over the world is considered a dark period. It is called the Dark Ages in the history of Europe. In India the medieval period was characterized by foreign invasions and internal strife. But in spite of the clashes and conflicts in the realm of politics, this period was in many respects a creative epoch, especially in the sphere of religion, thought and culture. One of the most significant features of this period was the rise of liberal reform movements in religion under great saints like Vallabhacharya, Ramananda, Chaitanya, Namadev, Kabir and Nanak, all of whom were exponents of the Bhakti cult. Their preaching was characterized by an emphasis on the fundamental unity of all religions and the oneness of the Godhead. Love of fellow beings irrespective of caste, creed and sex, and unflinching love for and faith in God were, according to them, the true means of salvation. Women saints from every part of India played an important role in this Bhakti movement. All the reform movements used the language spoken in their respective areas, which gave great stimulus to the growth of vernacular literature all over India. Many women writers and composers made great and lasting contributions towards the enrichment of the thought and literature of their time.

Among the women saints of Karnataka Akka Mahadevi, or Mahadeviyakka as she is also called, holds a very high place. Even today her influence is felt all over the country and her name is held in great respect among the people. The middle of the twelfth century was a period of profound significance in the history of Karnataka. It was

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during this time that a religious movement led by the famous religious leader and reformer Basaveshwara and his fellow workers, Allama Prabhu and others, revitalized and reshaped the Shaiva religion and philosophy into a new and abiding form called Vira-Shaivism. Akka Mahadevi belonged to this group. 'Akka' means elder sister and, though Mahadevi was one of the youngest members of this group, she was regarded as an elder sister in spiritual attainments and was looked upon with great reverence by one and all.

In her intense devotion to Lord Shiva and her single-minded quest of Him she had spurned the riches and comforts of a palace, cut asunder domestic bonds and set out as a wandering devotee, meeting with and overcoming many hardships on her journey to the final goal. Renowned as a Vira-Shaiva mystic, Akka Mahadevi left a literary legacy as well. She had the gift of imaginative expression and many of the outpourings of her experiences are preserved for posterity in the form of *vachanas*, sayings, in rhythmic Kannada prose, a type of composition which was widely favoured by the Vira-Shaiva devotees of the time. Among the many *vachana* writers of Kannada, Mahadevi is acclaimed as one of the very best by modern critics as well as by her contemporary admirers. Her *vachanas* are characterized by intense feeling and deep insight. Some idea of her spiritual ascent, her travail and illumination, can be gathered from these sayings which form a unique contribution to Kannada literature.

Mahadevi was born in A. D. 1130 in an ordinary lower middle-class family at a place called Udutadi. Her parents were ardent devotees of Lord Shiva and so it is not surprising that Mahadevi became a devotee of Shiva even from her childhood. She grew up to be a maiden of surpassing beauty. One day Prince Kaushika, the ruler of the state, was passing by in a procession when his gaze fell upon Mahadevi as she was standing in front of her house. Kaushika fell in love with her and wanted to marry her. But as he was a Bhavi, a non-Shaiva, her parents hesitated and Mahadevi rejected the proposal with utter indignation.

From her childhood Mahadevi had been a devotee of a form of Shiva known as Chenna Mallikarjuna, and He was the sole Lord of her heart and soul. How could she consent to marry Kaushika, who was a Bhavi! But Kaushika was the king, and his ministers threatened her parents that unless they gave their daughter in marriage to him they

would be put to death. Indeed, before the might and power of the king the poor parents were very much afraid, so they pleaded with their daughter to accept Kaushika as her husband.

This was a stupendous blow. If it had concerned only herself, Mahadevi would have resisted to the very end, but now she had to think of saving her parents' lives. What she would never have done to protect herself, she resolved to do for the sake of these devotees of Shiva, her parents. An old dictum of the saints came to her mind: 'One should protect the devotees of Shiva at any cost. One should undergo every kind of misery and agony to save the *shāranas*, the devotees.' Thus fortified in her resolve she decided to make the supreme sacrifice: she would submit to the marriage. Now she pacified her parents and told the ministers that she would agree to their proposal provided that they agreed to her conditions: 'I shall engage myself in the worship of Shiva as I like. I shall spend my time in the company of the devotees as I like. I shall serve my Guru as I like. I shall be with your prince as I like. And I shall tolerate only three violations of these conditions.' The ministers gladly agreed to these terms and even drew up a document recording them. Kaushika was overjoyed at hearing that Mahadevi had at last agreed to marry him.

After the marriage Mahadevi went to Kaushika with a heavy heart and tried to engage herself in the worship of Shiva and in the service of the devotees, whose elevating company used to give her some consolation. Thus it went on for some time. One day some devotees came from a distant place and sent word to the queen. But as Mahadevi was resting at the time, Kaushika sent back the servant, shouting that not a day passed without the arrival of some devotees and that the queen should have undisturbed sleep at least on that day. The clamour awakened Mahadevi. She was wildly angry with Kaushika for speaking insultingly of the devotees and she began to weep at what had happened. This was the first 'fault' of Kaushika, but on his imploring her forgiveness Mahadevi consented to overlook it. The second was soon to follow.

One morning when Mahadevi had bathed and was absorbed in worshipping the *linga* of Chenna Mallikarjuna, Kaushika came to the place to watch her. He was so overwhelmed at the sight of her transcendent beauty that he rushed towards her and caught her in his arms. Mahadevi's mystic communion was disrupted. She turned round,

and seeing Kaushika's face she shrank as if from a pointed dagger. In distress and anger she flung hot words at him. How could he, a Bhavi, come and touch her in the midst of her worship of Shiva? Well, he had committed the second 'fault'.

Another day when she was with Kaushika she came to know that her Guru had arrived, and without taking time to dress herself properly she rushed to prostrate herself at her Guru's feet. Kaushika felt humiliated and, losing all patience, wrested her garment from her with the taunting remark, 'Leave it, take it off! What need have you, an outstanding devotee and ascetic, for any clothing?' This was the breaking point. The count of three 'faults' was now complete. In spite of his great passion for Mahadevi, in spite of every desire and effort to keep her bound to himself, Kaushika had thrice violated the terms of the marriage. He had come between her and the devotees, between her and the *linga*, and between her and her Guru. The release that Mahadevi had been longing for was now obtained. She left Kaushika's palace, taking with her the *linga* of her worship. Rejoicing in her new-found freedom, she bade farewell to her parents and her Guru and left the town alone; she became a living embodiment of renunciation.

Akka Mahadevi went first to Kalyana, the centre of Vira-shaivism where the great leaders like Basaveshwara and Allama Prabhu lived, and to them she appealed for spiritual guidance. But Basaveshwara and others found to their great wonder that she was far advanced in spirituality and actually they had very little to teach her. Basaveshwara in particular seemed to have been moved very deeply by this young saint's spiritual perfection. And it was to him, more than to anyone else, that Mahadevi turned for advice in finding her elusive lover, Chenna Mallikarjuna. He and the other elders blessed her resolve to achieve unbroken union with the Lord of her heart. It was as if they had given this daughter of theirs in marriage to the Lord and were now sending her to her husband's home on Srishalla, the holy mountain. And Mahadevi, while taking leave of them, assured them that she would never bring discredit to her spiritual home.

Now Mahadevi went all alone to Srishalla, the abode of Lord Shiva. Her intense *tapasya* there and her yearning and mystic love she expressed beautifully in her *vachanas*.

At long last, after intense *tapasya* and much spiritual travail the

supreme vision was granted to her as one of her *vachanas* bears witness:

I have seen Him in His divine form,
 Him with the matted locks,
 Him with the jewelled crown,
 Him with the gleaming teeth,
 Him with the smiling face.
 He who illumines the fourteen worlds with the light of His eyes,
 I have seen Him, and the thirst of my eyes is quenched.

That was her expression of the realization of God in His supreme form. But Mahadevi rose even higher and appears to have experienced mystic union with the Formless Itself. This is how she expressed the inexpressible:

I do not say it is the *linga*,
 I do not say it is oneness with the *linga*,
 I do not say it is union,
 I do not say it is harmony,
 I do not say it has occurred,
 I do not say it has not occurred,
 I do not say it is You,
 I do not say it is I,
 After becoming one with the *linga* in Chenna Mallikarjuna,
 I say nothing whatever.

Akka Mahadevi's *vachanas* are famous all over Karnataka. Apart from their spiritual fervour, even in the field of practical wisdom they are unsurpassed. It has been said that her sayings '... have become practically aphorisms, comparable in quality to those of Confucius. They are of great poetical merit, characterized by simplicity of expression, and are full of reference to the daily cares, turmoils and tribulations that beset our lives.'

As an example, here is another of her *vachanas*:

Having made one's home on the hill-top, how can one afford to
 be afraid of the beasts?
 Having made one's home on the seashore, how can one afford to
 be afraid of the surging waves?
 Having made one's home in the market-place, how can one afford
 to shrink from its noise?

Hear what I say, O Chenna Mallikarjuna:

Having been born in this world, one should not lose one's composure at praise or blame

But maintain the poise of one's spirit.

Like Mira Bai in North India, the name of Akka Mahadevi occupies a very high place in the history, not only of Karnataka, but of the whole of South India. Her name is associated with deep and passionate religious devotion as well as a high level of literary genius and poetic achievement.

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The Holy Mother's Life in the Light of the Shastras

V.S. NARASIMHAN

OF THE three rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati which have their confluence at Prayag, the Saraswati is not visible. Like the river Saraswati, the Holy Mother's part in the divine drama of the Ramakrishna Movement was mostly not visible. She played her role behind the scenes. For example, even though she lived in Dakshineswar in the service of her Lord, not very much was seen or heard about her. Talking of the Holy Mother, a disciple remarked: 'We would find her always with a long veil, so that only the nails of her toes were visible.' The treasurer of the Dakshineswar temple remarked: 'Yes, I am told that she lives here. But we have rarely seen her.' It is a wonderful coincidence that her name Sarada is a synonym for Saraswati. Her role of a Sangha Mata or Mother of the Ramakrishna Order is of the utmost significance. She had been and is even now the source of inspiration to the monastic and lay disciples of the Ramakrishna Order.

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Men of God-realization interpret the injunctions of the scriptures more by their example than by preaching. Sri Krishna says in the *Gita*, 'Whatever is done by a great man is followed by others.' Such great men enrich the precepts of the scriptures by their practical examples. A study of the life of the Holy Mother provides insight into the scriptural or *shastric* way of life, even though she herself did not have specific knowledge of the scriptures.

Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother, in wholly dedicating their lives to the pursuit of the divine, demonstrated what Yajnavalkya told Maitreyi in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. He said, 'Verily, not for the sake of the husband, my dear, is the husband loved, but he is loved for the sake of the Self.' The Holy Mother was dear to Sri Ramakrishna because she not only consented to be his spiritual partner, or *sahadharmini*, she did so knowingly in the truest sense of the term. And, it was because Sarada recognized the divinity enshrined in him that she adored, worshipped and served him.

The *Isha Upanishad* declares that the whole universe is enveloped by the Lord, *Ishwara*. The Holy Mother literally lived up to this dictum. To her, *Ishwara* was none other than Sri Ramakrishna. He was everything to her. One day, in Jayrambati, a boy looked with greedy eyes at the food just about to be offered to Sri Ramakrishna. When the Holy Mother noticed it she made arrangements to have something else, instead, offered that day. The reason was that eyeing something with greedy eyes is tantamount to eating; and that which is partaken of cannot be offered to God. Another day the Mother acted in an entirely different manner. She called the very same boy and fed him with the food before offering it. When someone objected, she replied, 'Sri Ramakrishna lives in this boy also'. Once she asked Swami Parameshwarananda, one of her close disciples, to drink the milk meant to be offered to Sri Ramakrishna. To the disciple's protest her calm reply was, 'Why worry? Sri Ramakrishna is in you, also.' Similarly, she fed an attendant and also a parrot kept in the *ashrama* with the food to be offered to Sri Ramakrishna. She felt the presence of the Master everywhere.

In the *Purusha Sukta* the Absolute Reality is described as one that has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, and a thousand feet. The all-pervading Reality is also described in the *Gita* as having hands and feet everywhere, infinite eyes and faces, and so on. The Holy Mother also

saw the presence of this *Virat Purusha* in all those about her.

The injunction of the first *mantra* of the *Isha Upanishad* is, 'Do not be greedy'. To the *jnani* everything belongs to the Lord. He or she does not lay exclusive claim to anything as his or her possession. Hence the *jnani* does not covet wealth. To one awake in *prajna*, the wisdom of Brahman, worldly possessions are unreal, hence he feels no attraction for them. In the life of Sri Ramakrishna we learn that he used to take mud in one hand and gold in the other and after repeating a few times, 'Mud is gold; gold is mud,' would throw both into the Ganga. Once a merchant begged him to accept a thousand rupees from him for his maintenance. Sri Ramakrishna discouraged him. The merchant, however hit upon a clever plan. He suggested that he deposit the money in the name of the Holy Mother if the Master had no objection. Sri Ramakrishna said he would not interfere if Sarada Devi accepted it. The proposal was put before the Holy Mother. True to Sri Ramakrishna's expectation, she said, 'What does it matter if it is in his name or my name. I do not approve of it.' Sri Ramakrishna felt satisfied that his divine wife despised wealth as he did. The Holy Mother thus demonstrated in her life the dictum of the *Isha Upanishad*.

To pray to the Lord for one's own welfare is to pray with a selfish desire, *kama*, and hence it is unworthy of a spiritual aspirant. Whereas, to offer prayers for the welfare of entire humanity is the trait of a mature *sadhaka*. Such soul-elevating prayers are found in the scriptures: 'May all be happy; may all be free from diseases; may all see auspicious things; may all be free from pain.' It may also be repeated, 'May the entire universe be happy.'

The Holy Mother literally lived in the spirit of these prayers. She was once visited by the young wife of a doctor, who had just begun his practice. The young girl requested the Holy Mother to pray to the Lord that her husband's income may increase. The Mother replied that she would never do so. She had no objection to praying for the welfare of everyone, but this particular prayer of a doctor's wife would indirectly mean that more people should fall sick! Though others repeat these lofty universal prayers like parrots, the Holy Mother was always mindful of the essential meaning of the prayers.

It is said in the *Gita*, 'One's own dharma, even if imperfect, is better than the dharma of another. It is better to die performing one's own dharma, for the dharma of another is fraught with fear.'

Sri Sarada Devi went to Dakshineswar as a young woman. Her sole intention was to serve her husband. Like Gargi and Maitreyi of olden days, she shone like a veritable Brahnavadini and reached the pinnacle of spiritual heights while working as an ideal housewife, serving her husband, nursing her mother-in-law, cooking and feeding Sri Ramakrishna's disciples and so on. No household duty was neglected by her. She considered it her dharma to be a true *sahadharmini* of Sri Ramakrishna and in and through this dharma she reached perfection. She herself used to repeat, 'What have I to do except to carry out the will of the Master?' Her life is a veritable commentary on the words of Sri Krishna in the *Gita*, 'He who does work for Me alone, and has Me for his goal, and is devoted to Me, who is free from attachment and bears enmity to no one, he enters into Me.'

Sri Sarada Devi lived for Sri Ramakrishna and was ever devoted to him. She carried his mantle for a number of years after his passing away and as the Sangha Mata was the guiding spirit behind the Ramakrishna Math. Thousands of aspirants worship her now as the Divine Mother. Thus, according to the words of Sri Krishna, she has become one with her Lord, demonstrating the truth of the *shastras* by her personal life. Such a life, so full of purity and devotion is bound to make everyone pure and devoted.

She whose character is sanctifying,
 She whose life is equally so,
 She who is purity embodied,
 To Her we bow again and again.

Every morning and evening perform japa and meditation with a cool brain. It is not an easy task. Compared to meditation, it is easier to till a plot of land.

The Holy Mother

Maya—the Play of the Gods

PRAVRAJIKA VIVEKAPRANA

MARKANDEYA THE son of Mrikanda, had reached rare heights of self-control. He had reached a stage where his mind was not disturbed by the ordinary passions of men: neither desire nor fear gripped him. He lived in utter serenity, unagitated by the woes that made the common man a slave.

In the land of Badarika Markandeya had an *ashrama* in a beautiful spot surrounded by tall, majestic *devadaru* trees. His daily routine was one of utter simplicity. He had few wants, and these were all fulfilled by the forest around him. He had no companions. What need did he have for anyone when not a single wave arose in the serene lake of his mind? Such was his peace that even the thought of death, the ultimate dread, held no sting for him for he had conquered death.

So rare a soul was the *rishi*—that one day he was visited by the gods. They wished to sport with him, as one does with a child, for the gods love to play with one who steps outside the whirlwind of the passions. The *rishi* welcomed the gods and honoured them. They then offered him a boon. He said he had no need of boons, but still they insisted; and then he fell into the divine trap. He said that, if it so pleased them, he would like to know how it is that the play of Maya continues to whirl the ordinary mortals. The gods smiled their assent, and vanished.

Time passed and Markandeya had all but forgotten the gods' visitation. He seemed to live in eternity, so great was his concentration on each instant. One day he saw that dark clouds were gathering in great masses. Lightning was trapped. Energy build up. There was tension in the air. Suddenly the heavens seemed to open and rain poured down around the hermitage and a tremendous flood engulfed the place. The *rishi* was astonished for he had never before experienced such avenging fury of nature. The waters rose higher and higher and surrounded him until at last, finding nothing left to hold on to, the sage was thrown hither and thither at the mercy of the monstrous waves. All around him he seemed to see terrible shapes of death and destruction. Then fear entered and took hold of his mind, for by now

his mind had lost hold over itself. Such is the power of emotion over human imagination that what had been utter repose an instant earlier was now transformed into a howling, raging hell.

Utterly distracted and upset, the sage was raised to the crest of a wave, only to be plunged once more into the unknown depths of the raging sea. Then, when he seemed at the end of his tether, lo and behold, he saw a wondrous sight. A child was floating on the raging waves, calmly sucking his thumb, and with a contented smile of complete repose on his face.* The *rishi*, his mind now anchored, floated nearer and nearer to the child, till he seemed to be drawn into the peace surrounding the vision—and behold all the horrors disappeared and he found himself back in his *ashrama* as if nothing at all had ever happened. As he marvelled at the suddenness of his experience he was once again thrown out into the sea that was howling and raging as before. But now his mind held on to the vision and slowly the waters subsided, the monsters disappeared, the clouds vanished. All was quiet, all was peace. The *rishi* sighed—such is the power of Maya.†

* The child is the embodiment of the one Being of the universe, in whom is the soul, who is in the soul, who is the soul of man, and knowing him—and therefore the universe—as our self, alone extinguishes all fear, brings an end to misery, and leads to infinite freedom.

† Based on the *Bhagavata Purana*, XII.8, 9.

From Mahat down to the gross body everything is the effect of Maya : These and Maya itself know thou to be the non-Self, and therefore unreal like the mirage in a desert.

Vivekachudamani

Some Aspects of Tantric Symbolism

M. C. JOSHI

ACCORDING TO Shankaracharya the total number of Tantras is sixty-four. They are associated with more than one cult or sect. The Tantras associated with Shaktism have deep-rooted and well-preserved connection with the disciplines and practices of both Kaula* and non-Kaula schools. According to the Shakta Tantras everyone who has been initiated has to undergo three mental stages of *sadhana* viz., *pashu-bhava*, *virabhava*, and *divyabhava*.† Symbols and symbolic worship, therefore, play an important part in the whole system. Among the *shaktas*, *manasa-puja* (mental worship) and *antar-yaga* (internal-sacrifice) are considered higher than external worship and outer sacrifice. *Tara-rahasya* clearly mentions the importance of *antaryaga*. In this connection the tradition of Tantras states: 'Whatever is worthy of being known is oblatory offering; senses are sacrificial ladles; all the (bodily) energies are sacrificial flames, one's own soul is the auspicious (*shiva*) fire (of sacrifice), and (thus), every one is the performer of a sacrifice.'‡

Symbolism is thus an integral part of Tantrism and is very well reflected in associated iconography. In fact, some of the Tantric texts themselves define the symbolism of the deities or their forms and attributes. The symbolic explanation of various objects and concepts given in the Tantras is not only meaningful but has close links with the Shakta thought. For instance, the symbolism of the weapons of goddess Lalita or Tripura is clearly mentioned in verses of *Lalita Sahasranama*.§ 'Bright as thousands of rising suns, she has four

* *Kaula* stands for Shakti, and so the Kaula schools were Shaktik in character.

† In the first stage the *sadhaka* is like a *pashu*, a man whose inclinations are like those of an animal, who has not subdued his passions and moves with the outgoing current. In the second stage, the *sadhaka* who is competent to follow the path of a *virja*, a man of fearless disposition, has assailed the *kundalini* at the base-root and made her turn and rise. In the final stage the bonds of the *sadhaka* with a divine disposition do not exist in substance, but a semblance of them is dissolved in the ocean of nectar. *Ed.*

‡ सर्वदेवं हृष्यम् । इन्द्रियाणि सुखः । शक्तयो ज्वालाः । स्वात्मा शिवपावकः । सर्वमेव होता ॥

§ उद्यद्भानुसहस्राभा चतुर्बाहुसमन्विता । रागस्वरूपपाशाद्या क्रोधाकाराङ्कुशोज्ज्वला ॥

मनोरूपेक्षुकोदण्डा पञ्चतन्मास्रसायका ॥ 53, 54a.

hands carrying *pasha*, *ankusha*, bow of sugar-cane and five arrows representing, respectively, desires or attachments, wrath, mind and five subtle elements, viz. *shabda*, *sparsha*, *rasa*, *rupa* and *gandha*.*

Tripura-Mahimnastotra (attributed to Durvasa) further defines the *pasha* held by the goddess as a symbol of attraction and enchantment.* The gross form of Lalita or Sri when reduced to subtle form turns into *vindu* or dot marking the centre of Sri-Chakra, her *yantra*, which symbolizes her abode in the cyclical world as can be understood from a verse of *Tripura Mahimnastotra*,† in which Sri-Vidya is called the root of the Vedas i.e. *Pranava* or *Om* (cf. *ॐकार प्रमववेद*). A painting from Uttara Pradesh depicts the concept in an interesting way: with Brahma, Vishnu, Ishvara, and Tripura forming the *Om*. According to the Shaktas, it is the *chandra-bindu* or *anusvara* indicating the nasal sound in a letter, which represents the *Devi-tattava*. The tradition itself seems to be very old, for the *Devi-Mahatmyam*, datable to the Gupta-Vakataka age clearly states that: 'You are half a *matra*, though eternal. You are verily that which cannot be uttered specifically.'‡

The crescent, often depicted on the head of Shiva and various forms of the Devi, is also not without symbolic significance. It is regarded as the eternal source of nectar as can be observed in the verse of meditation of Shiva as Mrityunjaya in *Mantramahodadhi* (XVI.19). According to this description, Shiva in his form as Mrityunjaya lustrates himself with nectar dripping from the moon on his crest as well as with water that is being poured from two jars raised by the Lord himself over his head.

The tradition is also referred to by Bhavabhuti, the great Sanskrit poet, when he describes the dancing Chamunda in the *Malati-Madhava*.§ The verse specially mentions the nectar, oozing from the moon when it was accidentally scratched by the Goddess in a movement during her dance. The nectar brought back to life the skulls

* पाशं प्रपूरित महासुमतिप्रकाशम् यो वा तव त्रिपुरसुन्दरि सुन्दरीणाम् ।

आकर्षणेऽखिलबन्धोकरणे प्रवीणम् चित्ते दधाति स जगद्वय वश्यकुत्स्यात् ॥ ॥.43.

† श्रीचक्रं श्रुतिमूलकोश इति ते संसारचक्रात्मकम् विख्यातं तदधिष्ठिताक्षरशिवज्योतिर्मणं सर्वतः ।

एतन्मन्त्रमयात्मिकाभिररुणं श्रीसुन्दरीभिर्बुतं मध्यं बैन्दवासंहपीठललिते त्वं ब्रह्मविद्याशिवे ॥ ॥.28.

‡ अर्द्धमात्रा स्थिता नित्या यानुच्चार्याविशेषतः । ॥.55.

§ प्रचलितकरिकुतिपर्यन्तचञ्चलखायातभिन्नेन्दुनिष्यन्दमानामृतश्च्योतजीवत्कपालावलीमुक्तचण्डाट्टहासस-
द्भूरिभूतप्रवृत्तस्तुति । V.23a.

forming her garland. The symbolism is further confirmed by the *Mahanirvana Tantra*: 'The crescent moon on your forehead marks the source of nectar.'^{*} The dance of the Goddess herself, according to *Yoga-Vashishtha* (LXXXIV-19.20) is regarded as symbolic of creation (*sarga*), old age (*jara*) and death (*marana*).

In this context, it may be relevant to discuss the concept of Goddess Kali or Dakshinakali which is also connected with symbolism. Her blue or black colour symbolizes the limitlessness of the Cosmic Energy or her *maha-nirguna-rupa*, that is space itself.[†] Her blue-black complexion also characterizes her *Sarvatattvatmika* i.e. united form of all elements and colours.[‡] She is without covering for she is above all kinds of illusion and she is Kali because she governs and creates time. The powerless Shiva beneath her feet represents Nirguna-Brahman. Her three eyes characterize the trio of light, viz., the sun, moon and fire. Her earstuds in the form of the bodies of dead boys represent dharma and *adharma* and her *munda-mala* is, in fact, a garland of the fifty letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, viz. *varna-mala* which is symbolic of Shabda-brahman. The girdle of severed human arms around her waist indicates the loss of the karmas or end of all actions. She grants protection and boons to her devotee and also kills the devotee's animal instinct, indicated by a severed human head in her lower left hand with the sword of knowledge held in her upper left hand.

Weapons like *shula* (trident) and *kartri* (scissors) held by other Shakta deities including Tara also suggest the idea of liberation (*mukti*), for they all symbolize the removal of the fetters of attachment (*pasha*).

Among the other popular attributes of Shaiva and Shakta deities, *pustaka* and *mala* or *aksha-sutra* deserve particular attention because they respectively symbolize *vidya* or knowledge including the Vedas and Vak, the latter being represented by letters of Sanskrit alphabet, *varna-mala* from *a* the first letter to *ksha*, the last letter. It is on this account that the name *aksha-mala* has been defined in the *Jnanarnava Tantra* as *matrika-varna-rupini*, the mother in the form of letters.[§] Of

* अमृतत्वास्लसाटेऽस्याः शक्तिचिह्नं निरूपितम् ।

Quoted in Vimalananda Suri's commentary on Karpuradistotra.

† महानिर्गुणरूपा च वाचातीता कलापरा । महाज्वालाभर्तृदोष्ता मुण्डबिन्दुबिभूषिताम् ॥

‡ चिद्रूपा ज्ञाननिलया चैतन्यानन्दविग्रहा । कोटिसौदामिनीभासा सर्वतत्त्वस्वरूपिणि ॥

§ अकारप्रथमो देवी अकारोऽत्यस्ततः परम् । अक्षमालेतिविख्याता मातृकावर्णरूपिणी ॥

the other forms of Shakti some interesting aspects connected with symbolism can be noted in the concept of *Mahishasura-Mardini*. In the *Devi-Mahatmyam* she is mentioned as the collective energy (*tejas*) of various gods in feminine form. Her lion mount, according to the *Vaikriti Rahasya*, which is an appendix of the *Devi-Mahatmyam*, characterizes dharma in its full form.* Mahishasura, who is also to be worshipped with the Goddess has been regarded as a symbolic form of Shiva in the *Kalivilasa Tantra*.†

A notable point connected with symbolism is the representation of a certain aspect of Shakti through an image of Vishnu. A fine example of such an icon is a terracotta panel depicting Anantashayi-Vishnu, originally fixed on the famous Gupta temple at Bhitargaon near Kanpur (U.P.) and is now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. In this relief Vishnu is shown with only two hands, which do not bear any attributes. The right arm is stretched on the body of the many-headed serpent, Ananta, whose hoods are raised. The left arm rests on the left knee. Vishnu is in a half-reclining position with a somewhat extended right leg and upraised left knee on the bed of serpent. Except for a heavy looking crown and ear-studs, there are no ornaments on Vishnu's body. His apparel consists of a *kaupina* or short loin-cloth. The facial expression of the Lord, unlike most of his other contemporary representations, is marked with some kind of weariness, indicated by wrinkled-cheeks, a slightly open mouth, sleepy-eyes and the face turned slightly downwards. , Lakshmi's absence is conspicuous. The single-headed Brahman on his lotus seat looks terrified. The twin demons, Madhu and Kaitabha, bearing the grace of a just-born child, stand close to the tail of Ananta with *gada* in the left hand and expressing *abhaya* with right.

The peculiar iconographic traits of this sculpture seem to have some significance for the *Ananta-shayana* scene with Brahma and twin demons, most probably represents the Shakta version of the story of Madhu-Kaitabha's death as referred to in the *Markandeya Purana* and *Devi Bhagavatam*.

The relief illustrates the following three aspects of the Madhu-Kaitabha episode:

* दक्षिणेपुरतः सिंहं समग्रं धर्ममीश्वरम् ॥ 30.

† महिषस्त्वं महावीर शिवरूपः सदाशिवः ॥ XIX.1.

- (i) Vishnu, under the influence of Yoga-nidra (Maha-maya), is shown rousing himself from sleep. The artist has successfully represented the idea by delineating him in a yawning and lethargic mood. According to the *Markandeya Purana*, *Devi - Mahatmyam*, Yoganidra, the Goddess, came out of the body of Vishnu through his eyes, nose, arms and heart to save Brahma from the twin demons.
- (ii) The terrified Brahma is represented as approaching Vishnu for protection after offering his prayers to the Goddess.
- (iii) The post of the twin demons suggests that, as stated in the *Devi-Bhagavatam*, they are challenging Brahma either to fight them or to recognize their superiority by becoming their slave. It is perhaps for this reason that Madhu and Kaitabha have *gada* and *abhaya* indicating their capacity to fight and to grant freedom from fear to those who acknowledge their overlordship.

The relief, thus excellently presents the Shakta version of the myth of creation. The intention of the Gupta artist was to depict symbolically the concept of Universal Awakening through Brahma and Vishnu who were to serve as the medium of creation and preservation for the Goddess. In this context the *Devi-Mahatmyam* styles her as *Tamasi*, i.e. the Night or Darkness, carrying in her womb the day with all its glory and hope.

All that has been discussed above about Tantric symbolism is based largely on the medieval and later texts and it may be asked how one is justified in applying it to iconic concepts of earlier origin. In reply, we can only say that Tantric symbolism is applicable to those images which were produced and worshipped under the impact of Shakta Tantrism. The basic Tantric tenets are closely connected with the concept of Vak, and with Kundalini-yoga, the Pashupat doctrines and with Shunya-veda, all of which have determined the associated symbolism. The gross form of the Supreme Mother turns ultimately into *shunya* (void) through various stages. The tradition rightly records that the rituals and symbolism of the Tantra philosophy as preserved in the available tradition, appear to have reached a well-developed stage by the medieval period, although the historical *tantrachara* can be traced in the Gupta-Vakataka age itself.

The *tantrachara*, whether of earlier or later types, has some variations yet it is not without a basic conceptual unity in the system as a

whole. It is conditioned by certain ritualistic practices and specific regulations closely associated with *mantra*, *yantra* and above all, *guru-tattva* (with an established *guru-parampara*, beginning with Adinatha or Shiva himself), which involves the large-scale use of symbols and symbolic expressions in worship, iconography and concepts.

The Cult of Shalagrama Worship

K. BHARADVAJA

THE RIG VEDA (X.121), contains a hymn to Prajapati or the Protector of the Creation. He is eulogised as Hiranya-garbha or the one who accommodates gold in Him. What is this gold which the Lord accommodates in Himself? The reply to it may be that the 'gold' referred to here stands for the cosmic unit or cosmic egg (*brahmāṇḍa*), which is said by Manu to have been of golden hue in the beginning—*तदण्डमभवद्वैमम् । (Manu Smṛiti 1.9)*.

Since this cosmic unit termed *hiranya* made of non-sentient matter and containing innumerable sentient beings is situated in the Lord, He is spoken of as Hiranya-garbha.

Manu informs us that the Lord, first of all, created *apa* (*nara*, water) and rested therein, and, therefore, He is called Narayana. It was, then, the potential drive of the Divine that, after mixing up with *apa* grew into a golden egg.

Narayana rests (or pervades) in the universe to protect it. Because of this He is called Purusha, Vishnu, Vasudeva and Shipi-vishtha.

The magnitude of the universe seems to be immeasurable, but it is believed that the macrocosm has its counterpart in the microcosm. Thus, the gemologists explain that the planets—Mars, Jupiter, Venus and so on have their semblance in coral, topaz, diamond and so on. If this is true, then Narayana accommodating this golden universe (*ह्रिमण्डम्*) in Himself has His counterpart in the sacred stone called the Shalagrama, and this proposition supports the sanctity and veneration attached to it in devotional practices.

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A closer examination of the holy stone will disclose that it is also Hiranya-garbha inasmuch as it has some positive gold in it. Some stones have golden streaks of various dimensions and in various directions. It is also said that occasionally some people who know of the existence of gold in Shalagrama stones take it out for selfish ends.

Probably it was to a Shalagrama that priest Atharva paid his homage by singing the following verse in the *nichrid virat gayatri* metre: 'You are a stone belonging to sages. Let me offer my salutation to the divine stone.'*

A Shalagrama is a beautiful black (*shyama-sundara*) stone of various sizes and shapes found in the Gandaki River. The *Varaha Purana* has recorded a legend about it. Once upon a time Lord Vishnu practised austerities, and at that time the sweat flowing from his temples (*ganda*) formed into a river which, as time went on, came to be known as Gandaki.† The (goddess) of Gandaki, too, did severe penance to visualize Vishnu. The Lord appeared, and offered a boon. Gandaki requested the Lord to become her son.‡ The Lord agreed and said, 'I shall become your son, in the form of the Shalagrama;§ and on account of my presence, you will become supreme among rivers.**

The legend narrated in the *Varaha Purana* seems to be an elucidation of a few scriptural texts of earlier times. For instance, the austerity practised by Lord Vishnu is based on two statements in the *Taittiriya Upanishad*:

- i) 'He performed penance' and
- ii) 'Having performed penance He created all this.'††

The emergence of water from the Lord can be traced to the following statements:

- i) 'He who generated the vast and delightful waters.'‡‡

* ऋषीणां प्रस्तरोऽसि । नमोऽस्तु देवाय प्रस्तराय । *Atharva Veda*, XVI.ii.6.

† i) तस्योष्मणा समुद्भूतः स्वेदपूरस्तु गण्डयोः । तेन जाता धुनी दिव्या लोकानामवहारिणी ॥ CXLIV.109.

ii) मुक्तिस्त्रैलोक्यं देव दर्शनादेव मुक्तिवत् । गण्ड-स्वेदोद्भवा यत्न गण्डकी सरितां वर ॥ *ibid.*, 122.

‡ मम गर्भगतो भूत्वा विष्णो मत्पुत्रतां व्रज ॥ *ibid.*, 59.

§ शालग्राम-शिलारूपी तव गर्भगतः सदा । स्थास्यामि तव पुत्रत्वे भक्तानुग्रहकारणात् ॥ *ibid.*, 62.

** मत्सन्निध्यान्नदीनां त्वमतिश्रेष्ठा भविष्यसि । *ibid.*, 63.

†† स तपोऽस्तप्यत । स तपस्तप्त्वा इदं सर्वमसृजत । ॥.6.

‡‡ यश्चापचन्द्रा बृहतीर्जान । *Rig Veda*, X.lxxix.9.

ii) 'He created waters first.'*

Similarly, the Lord's entering into the waters of Gandaki is echoed in the *Taittiriya Upanishad*: 'Having created that, He Himself entered into it.'† The author of the *Varaha Purana* has tried to enunciate the Vedic idea through his own interesting style of telling sacred tales.

The same Purana has prescribed that a devotee should worship the even numbers (2, 4, 6 and so on) of Shalagramas and not odd numbers. However, the worship of one Shalagrama is sanctioned.‡ The virtue accruing from adoration of a dozen Shalagramas is said to be immense, and that resulting from the adoration of a hundred is beyond description.

The Shalagrama has been an object of adoration for centuries. It has been held sacred not only by Vaishnava Acharyas but by others too. Acharya Shankara, for instance, has referred to the Shalagrama twice in his commentary on the *Brahma-Sutras*.§

The water with which a Shalagrama is washed is considered to be very sacred. If sipped, it destroys all evils.** Women and low caste people are not allowed to worship Shalagramas directly. They may however, arrange to worship them through somebody who is eligible to do so.

We find references to Shalagramas in some other Puranas also. Here are two instances:

(i) A person sipping even a drop of water sanctified by contact with a Shalagrama, will not be required to taste a mother's milk in the next birth, because he will get salvation.††

(ii) Persons who take the sacred water of the Shalagrama need not take *pancha-gavya* any more.‡‡ *Pancha-gavya* is prepared by

* अप एव ससर्जदौ । *Manusmriti*. I.8.

† तत् सृष्ट्वा तदेवानुप्रविशत् । II.6.

‡ विषमा नैव पूज्याः स्युर्विषमे त्वेक एव हि ॥ CLXXXVI.42.

§ i) यथा शालग्रामे हरिः ।

ii) शालग्राम इव विष्णोः । Shankara Bhashya on I.ii.7, 14.

** चरणामृतपानेन सर्वपापक्षयो भवेत् ॥ *Varaha Purana*, CLXXXVI.52.

†† शालग्राम-शिला-तोयं यः पिबेद् बिन्दु मात्रकम् ।

मातुः स्तन्य-रसं नैव स भवेन्मुक्तिभाङ्गनरः ॥ *Agni Purana*.

‡‡ ये पिबन्ति नरा नित्यं शालग्राम-शिला-जलम् ।

पञ्चगव्य-सहस्रैस्तु प्राणितैः किं प्रयोजनम् ॥ *Devi-Bhagavatam*, IX.xiv.58.

mixing cow's milk, curd, butter, urine and dung. Sipping it was prescribed in the Dharma Shastra as an atonement for a person who had committed a sin.

As mentioned before, the Shalagrama contains a little gold, and the water which a devotee sips after washing the deity with it is conducive to general health and prosperity. According to the Vedic tradition, gold confers longevity.*

The *Bhavishya Purana* contains an ode to Shalagrama in thirty-two verses giving a few details of the holy stone. The *Garuda Purana* has also described some details in sections 44, 45 and 66 of Book I.

The Gandaki, from where Shalagrama stones are obtained is a sacred river. In Puranic lore, it is held in high esteem for its sanctity. The *Gandaki-gauravam* has seventy-one beautifully composed verses in its praise. For example, a verse says: 'O mother, since Lord Vishnu, who sportingly creates the universe, resides in your womb, men of erudition are unable to describe your greatness.†

According to the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, King Bharata during his retirement went to the hermitage of Sage Pulaha which was hallowed on all sides by Chakra-nadi i.e. Gandaki, through contact with circular stones (*drishachakra* or Shalagrama).‡

The worship of Vishnu in the Shalagrama is very popular, so much so that we find it in almost all temple in general and in Vishnu temples in particular. Some people keep more than one Shalagrama. The Raghunatha temple in Jammu is said to have more than a hundred thousand Shalagramas. Shalagramas are found in multiple sizes and in various shapes. There is a temple in Brindavan where the weight of a Shalagrama is traditionally said to be fifty kilos.

The Deity worshipped in the Radha-Ramana temple of Brindavan is a Shalagrama. According to a popular legend, the sacred stone was originally in its natural form without any particular shape of Vishnu or

* i) आयुष्यं वर्चस्वं रायस्पोषमोद्भिदम् ।

इदं हिरण्यं वर्चस्वज्जैत्रायाविशतोदिमाम् ॥ *Rik Parishistam*, XXVII.1.

ii) उच्चैर्वाजि पृतानाषाट् समासाहं धनञ्जयम् ।

सर्वाः समग्रा ऋद्धयो हिरण्येऽस्मिन्समाहिताः ॥ *ibid.*, 2.

† तव गर्भगतोऽस्ति यो हरिर्भुवनानां घटकः स्वलीलया ।

अत एव बुधा नहि क्षमा जननि त्वन्महिमानमीरितुम् ॥

‡ यात्राश्रमपदान्मुभयतो नाभिभिदृषच्चक्रैश्चक्रनदी नाम सरित्प्रवरा सर्वतः पवित्रीकरोति । *V.vii.10.*

Krishna. A devotee who used to worship it ardently desired to adorn the Deity with ornaments such as anklets, armlets and a diadem; but it was not possible for him to adorn the Shalagrama in this way. The desire in his heart was so keen that he could not sleep at night. His sleeplessness turned into deep meditation. Sincerity bears good fruit. The Lord, who knows the intentions of each individual, could not ignore His devotee's genuine love; and He wrought a miracle. The Shalagrama changed into a beautiful image of Sri Krishna! The devotee's satisfaction and joy knew no bounds when, early next morning, he saw an image of the Adorable, which he could then adorn to his heart's content. The name of the devotee was Gopala Bhatta Goswami who lived in the sixteenth century. This miraculous event took place, so tradition has it, on the full moon day of Vaishakha in the Vikrama era of 59.

Also known is the similarly miraculous event when the Lord changed a cobra into a Shalagrama for the sake of Mirabai. This goes to prove the reverence attached to this sacred stone.

The worship of the Shalagrama is thus the worship of the Supreme. It reminds us that the entire *hiranya*, the attractive and alluring world, is placed in an infinitesimal portion of the Divine lap. A fascinating concept indeed!

It is wise to take refuge in Him. He will always give you whatever is necessary. However, one should pray for devotion and desirelessness; for such a prayer does no harm.

The Holy Mother

Brahma-Sutra-Bhashya of Sri Shankaracharya

M. R. YARDI

— 8 —

Brahman as the Sole Cause of the Universe

BRAHMAN HAS been defined as the source in which the universe has its origin and so on in *Sutra* I.i.2 (जन्माद्यस्य यतः). The compound *janmadi* includes its continuance and dissolution also. In our experience we find that every product is produced from an inert material by an intelligent producer. Pots, for instance, are produced out of clay by a potter, or ornaments are fashioned out of gold by a goldsmith. The Hindu logicians, therefore, classify the cause of a product as of two kinds, namely the material cause such as clay or gold, and the efficient cause such as a potter or a goldsmith. A doubt, therefore, arises as to what kind of a causal relationship exists between Brahman and the world.

The dualists argue that Brahman can be only the efficient cause, as we read in the Shruti texts that this world has been created by Him after thought. In such Upanishadic passages as 'He thought', 'He created *Prana*' (*Prashna Upanishad*, VI.3, 4) the creation of the world by Brahman is said to have been preceded by thought. Now creation after thought is noticed only in the case of the efficient cause. We also find that every undertaking depends for its success on many accessories. Moreover like kings in different regions, God as the lord of the world possesses only powers of superintendence. Further this universe is seen to be composed of parts, insentient and impure and so must have a cause of the same nature, as the cause and its effect are found to be non-different. On the other hand, Brahman is 'without parts, without activity, tranquil, without blame or blemish' (*Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, VI.19). Some of the Smritis, therefore, recognize a material cause different from Brahman, possessing the same characteristics as the universe.

To this the *sutakara* replies in *sutra* I.iv.23, 'Brahman is also the material cause (of the universe), as this is in conformity with the propositions and illustrations (in the scriptures) (प्रकृतिश्च प्रतिज्ञादुद्दामानुपरोधात्).

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Of these, the propositions are of the following nature: In the *Chandogya Upanishad* (VI.i.2), Shvetaketu's father asks him whether he knows that by which everything else becomes known. Here it is obvious that by the knowledge of the material cause alone, all its effects are known, as every effect is not different from its material cause. The instrumental cause is, however, different from its effect as in the case of the architect and the architecture. The illustrations given in the *Chandogya Upanishad* (VI.i.4) also apply only to the material cause: 'by one clod of clay, all that is made of clay becomes known' or 'by knowing a piece of gold, all that is made of gold becomes known.' Similar propositions and illustrations are met with in the *Mundaka* (I.i.3, 7) and the *Brihadaranyaka* (IV.v.6, 8) Upanishads. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* (III.1) also uses the ablative case *yatah*, where it defines Brahman as 'that from which these beings emerge'. In accordance with the Panini's *sutra* (I.iv.30) (जनिकर्तुः प्रकृतिः), the basic substance of anything that is produced is put in the ablative case. Further, in view of the emphatic statement that all this was one without a second before creation, there was no other material except Brahman and so the latter is the material cause of the universe.

The *sutrakara* adduces further reasons in support of his view. In *sutra* (I.iv.24) he states, 'because of the teaching of volition' (अभिधेय-देशात्). We read in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* (II.v.2), 'He wished, "May I be many"', and in the *Chandogya Upanishad* (VI.ii.3), 'He reflected, "May I be many"'. Here He is evidently the material cause, as the will to become many relates to Himself. In *sutra* I.iv.25, the *sutrakara* says, 'because of the direct mention of both' (साक्षाच्चोभयाम्नानात्). Here 'both' refers to the origination and the dissolution of the universe. Brahman is stated as that from which the world comes into being and in which it is dissolved (*Chandogya Upanishad*, I.ix.1). Now effects can be produced from only the material cause and also reabsorbed in the material cause only. The *sutrakara* further adds in *sutra* I.iv.26, 'Because the act of origination refers to himself by way of transformation' (आत्मकृतेः परिणामात्). In the *Taittiriya Upanishad* (II.7) it is stated, 'He created Himself out of Himself'. The qualifying phrase 'by Himself' indicates that there was no dependence on any other cause. In the same Upanishad, we are further told that Brahman transformed Himself in a different way: 'Having created the world, He entered into it; and having entered into it, He became the actual and beyond, the

defined and the undefined' (II.6). The *sutrakara* finally clinches the argument by his *sutra* I.iv.27, which states, 'because It is described as the source' (योनिश्च हि गीयते). Brahman is declared as the source of all beings, the *bhutayoni*, (*Mundaka Upanishad* I.i.6) and the *brahmayoni* (*Mundaka Upanishad* III.i.3). The word *yoni* literally means 'the womb' and so signifies the material cause. Thus all the Vedic passages affirm that the reflecting God is the material cause of the universe.

Some important Smritis, however, hold the view that God is only the efficient cause, as the act of creation involves the employment of some material other than the creator. The *sutrakara* proceeds to rebut this view in *sutras* II.ii. 37-41, as it runs counter to the Vedantic conclusion that Brahman is one without a second. Some forms of Samkhya and Yoga affirm that God is only the presiding deity over Nature and souls, all these being totally different from one another. The Maheshvaras (Shaivites and others) believe that Pashupati, the Lord of creatures, is only the efficient cause and helps the creatures (*pashus*) to cast off the noose (*pasha*) of transmigration. So also the Vaiseshikas speak of God as the efficient cause in conformity with their way of thinking. Sri Badarayana refutes all these views in *sutra* II.ii.37, which says, 'It is inconsistent to speak of Him as one who presides (over Nature)' (एतदसम्भञ्जस्य). If the Lord assigns to different persons high, intermediate and low positions according to His sweet will, then He will be open to the charge of partiality, prejudice and so on. If it is held that these positions are determined by the past deeds of the living beings, this would lead to the defect of mutual dependence (इतरेतराश्रय). To suggest that creation is without beginning, does not solve the problem. If God is held to be active from the beginning of creation, He will have to be held as imperfect, as according to the *Nyaya Sutra* I.i.18, only imperfections lead to activity. His creatorship is also inconsistent with the yogic concept of God as a special kind of Purusha (soul) who is inactive. The *sutrakara* goes on to explain in *sutra* II.ii.38 that '(this inconsistency arises) because of the absence of a plausible relation (between God and His creation)' (संबन्धानुपपत्तेश्च). A Lord distinct from Nature and souls cannot be their ruler unless He is related to them in some way. This relation cannot be conjunction (संयोग), as God, Nature and souls are all held to be all-pervading and without parts. It cannot be the relation of inherence (समवाय), because

it is impossible to say which is the container and which is the contained. Nor is it possible to assume any other connection without first determining what kind of causal relation exists between God and the world. This difficulty does not arise in the case of Vedanta, which assumes this relation to be one of identity (सादात्म्य).

The *sutrakara* further explains why in his view God cannot act on Nature as a potter does on clay. He says in *sutra* II.ii.39 '(God cannot be the director), for want of a physical support' (अधिष्ठानानुपपत्तेश्च). In this world a king is seen to rule over a kingdom with the support of his body. This is impossible in the case of God, as a body can come into existence only after creation starts and not before. The next *sutra* states that 'if we assume a body with sense organs for him, this too is an impossibility as he will then be subject to the experience of pleasure and pain and so on' (करणवच्चेन्न भोगादिभ्यः). In that case, he says 'God will become liable to finitude and loss of omniscience' (अन्तवत्त्वम-सर्वज्ञता वा). This is an alternative interpretation given by Sri Shankara for the two *sutras* II.ii.39, 40, and it has been adopted here, as all the three *sutras* II.ii.39-41 seem to hang together.

It may be argued that if Brahman is held to be the material cause, it will conflict with certain Smritis as stated above and will leave no scope for them. These Smritis, such as the *Samkhya-shastra* of Kapila, who is praised as a seer in the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* (V.2), are composed solely with the aim of liberation and have no other purpose in view. In order to leave some scope for them, it is argued that the Shruti texts should be construed so as to avoid any contradiction with them. The *sutrakara* replies to this in *sutra* II.i.i, 'If it be said that this will lead to the defect of not leaving any scope for certain Smritis, (we say) not so because the contrary view will not allow any scope for other Smritis' (स्मृत्यनवकाशदोषप्रसङ्ग इति चेन्नान्यस्मृत्यनवकाशदोषप्रसङ्गात्). There are other Smritis like the *Manusmriti*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, which hold the same view as the Shruti texts. Manu, who is held in high regard by the *Taittiriya Samhita* (II.ii.10.2), also commends the person who sees his own Self in all beings and all beings in his Self (XII.91). So also the *Mahabharata* (XII.cccxxvi.30) states that the Unmanifest (*avyakta*) is reabsorbed in the attributeless Being. In the *Bhagavad Gita* too, (VII.6), the Lord declares that He is the origin of all this world and of its dissolution too. While determining the validity of the means of knowledge, we come to the conclusion that

the Shruti text commands greater authority than a Smriti text, as it is based on realization rather than ratiocination.

The *sutrakara* then proceeds to consider two objections raised on grounds of logic. We find that the world as a product is dissimilar to Brahman, which is said to be its material cause. Brahman is sentient and pure, while the world is exactly the opposite. We cannot explain away this difference by the argument that the world is in fact conscious, but that its consciousness is not apparent owing to some peculiarity of its transformation. For the scripture, (*Taittiriya Upanishad* II.6) itself, speaks of Brahman as manifesting Itself in two forms: the sentient and the insentient. The aphorist states this objection in *sutra* II.i.4 as follows: 'No, (Brahman cannot be the cause of the world) as it is different in nature from the world, and that it is so (is known) from the scripture' (न विलक्षणत्वादस्य तथात्वं च शब्दात्). His reply is contained in *sutra* II.i.6, which states, 'But it is seen' (दृश्यते तु). Sri Shankara explains this as follows: We see that insentient hairs and nails arise from sentient creatures and that scorpions and insects spring from cow-dung. We cannot expect the cause and the effect to be similar in their entire characteristics, for the causal connection implies some difference between the two. Their similarity of nature consists in the fact of existence, *satta-lakshana*, which is common to both the world and Brahman. The *sutrakara* further argues in the *sutra* II.i.10 (स्वप्नदोषाच्च) that 'the same defect arises in their (Samkhyas') view also'. The world of sound and form is equally different from Prakriti, which is devoid of form or any other quality. Moreover, while the Samkhyas postulate a Prakriti as the cause of the material world, they have to supplement it by the doctrine of innumerable souls (Purushas) in order to explain the sentient world. But this doctrine disclaims the concept of unity, which is the basic tenet of the Upanishads.

The view that Brahman is the material cause of the world is disputed on another logical ground. It is argued that it negates the well-known distinction between the enjoyer and the objects of enjoyment. We see, in every day experience, that intelligent organic creatures enjoy the objects of the inorganic world. The *sutrakara* raises this objection and replies to it in *sutra* II.i.13. This *sutra* states, 'If it be said that there would be no distinction as between the enjoyer (and the objects of enjoyment), (we say that such a distinction is seen to exist) as in ordinary life.' (भोक्त्रापत्तेरविभागश्चेत् स्याल्लोकवत्). The reply is that such a

distinction may well exist, as ordinary experience furnishes us with examples, such as, we find that when waves, foam, bubbles and so on are formed on the sea, they act independently by way of separating from and coalescing with one another. But they never cease to be different from the sea water. Similarly when Brahman enters into the human body (*Taittiriya Upanishad* II.6), He assumes a distinct personality because of the limiting adjunct, the body, much in the same way as the all-pervasive space becomes divided because of the limiting adjuncts such as pots.

The Upanishads are unanimous in holding that this sentient and insentient world has emerged from Brahman, Who is One without a second. However, they are not very clear as to how this One became the manifold world without the loss of Its unity and integrity. Later thinkers of Vedanta have attempted to provide an explanation, which takes either of two forms, according to whether one is a realist or an idealist. According to Sri Shankara's *Vivarta-Vada*, the world is only an appearance (*abhasa*), a mere illusion (*maya*), superimposed (*adhyasta*) on the changeless Brahman by man because of his ignorance (*avidya*). The other view holds that Brahman has transformed Himself into the manifold world, so that both are real. This is known as the *Parinama-Vada*, which says that the infinite Brahman has become the finite world through His mysterious power (*maya*) by recourse to limiting adjuncts (*upadhis*). While the followers of Sri Shankara define *maya* as the divine power of illusion, Sri Ramanuja and his followers hold that this *maya* of God is His power of producing marvellous effects. Even Shridhara describes *maya* as the divine skill which makes impossible things possible (अचटमानघटनात्तुयम्, on *Gita*, VII.25). In his commentary on the *Brahma-sutra*, Sri Shankara often gives the impression that he is answering the objections likely to be raised to his doctrine by some previous commentators who held the other view. For example, Anandagiri states in his comment on Sri Shankara's *bhashya* on *sutra* II.i.14 that here, Sri Shankara, after meeting the objections from the standpoint of transformation in the previous *sutra*, proceeds to answer more satisfactorily the objection raised by recourse to the doctrine of appearance (परिणामवादमवलम्ब्यापाततो विरोधं समाधाय विवर्तवादमाश्रित्य परमसमाधानमाह). This shows that the doctrine of transformation was held prior to Sri Shankara.

As pointed out by scholars like Deussen, there are some passages

in the Upanishads (e.g., *Brihadaranyaka*, IV.v.15), which hint at the illusory appearance of the world. Sri Shankara takes *sutras* II.i.14 and II.iii.50 as supporting his doctrine of *maya*. He explains the former *sutra* as follows: 'The modification such as the pot has speech as its origin and so exists only in name; as clay alone it is true. The modification has no existence apart from the clay and so is unreal.' He explains *sutra* II.iii.50 (ब्रह्मास एव च) that 'the individual Self is a mere reflection of the Supreme Self like the reflection of the sun in water.' His followers take this *sutra* as a statement of the reflection theory, *Pratibimba-Vada*. It is, however, doubtful that the *sutrakara* intended to suggest the doctrine of *Vivarta-Vada* in these *sutras*. He does not employ its terminology such as *avidya* and *adhyasa* anywhere or give the usual illustrations such as the rope and the snake, the mirage or the imaginary city in the sky. He uses the word *maya* only once in *sutra* III.ii.3 in the sense of unreality. Therein he says, 'But the dream world is mere appearance on account of its nature not becoming manifest with the totality (of the attributes of the waking state)' (मायामात्रं तु कात्स्न्येनानभिब्यक्तस्वरूपत्वात्). This means that the world which we see in the waking state is not a mere appearance, but real. It is true that the *sutrakara* also does not employ the terminology *upadhi* and *maya* to denote the limiting adjunct or the mysterious power of God. But the Upanishadic texts and the illustrations referred to by him in his *sutra* I.iv.23 seem to indicate that he subscribed to the transformation theory. He refers to the powers of Brahman in his *sutra* II.i.30, 'And (Brahman is) possessed of all powers, because that is seen from the scripture' (सर्वोपिता च तद्दर्शनात्). Finally as stated above, the *sutrakara* has used the word *parinama* itself to denote the act of origination in *sutra* I.iv.6.

THE GOSPEL OF THE HOLY MOTHER

SRI SARADA DEVI

(A Review Article)

[*The Gospel of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi* recorded by her devotee-children. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 1984, pp. xxxix+409, Price Rs. 24/-]

THE BOOK, *The Gospel of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi* is a collection of conversations with the Holy Mother, whose life is a model cast in the mould of Sri Ramakrishna : a model of universal motherhood. It is a scripture as well as a historical documentation of the life of an Indian woman who, though she spent her life in the seclusion of purdah, is today the ideal of innumerable spiritual seekers everywhere in the world. This book is also a practical commentary on the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. It is the first English translation of the entire two-volume Bengali book, *Sri Sri Mayer Katha*. The conversations in it were recorded by thirty-eight people. Rather than mere reminiscences of people writing mostly about themselves, this book presents the Mother's own narrations of her life with Sri Ramakrishna and of her latter life among her relatives and disciples. It is a book from which the reader learns how others saw her and, moreover, how she saw others.

The Gospel of the Holy Mother is divided into three parts. The first section, translated by Swami Nikhilananda, was published in the biography, *Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother*. To this has been added a large section translated by Swami Prabhananda, and a third smaller section translated by others. The Publisher's Introduction gives a life-sketch of the Holy Mother.

'One morning the Holy Mother was helping to husk paddy. It was almost her daily job. I asked her, "Mother, why should you work so hard?" She said in reply, "I have done much more than necessary to make my life a model."'

'Sri Ramakrishna practised all kinds of disciplines. He used to say, "I have made the mould; now you may cast the image." To cast the image means to meditate and contemplate on the Master, to think of the various incidents of his life. By meditating on him, one gets all the spiritual moods.'

In the course of conversation, the Holy Mother told a disciple, 'Do

you know, my son, that the Master looked upon all in this world as Mother? He left me behind this time for demonstrating that Motherhood to the world.'

From such conversations as these we learn the details of how Sri Ramakrishna formed the Holy Mother's character and guided her life in worldly as well as spiritual matters. The Holy Mother's life with Sri Ramakrishna really began in 1872 when she went to the Dakshineswar Kali Temple to live with him as his young bride. On the way to Dakshineswar from her village, about sixty miles away, she fell ill and despaired of being able to complete the journey. Lying half-conscious with fever, she had a vision of a woman of exquisite beauty, dark complexioned, and resembling the goddess Kali. The goddess told her that she had come from Dakshineswar. She reassured the Holy Mother saying that she would soon recover and see Sri Ramakrishna. She said, 'It is for your sake that I am keeping him there.' When the Holy Mother reached Dakshineswar Sri Ramakrishna began to look after her, for he was ready to fulfill his duty to his wife. She made no demands on him, however, and was as eager to serve her God-intoxicated husband as he was to make her his spiritual partner. At first she stayed in his room but when he saw that she kept awake at night to look after him when he went into spiritual trances, he insisted that she move to a room in the Nahabat. He also could not sleep at night if he thought he had accidentally offended her, even by a single word.

As the Holy Mother lived in strict purdah in Dakshineswar, she was never seen by anyone but a few intimate devotees of the Master. She got up at three a.m. and after a bath in the Ganga, meditated until dawn. He kept a careful watch on who she spoke to, and saw that she did not deviate from her *sadhana*. Much of her day was spent cooking for Sri Ramakrishna's disciples and for Sri Ramakrishna whose delicate stomach could not digest the food from the temple. Many of the women devotees who came to see Sri Ramakrishna would stay with her in her small room. The size of the Nahabat is indicative of the scant physical requirements of the Holy Mother. Though she served all others with abundant care she took the barest care of herself. Plump aristocratic women from Calcutta stood at the door of the Nahabat. Holding the door-frame, they poked their heads into the low doorway and said, 'Ahl! What a tiny room for our good girl! She is,

as it were, like Sita.' In later years the Holy Mother related this to her nieces saying, 'You wouldn't be able to live in such a room even for a day.' The Mother said, 'I have even stayed in the Nahabat for two months at a stretch without moving out. I bowed down to him (Sri Ramakrishna) from afar.' Day after day, she saw Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples dance and sing in ecstasy, watching them from behind the screened verandah round her tiny room.

Some time after her arrival in Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna worshipped the Holy Mother as the youthful goddess Shodashi. At the end of the worship he offered her the result of all his *sadhanas* and made her the co-sharer of his spiritual realizations. This significant event, narrated by the Holy Mother in minute detail, is recorded in this book. During the Holy Mother's lifetime, books were published about Sri Ramakrishna, but not all of them were accurate. In the course of the Holy Mother's conversations, recorded here in *The Gospel of the Holy Mother*, she corrects and authenticates sources of information and facts about Sri Ramakrishna and about herself. For example, she says about her days in Dakshineswar, 'All that is properly written in Sarat's book.' (*Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*). 'M's book (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*) is also good. What the books say is not always correct. Ram's (Ramachandra Dutta's) book does not give a correct description of the Shodashi Puja, when the Master worshipped me.' The Mother also recommended to one of her disciples that he read the *Ramakrishna Punthi* daily.

When it became known that Sri Ramakrishna was terminally ill, he was taken by his disciples and devotees to a garden house in Shyampukur as it would be more convenient for nursing him. But the preparation of his food became a problem and the devotees had to take the Holy Mother there so that she could cook for him, although it was a great hardship for her, and difficult for her to live her invisible life there. Finally, Sri Ramakrishna was taken to Cossipore, where he spent his last days. There, also, the Holy Mother lived in a small room downstairs, and cooked for him. Sri Ramakrishna entered *maha-samadhi* in 1886. The Holy Mother was thirty-three. In *The Gospel of the Holy Mother* the problems of the subsequent period of her life are told in her own words:

'After Sri Ramakrishna passed away, while staying alone at Kamarpukur, I thought within myself, "I have no children. There is no

one in this world whom I can call my *own*. What will happen to me?" Then the Master appeared to me and said, "Well, you want a son. I have given you so many jewels of sons. And in course of time you will hear many, many more people addressing you as Mother." "

'After the Master's passing away, I was at Kamarpukur. I was to come here to Calcutta, but many people began to object, "Oh dear, will you go and stay among those youthful boys!" (Sri Ramakrishna's disciples). There was an old widow, Prasannamayī, in our village. People used to respect her as a wise and pious person. Later I went and asked her opinion. She replied, "Why, you may certainly go. They are your disciples, like your own children. What is there in this to ask? Of course you can go." "Hearing that, all approved of my moving to Calcutta.'

She later told a disciple: "Of a truth, I always saw as though the Master lived on the land on the other side of the Ganga (that is, opposite to Dakshineswar)—in a cottage just where the present monastery and plantain trees are. (At the time there was no Math). After the new land was purchased for the Math, Naren took me there one day. He showed me each and every part of it and said, "Mother, now you can move about in your own place at will without any restrain".'

'At Bodh Gaya I saw the Math of that place with so much property. There was no dearth of any commodity there. I used to weep and pray to the Master: "Oh, Master, my children have no place to stay, nothing to eat. They go wandering from door to door. If only they could have a place like this to stay!" "

The Holy Mother became the spiritual guide and adviser of the monastic children of Sri Ramakrishna. It was through her blessings that they had 'a place to stay'. On 12 November 1898, the Holy Mother visited the newly acquired Belur Math and performed the worship of Sri Ramakrishna in the shrine. Soon after, the Belur Math was formally dedicated and the monks took up residence there. On 13 November the Holy Mother performed the opening ceremony of the Sister Nivedita Girls' School and, with her blessings, the women's work was thus begun which formed the nucleus of the later Sri Sarada Math.

The Holy Mother was 'Mother' to many lay devotees also to whom she gave spiritual initiation and advice. One disciple asked her,

'What I want to know is this: I address you as my mother. Are you really my mother?'

Mother: 'Who else am I? Yes, I am your own mother.'

She was aware of her divine nature and the divine nature of others as well. For example, the Mother told a disciple, 'The Master is God Himself.'

Disciple: 'If the Master is God, then who are you?'

Mother: 'Who else am I?'

'Look, many times I wonder, I am but the daughter of Ram Mukherjee, and many women of my age are there at Jayrambati. How do I differ from them? All these devotees come from various places and bow down to me. On asking them, I find that some are doctors, some are lawyers. Why do these people come?' She was silent for a while. (A little later her disciple said), 'Well, Mother, do you not, then, always remember your real nature?' The Holy Mother replied, 'Is it possible always? If it were so, could all this work go on? Yet amidst all this work, whenever the desire arises, inspiration comes in a flash upon a little thought and the whole of the play of Maha-maya comes to be understood.'

At one time the Holy Mother said, 'The Master did not let anybody know of my existence. He protected me always with infinite care. Now the thing has gone to the other extreme; they are advertising me, as if by the beat of a drum in a market place.' One may expect that this important book, *The Gospel of the Holy Mother*, will amplify the drum beat and let it resound in every corner of the world.

BRAHMACHARINI SUTAPA