



# SAMVIT

[ Knowledge that leads to enlightenment ]



Sri Sarada Math, Dakshineswar, Calcutta - 700 076

No. 16, September, 1987

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No. 16  
**SEPTEMBER**  
1987

The semi-annual journal  
of  
Sri Sarada Math  
Dakshineswar, Calcutta - 700 076

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***Editorial & Publication Office***

C-8A Hauz Khas  
New Delhi - 110 016

	<i>Rates inclusive of postage</i>	
<b>India, Nepal &amp; Bangladesh</b>	single issue	Rs. 5.00
	two issues	10.00
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	annual	Rs. 16.00
<b>U.S.A. &amp; other countries</b>	SURFACE MAIL	AIR MAIL
	annual \$4.00 £ 2.00	\$6.00 £ 3.00

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# SAMVIT

म नो बुद्ध्या शुभया मयुनक्तु ।

May He endow us with good thoughts.

*Shvetashvatara Upanishad III. 4*

## Universal Prayers

सहस्रशीर्षा पुरुषः सहस्राक्षः सहस्रपात् ।  
स भूमिं विश्वतो वृत्वाऽत्यतिष्ठद्दशांगुलम् ॥

The Supreme Being has innumerable heads, eyes and feet; pervading the earth on all sides, He transcends the Universe.

\* \* \*

पुरुष एवेदं सर्वं यद् भूतं यच्च भव्यम् ।  
उतामृतत्वस्येशानो यद् अन्नेनातिरोहति ॥

The Supreme Being is all this, what has been and what is to come. He is the Lord of immortality; He manifests matter and yet transcends it.

*Rig Veda X. xc. 1-2.*

## REFLECTIONS

### The Spiritual Conquest

IN MID-JULY 1893 Swami Vivekananda reached America to attend the Parliament of Religions. He had no recommendations, and he did not represent any recognized organization. Just before he left India, however, he made a very significant remark to his brother-disciple, Turiyananda: 'The Parliament of Religions is being organized for this,' he said pointing to himself, 'My mind tells me so. You will see it verified at no distant date.' It is now that the full meaning of these prophetic words can be understood. Because his name only still lives worldwide among the delegates who attended the Parliament. And it is natural, as he marched forward as a Prophet on his spiritual conquest.

He left the shores of India alone and on reaching America had to face many difficulties. The following year he wrote to the Maharaja of Khetri: 'Last year I came to this country in summer, a wandering preacher from a far distant country, without name, fame, wealth, or learning to recommend me—friendless, helpless, almost in a state of destitution.' But while the world, and even his own countrymen, doubted the credentials of this young Vedantin, he found noble and liberal-minded men and women in the West who understood him and stood by him in all his trials and tribulations; and his march of spiritual conquest gained momentum and fervour.

### Gone, but Not Forgotten

All those who offered him the hand of friendship have passed on now, but they are not forgotten. On the contrary, due to the earnest, inspired, and holy endeavour of two present-day admirers of Swamiji, much interesting information can be gathered about these pioneers of his work. These two writers are Gargi (Marie Louis Burke) and Sri Shankari Prasad Basu. The former has given us four voluminous books entitled *Swami Vivekananda in the West*, *New Discoveries* (two more are promised). The latter has written and edited the following: *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, *Lokmata Nivedita* (in Bengali) and *Letters of Sister Nivedita* in two volumes (the third

is promised). He has also brought out *Vivekananda O Samakalin Bharatavarsha* (In Bengali) in six volumes. So much matter has been squeezed into these volumes that one is aghast at seeing the work Swamiji did during the few years of his spiritual ministration.

On 11 November 1899 Sister Nivedita wrote from Chicago to Josephine MacLeod, 'It is a great thing to be the one privileged to endure the brunt of the battle—but it is we all together, really, who are doing it—it is no one person. Each of us in each [?] place, for all the others, is serving him.' What an eloquent and beautiful summing up of Swamiji's idea of a Sangha, a spiritual concourse! In it, all—individually and jointly—hold the responsibility of doing his work. Both Sister Nivedita and Miss MacLeod belonged to this assembly, and were working with Swamiji. But there were many other women also who came forward to help him. In his letter quoted above, he further wrote, '...American women befriended me, gave me shelter and food, took me to their homes and treated me as their own son, their own brother.' In London too, where he went in 1895 and 1896 he found devoted friends and helpers among women. *Samvit* desires to pay homage to those selfless dedicated women who helped Swamiji in 'consolidating his Empire on spiritual lines' by describing their lives and work.

### The Dedicated Ones

The various services which these women rendered can be broadly categorized as follows: The motherly hostesses whom he referred to in his letter. The first among these was Miss Kate Sanborn of Metcalf, Massachusetts. It was providential that before the Parliament of Religions, in a train going from Chicago to Boston, Swamiji met this elderly woman, and it was through her that he met Professor John Henry Wright of Harvard. It was his introductory letter that enabled Swamiji to be a delegate at the Parliament and thus the whole of America came to know him. During the Parliament Mrs. John Lyon of Chicago was his hostess. Swamiji felt very close to her as she reminded him of his mother. Mrs. George Hale of Chicago was another. Endearingly he called her 'Mother Church'. Fortunate was this Hale family for Swamiji practically made

their home his headquarters during the whole of 1894. Mrs. Guernsey of New York; Mrs. John Bagley of Detroit; Miss Mary Elizabeth Dutcher of Thousand Island Park and the Mead sisters of Pasadena were all his hostesses at some time or other. Mrs. Betty Legget needs special mention as her home in Ridgely Manor, New York, Paris or elsewhere, was always open to Swamiji and his whole party. In the houses of these women, Swamiji did not merely get shelter, but he was surrounded by as much love and care as only a home can give. The Sanskrit adage: 'For the noble-minded the whole earth is a family' (उदारचरितानां तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्) is most applicable in Swamiji's case.

Then there were those women who helped him by being writers, stenographers, transcribers and editors. Among these fine women, whose 'pencils were always busy' during Swamiji's lectures or parlour talks, were Miss S. E. Waldo, Miss Ida Ansell, Miss Laura Glen, and Miss Helen Mead. Without much experience in recording they preserved Swamiji's teachings for posterity so faithfully that we read his lectures as if we are listening to them. One day when Miss Waldo was reading out her class notes to another, Swamiji heard her. He was so surprised that at the end he exclaimed, 'How could you have caught my thought and words so perfectly?'

Another group of women who were greatly benefited by Swamiji's spiritual ministrations and became his lifelong admirers and followers were Mme Emma Calve and Miss Emma Thursby, two internationally known singers; Ella Wheeler Wilcox, the American poet and Mrs. Funkey of Detroit. It is apparent that this list is not exhaustive.

In the last group, and to these we can never be sufficiently grateful, are Miss Josephine MacLeod, Mrs. Ole Bull, Miss Margaret Noble (Sister Nivedita), Miss Christina Greenstidel (Sister Christine) and Mrs. Charlotte Sevier (Mother Sevier). They loved Swamiji and dedicated their lives to his cause. They came to India, worked for him in different capacities, and till the end of their lives remained loyal to him. Their contribution is immeasurable. Their lives will be depicted in future issues. In this issue we start with Sister Nivedita as a transmitter of Swamiji's message.

# Kali, the Eternal Mother

SISTER NIVEDITA

OUR DAILY life creates our symbol of God. No two ever cover quite the same conception. It is so with that symbolism which we know as language. The simple daily needs of mankind, seem, the world over, to be one. We look, therefore, for words that correspond in every land.

Yet we know how the tongue of each people expresses some one group of ideas with especial clearness, and ignores others altogether. Never do we find an identical strength and weakness repeated: and always if we go deep enough, we can discover in the circumstances and habits of a country, a cause for its specific difference of thought or of expression.

Something of the same sort is true of religious symbols. Short of perfect realization, we must see the Eternal Light through a mask imposed by our own thought. To no two of us, probably, is the mask quite in the same place, and some reach by their own growth, diverging points so distant from the common centre that they mark the extreme limits hitherto achieved of those great areas known as the Christian, or the Buddhist, or the this-that-or-the-other consciousness.

To do this, or even to carry a whole race to a new rallying-place round a standard planted on the old frontier is the peculiar mission of religious genius.

And so every one of us, simply by thinking his own thought, and living his own life to the full, may be answering his brother's cry for God in ways beyond the dreaming of the world.

These things being true, the imagery of all men has its significance for us. The mask is created by our own thought directly, and indirectly through the reaction of custom upon thought. Like all veils, it brings at once vision and the limiting of vision. Only by realizing the full sense of every symbol can we know the whole thought of Humanity about God.

But down with all masks!

The Uncreated Flame itself we long for, without symbol or veil or barrier. If we cannot see God and live, let us then die, what is there to fear? Consume us in primal fire, dissolve us into living ocean, but interpose nothing, no, nor the shadow

of anything, between the soul and the divine draught for which it thirsts!

True. Yet for each of us there is a chosen way. We ourselves may still be seeking it, where and when still hidden from our eyes. But deep in our hearts is rooted the assurance that the moment will yet come, the secret signal be exchanged, the mystic name will fall upon our ears, and somewhere, somewhen, somehow, our feet shall pass within the gates of Peace, we shall enter on the road that ends only with the Beatific Vision.

Till then, well says the old Hindu poet of the folk-song to himself:

Tulsi, coming into this world, Seek thou to live with all—  
For who knows where or in what guise, The Lord Himself  
may come to thee?

Our daily life creates our symbol of God.

To the Arab of the desert, with his patriarchal customs, the father of the family,—just and calm in his judgements, protector of his kindred, loving to those who played about his knees as babes,—may well stand as the type of all in which men feel security.

Naturally, then, it was the Semitic mind that flashed across the dim communing of the soul with the Eternal, the rapturous illumination of the great word 'Father'.

In the Aryan home, woman stands supreme. As wife in the West—lady and queen of her husband—as mother in the East,—a goddess throned in her son's worship,—she is the bringer of sanctity and peace.

The soul that worships becomes always a little child: the soul that becomes a child finds God oftenest as mother. In a meditation before the Blessed Sacrament, some pen has written the exquisite assurance: 'My child, you need not know much in order to please Me. Only love Me dearly. Speak to me, as you would talk to your mother, if she had taken you in her arms'.

But it is in India that this thought of the mother has been realized in its completeness. In that country where the image of Kali is one of the most popular symbols of deity, it is quite customary to speak of God, as 'She', and the direct address then offered is simply 'Mother'.

But under what strange guise! In the West, art and poetry have been exhausted to associate all that is tender

and precious with this thought of woman-worship. The mother plays with the little One, or caresses or nurses Him. Sometimes she even makes her arm a throne, whereon He sits to bless the world.

In the East, the accepted symbol is of a woman nude, with flowing hair, so dark a blue that she seems in colour to be black, four-handed—two hands in the act of blessing, and two holding a knife and bleeding head respectively—garlanded with skulls and dancing, with protruding tongue, on the prostrate figure of a man all white with ashes.

A terrible, an extraordinary figure! Those who call it horrible may well be forgiven. They pass only through the outer court of the temple. They are not arrived where the Mother's voice can reach them. This, in its own way is well.

Kali comes closer to us than these. Others we admire; others we love; to Her we belong. Whether we know it or not, we are Her children, playing around Her knees. Life is but a game of hide-and-seek with Her, and if, in its course, we chance to touch Her feet, who can measure the shock of the divine energy that enters into us? Who can utter the rapture of our cry of 'Mother'?

On the plane of symbolism, the soul of things somehow became associated with the manly form, and the manifested energy (Nature, as we call it) with that of woman and motherhood. In this conception will be noted the deliberate statement that God and Nature are necessary to each other as the complementary manifestations of One, just as we find in the male and female together, Humanity. The two are known in India as Shiva and Shakti. As the knight waits for the sight of his own lady, powerless without the inspiration of her touch, as the disciple waits for the master, and finds in him at last the meaning of all his life before, so the soul lies inert, passive, unstirred by the external, till the great moment comes, and it looks up at the shock of some divine catastrophe, to know in a flash that the whole of the without,—the whole of life, and time, and nature, and experience—like the within, is also God.

It is the beatific vision, says the West: it is realization of the Self, here and now, declares the East.

Of such a moment is the Kali image symbol—the soul opening its eyes upon the world and seeing God.

As the Purusha or Soul, He is Consort and Spouse of

Maya, Nature the fleeting diversity of sense. It is in this relation that we find Him beneath the feet of Kali. His recumbent posture signifies inertness, the Soul untouched and indifferent to the external. Kali has been executing a wild dance of carnage. On all sides She has left evidences of Her reign of terror. The garland of skulls is round her neck; still in Her hands She holds the bloody weapon and a freshly-severed head. Suddenly She has stepped unwittingly on the body of Her Husband. Her foot is on His breast. He has looked up, awakened by that touch, and They are gazing into each other's eyes. Her right hands are raised in involuntary blessing, and Her tongue makes an exaggerated gesture of shyness and surprise, once common to Indian women of the villages.

And He, what does He see? To Him, She is all beauty—this woman nude and terrible and black who tells the name of God on the skulls of the dead, who creates the bloodshed on which demons fatten, who slays rejoicing and repents not, and blesses Him only that lies crushed beneath Her feet.

Her mass of black hair flows behind Her like the wind, or like time, 'the drift and passage of things'. But to the great third eye even time is one, and that one, God. She is blue almost to blackness, like a mighty shadow, and bare like the dread realities of life and death. But for Him there is no shadow. Deep into the heart of that Most Terrible, He looks unshrinking, and in the ecstasy of recognition He calls Her *Mother*. So shall ever be the union of the soul with God.

Do we understand what the background is from which such a thought as this could spring? For the Kali-image is not so much a picture of the deity, as the utterance of the secret of our own lives.

The soul in realization beholds the mother—how? The picture of green lawns and smiling skies, and flowers steeped in sunshine, cannot deceive the All-Knower. Under the apparent loveliness, He sees life preying on life, the rivers breaking down the mountains, the comet poised in mid-space to strike. Around him rises up the wall of all the creatures, the moan of pain, and the sob of greed, and the pitiful cry of little things in fear. Irresponsible, without mercy, seems the spirit of time—deaf to the woes of man, or answering them only with a peal of laughter.

Such is the world as the Hindu mind is predisposed to see

It. 'Verily', says the heart wearily, 'Death is greater than Life, yea and better!'

Not so the supreme soul in its hour of vision! No coward's sigh of exhaustion, no selfish prayer for mercy, no idle resignation there! Bend low, and you shall hear the answer that India makes to the Eternal Motherhood, through all her ages of torture and despair. Listen well, for the voice is low that speaks, and the crash of ruin mighty:

'Though Thou slay me yet will I trust in Thee!' After all, has anyone of us found God in any other form than in this—the Vision of Shiva? Have not the great intuitions of our life all come to us in moments when the cup was bitterest? Has it not always been with sobs of desolation that we have seen the Absolute triumphant in Love?

Behold, we also, O Mother, are Thy children! Though Thou slay us, yet will we trust in Thee!\*

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\*Culled from her book, *Kali the Mother*.

## Sister Nivedita's Discipleship

PRAVRAJIKA ATMAPRANA

MARGARET ELIZABETH NOBLE, later known the world over as Sister Nivedita, was born in Ireland in 1867. She was running a school in Wimbledon before she met Swami Vivekananda in London in 1895. She was a seeker after Truth. With her manifold intellectual interests, she felt deep down within her a certain amount of despair in regard to religion and was groping in the dark for light. From Swamiji she learnt her lessons of spirituality. The first principle she grasped was that the kernel of spirituality was covered by the shell of dogma which had to be cut away to reach Reality. Swamiji believed that the time had come for the formulation of a Faith that would make its adherents tearless of Truth. This bold and new approach to God stimulated her dormant spiritual aspirations. She later wrote, 'It was by no means his intention to set forth dainty dishes of poetry for the enjoyment of the rich and idle classes.'

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Pravrajika Atmaprana is the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, New Delhi.

He always appealed to what was strongest and finest in man, and called upon the world to remember that every soul is potentially divine, and the goal of life is to manifest the divinity within. One day in a thunderous voice he said to a group of attentive listeners, 'What the world wants today is twenty men and women who can dare to stand in the street yonder and say that they possess nothing but God. Who will go? Why should one fear? If this is true, what else could matter? If it is not true, what do our lives matter?' Nivedita's heart was touched to the core. She started seeing the world as it appeared to the eyes of the Master and she did not hesitate to follow his lead. She immediately wrote a letter to him conveying her heart's desire to be his disciple. He wrote to her on 7 June 1896:

'My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life.

'This world is in chains of superstition. I pity the oppressed, whether man or woman, and I pity more the oppressors.

'One idea that I see clear as daylight is that misery is caused by *ignorance* and nothing else. Who will give the world light? Sacrifice in the past has been the Law, it will be, alas, for ages to come. The earth's bravest and best will have to sacrifice themselves for the good of many, for the welfare of all. Buddhas by the hundred are necessary with eternal love and pity.

'Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character. The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like a thunderbolt.'

After conveying his ideas to her in this manner, he added in a personal tone:

'It is no superstition with you, I am sure, you have the making in you of a world-mover, and others will also come. Bold words and bolder deeds are what we want. Awake, awake, great one! Let us call and call till the sleeping gods awake, till the god within answers to the call. What more is in life? What greater work? The details come to me as I go. I never make plans. Plans grow and work themselves. I only say, awake, awakel.'

His reply became a guideline for her all her life, and it will ever remain a creed for all dedicated workers. As his ideals

gradually dominated Nivedita's enquiring mind, it pacified her restless spirit. Before he left London, she addressed him as 'Master'. To quote her own words:

'I had recognized the heroic fibre of the man, and desired to make myself the servant of his love for his own people. But it was his *character* to which I had thus done obeisance. As a religious teacher, I saw that although he had a system of thought to offer, nothing in that system would claim him for a moment, if he found that truth led elsewhere. And to the extent that this recognition implies, I became his disciple.'

### Nivedita's Discipleship

It is from her own experiences and struggles that Nivedita was able to write later about true discipleship:

'Before a person meets his guru, his characteristics are constant mental activity, much restlessness and intellectual change of appetite, loud self-assertion, argumentativeness, and desire to manifest power. But when the Guru comes, or the idea that is to dominate the life is apprehended, there may be a keen initial struggle, but after it there is a period of profound apparent quiet. To see the thing as it appears to the mind of the master, is the one necessity. To serve him, acting as his hands and feet, as it were, in order that one's mind and heart may be made one with his; to serve him silently, broodingly, with the constant attempt to assimilate his thought, that is the method.'

Nivedita followed this method. One day, in London, Swamiji told her that he had plans for educating the women of his country in which she could be of great help to him. Would she like to come to India? This invitation changed her life. She left her country and her people and came to India in January 1898.

Her training began as soon as she reached India for she had to learn before she could start teaching. During this period her self-effacement was complete. Bipin Chandra Pal in his book, *The Soul of India*, wrote:

'Nivedita came to us, as no European has as yet come, not as an adept, but as a novice; not as a teacher, but as a learner. She did not pose before us as a prophetess but always stood in sincere love and reverence as a worshipper.'

This attitude made her give her all to India. She felt and made others feel that to be in India, to serve India, was a great privilege. She had to strive to live up to the motto of the Spiritual Order of Sri Ramakrishna founded by Swamiji—'For the liberation of the self and the welfare of the world.' On 25 March she was initiated, made a *brahmacharini* and was given the name 'Nivedita', the dedicated one. She responded quickly when at the end of her initiation Swamiji asked her to offer flowers at the feet of Buddha, and in a voice choked with emotion said to her, 'Go thou and follow Him, who was born and gave his life for others five hundred times before He attained the vision of the Buddha.'

After her *brahmacharya* Nivedita was accepted as a member of the Ramakrishna Order. In this new life, Swamiji stood before her as a guru in the old tradition. His method was directness in spiritual life, that is, a return to simplicity. Life *with* and *in* God had to be simple, natural and spontaneous. To introduce complications in religious life where there were none was against the spirit of consecration according to him. The only necessary virtue of a novice was sincerity. Swamiji wanted to build his temple of Faith on this. He had now to choose the bricks, and in Nivedita's words, 'He chose, not with an eye to the intellect, or power of attraction, or volume of force of those who were chosen, but always for a certain quality of simple sincerity, and, as it seemed, for that alone.'

Exactly one year after her first initiation, she was made a *naisthika-brahmacharini*, that is, one who has taken the vow of life-long celibacy. He now gave stricter instructions about personal life. He told her, 'You must give up all visiting, and live in strict seclusion. You have to set yourself to Hinduize your thoughts, your needs, your conceptions, and your habits. Your life, internal and external, has to become all that an orthodox Hindu Brahmin Brahmacharini's ought to be. . . . You have to forget your own past, and cause it to be forgotten. You have to lose even its memory.'

This was not an easy path, but she made a conscious and determined effort to follow this ideal. According to Swamiji's reorientation of the ideal, her's was to be a life of spiritual retreat in the midst of great activity. The climax of the obligations of the vows was reached in November 1899 at the Ridgely Manor in America. Here she gave up her western dress and



**Sister Nivedita in her plain gown adopted in 1899**



**Sister Nivedita with Swami Vivekananda, Mrs. Ole Bull and Miss Josephine Macleod**

adopted a plain, gown-like dress; here she went to stay alone in a cottage to live a life of solitude, austerity and study and here Swamiji gave her a *gerua* cloth. It is true that Swamiji did not give her *sannyasa* formally, but his act of giving *gerua* cloth to Mrs. Sara Bull and Nivedita is very significant. To quote from a letter she wrote to Miss MacLeod six days later:

'First he shut the door—then he arranged the cloth as a skirt and chudder round her waist—then he called her a *sannyasini* and putting one hand on her head and one on mine he said, "I give you *all* that Ramakrishna P. (Paramahansa) gave to me. What came to us from a woman I give to you two women. Do what you can with it. . . . Women's hands will be the best anyway to hold what came from a Woman—from Mother. Who and what She is, I do not know, I have never seen Her, but Ramakrishna P. saw her and touched Her—like this (touching my sleeve). She may be a great disembodied spirit for all I know. Anyway I cast the load on you. . . . And so Yum—happened "the event of my life"—the great turning point—and the dear St. Sara's.' <sup>1</sup>

### Guru's Blessings and Nivedita's Role

After this event Nivedita plunged into independent work. In all her activities Nivedita had the blessings of her guru. He was present when on an experimental basis she opened her school in Calcutta on 13 November 1898. He was with her when she left India for the West in June 1899 to get financial aid for her school project. In 1900 when she last saw Swamiji in Europe, he blessed her by saying, 'Go forth into the world, and there, if I made you, be destroyed! If Mother made you, live!' She returned to India in February 1902. Before she reopened her school Swamiji wrote to her:

'May all powers come unto you; May Mother Herself be your hands and mind. It is immense power, irresistible, that I pray for you, and, if possible, along with It, infinite peace. . . . If there is any truth in Sri Ramakrishna, may He take you into His leading, even as He did me, nay a thousand times more!'

With such abundant blessings it is no surprise to see Nivedita working, heart and mind, for the people, the country, and the dharma she adopted. As is well known by now,

Nivedita left the formal membership of the Order after Swamiji's passing away because she wanted freedom to work for the emancipation of the country from foreign domination. The Ramakrishna Order being purely spiritual and humanitarian, politics had no place in it. Nivedita wrote to a friend, 'I belong to Hinduism more than I ever did. But I see the *political* need so clearly too!' She knew that her Guru's benediction: 'Be thou to India's future son, the mistress, servant, friend in one' was working subtly but effectively in her life. It was hard for her to forget what Swamiji had told her once 'My mission: is not Ramakrishna's, not Vedanta's nor anything but simply to bring manhood to my people.' 'I will help you', Nivedita had sworn, and Swamiji gravely replied, 'I know it.' It was her duty now to spread his message to the people. Her greatest role, therefore, was to be a transmitter of his thought to the people.

It is true that Swamiji gave Nivedita to India, but it will not be wrong to say that Nivedita *also* gave Swamiji to us; for an important record of Swamiji's life between the years 1895 to 1902 would have been lost to us, but for Nivedita. By record is not meant a record of the bare incidents of his life, but a record of the thought-current that led him to the great purpose of his life. He lived a great life, and to read its meaning would have been an impossible task for us if through Nivedita's writings and speeches, the different facets of his personality had not been revealed to us. She was not an interpreter; who would dare to interpret *him*! She was but a recorder or a transmitter of his thought. She was aware of this sacred trust, as she writes in *The Master as I Saw Him*:

'His talks were not all entertaining, nor even all educational. Every now and then he would return, with consuming eagerness, to the great purpose of his life. And when he did this, I listened with an anxious mind, striving to treasure up each word that he let fall. For I knew that here I was but the transmitter, but the bridge, between him and that countless host of his own people, who would yet arise, and seek to make good his dream.'

The greatest work, therefore, that Nivedita did for India was to treasure what she got from Swamiji and hand it over to future generations through her writings. The theme of all her writings, which run into thousands of pages, is this: Swamiji

and India, Swamiji *in* India, and India as reflected in *h/s* mind and heart.

Nivedita's keen intelligence and easy grasp of higher thoughts made her a perfect listener and receiver of his message. Swamiji, on his part, gave her many opportunities to listen to him and learn. His talks started in the cottage at Belur in 1898, and continued during their trips to Almora and Kashmir. 'His country's religion, history, geography, ethnology, poured from his lips in an inexhaustible stream,' she wrote. During Swamiji's second voyage to Europe in 1899, Nivedita and Swami Turiyananda were with him. We read about a very interesting incident during that trip. Swamiji had told Turiyananda that he would take physical exercise regularly on the ship to keep fit. For a few days he took regular exercise. Thereafter Swami Turiyananda found that Swamiji would be so absorbed in his talks with Nivedita that he would forget to follow his regular routine, and whenever Turiyananda went to remind him, Swamiji would say, 'Not today, Haribhai, I am keeping quite fit on board. And I am talking to Nivedita. She is a foreigner and has left her country to learn about these things from me. She is very intelligent and I feel great pleasure in talking to her.' In this manner the talks went on and on. Through these talks she received one long, continuous impression of his mind and personality. One day, talking to a group of people, he addressed Nivedita in particular and said, 'And so you see, all this is but a feeble manifestation of the great ideas which alone are real and perfect. Somewhere is an ideal *you*, and here is an attempt to manifest it! The attempt falls short in many ways. Still go on! You will interpret the ideal some day.'

In this context, two things are to be remembered without which Swamiji's choice of Nivedita as the transmitter of his ideas will not be understood or justified. One was his intense love for his Motherland; second was his desire to effect an ideal exchange of ideas between the East and the West. It must be said that it was not always easy for Nivedita to understand Swamiji. In the beginning she was often confused; sometimes, even exasperated. Swamiji's passionate love for India was a revelation to her after coming to India.

In the West she knew him as a patient, sympathetic, meditative religious teacher. In India, he was different, as she

describes beautifully: 'He was born a lover, and the queen of his adoration was India. Like a delicately poised bell, thrilled and vibrated by every sound that falls upon it, was his heart to all that concerned her.' This love for his poor, downtrodden country, then in political bondage, made Swamiji impatient and restless, experiencing, as Nivedita puts it, 'the fruitless torture and struggle of a lion caught in a net.'

He wanted his disciples to Love India first, before taking up any work on his behalf. Swamiji's worship of everything that was India's, his unsparing criticism, at times, of her weakness and her want of worldly wisdom, his undimmed vision of her future greatness, all this staggered Nivedita. But once she understood, she tried to serve India with all her heart. She noted once, 'My own part, throughout the years of my discipleship, appears to me to have been something like that of a thought-reader.'

Her book *The Master As I Saw Him* is a masterpiece. After it was published and it received world-wide acclamation, Nivedita was deeply moved and wrote to Miss MacLeod:

'If when you dip into it, you recognize Swami at all, you will give me great happiness. I have worked for others as a hand or a tool, but, Swami demanded the whole of my powers, and left me to use them for him. Both kinds of service, all kinds of service are great and good, but this alone is all absorbing, because this alone implies perfect faith.'

To the great heart of Nivedita on her hundred and twentieth birthday, we pay our homage with love and respects.

### References

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## Savitri

BELA BRAHMA

'MAY YOU be like Savitri'—that is how the elders in India, irrespective of differences in the stations of their lives, in their cultural and educational backgrounds, in urban or in rural areas, bless their newly-married daughters-in-law. They hold Savitri very high in their estimation, regarding her as the embodiment of ideal womanhood, for she, who was fated to be a widow after a year of her marriage, could change her destiny by bringing back her husband's soul from Yamaraja, the Lord of Death. It was by the strength of her abiding love and devotion to her husband that Savitri could achieve triumph over Death. A deep study of her life by one with an imaginative mind and an intuitive vision will reveal the truth of her character. It was certainly something subtle and pure that was pulsating ceaselessly under the cover of her seemingly ordinary life. Her self-effacing nature and forbearance were a vital force that formed the very basis of her character. She reflected them in her everyday personal life with an easy, effortless grace and made it fascinating and great.

In the *Mahabharata*, Rishi Markandeya was asked by griefstricken King Yudhisthira whether he had heard or known of any other woman in the world who could be compared with the devoted and generous Queen Draupadi in her excellence, in spite of having suffered so much all through her life. In reply the *rishi* said that he knew one such person, and he mentioned princess Savitri, the beloved daughter of Ashwapati, the King of the land of Madra. Then he narrated in his own inimitable way Savitri's life with all its poignant pathos and greatness.

King Ashwapati was extremely virtuous. He was kind-hearted, well-versed in the Shastras and ever anxious to serve others. His only disappointment in life was that he had no child. So he took a vow to propitiate Goddess Savitri. He offered a hundred thousand sacrifices to her, and observed strict penance and continence for eighteen long years. At long last, the Goddess Savitri was pleased and appeared

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Bela Brahma, an educator, is deeply interested in the Epics and Puranas. Her study of women characters is very enlightening. See *Samvit* No. 10.

before him to grant the boon of a daughter, extremely beautiful and radiant with the light of love and fidelity. The boon had also the gracious sanction of Brahma, the Lord of Creation. Although the King was desirous of having a son, he accepted the boon with all humility and gratefulness.

In due course, a lotus-eyed, sweet daughter was born to him. The happy king, in consultation with the brahmins, named her after Goddess Savitri. Years rolled by. The princess had a fine figure, a faultless golden complexion, and a graceful gait, all of which made her divinely beautiful. But in spite of her uncommon beauty and rare accomplishments no prince came forward to her father asking for her hand. Not that they were not attracted towards her, but they felt somewhat subdued by the brilliance of her personality. At last, the worried father, conscious of his duty to get his daughter married at the proper age, asked her to travel and select as her life's partner a worthy and suitable man. Savitri, as an obedient daughter, bowed to her father's will and, blushing a little, touched his feet with reverence before she gently left his royal presence.

King Ashwapati made all the necessary arrangements for her journey and asked some of his old ministers to accompany her. At her father's behest, she mounted her golden chariot and started her venturesome journey. For months together she travelled far and wide covering distant regions, stopping only at the hermitages and forest retreats of saintly kings and the holy places of pilgrimage. Guided by her inner being, unknowingly she was in search of a kindred soul equally great and divine in nature. She met many princes but none could win her heart until she saw Satyavan in the hermitage of King Dyumatsena. She had found her match in him, and instantly made her final choice.

Savitri returned to her father's palace after completing her eventful journey and found him and *Rishi* Narada seated together engaged in a discussion in the royal court. She made respectful obeisance to both of them. King Ashwapati asked her to tell them in detail about her choice. Without any hesitation she told them it was Satyavan whom she had chosen to be her husband. Satyavan was born a prince, but subsequently he grew up in a hermitage. His father, Dyumatsena, was a *kshatriya* king in the land of Salwa. In spite of his

competence, the noble king, now blind, had lost his kingdom to his old enemies. Ever since then he was living in a hermitage with his queen and son, and leading an arduous, ascetic life.

The sage Narada was visibly disappointed at her selection, and said that he disapproved of it. But he also said that Satyavan had all the virtues that could ever adorn a human being. It was his uncompromising devotion to truth that had made the brahmins name him Satyavan. He was very handsome, he was as powerful as the Sun, as wise as Brihaspati, as valiant as Indra, and as forgiving as Earth. The King wondered why, in spite of all these virtues, the sage had disapproved of Savitri's choice. At his request, the venerable sage then disclosed to him the secret that Satyavan was destined to die after one year. The father shuddered at the dreadful prospect of having his beloved daughter married to Satyavan. He asked her, therefore, immediately to go and choose once again. But princess Savitri was made of different mettle. Her father's impatient order to select for the second time made her aware of her separate identity. Savitri, the idol of her parents, obedient to their command all these years, now for the first time noticed that their filial affection blurred their clear vision. They suggested to her something which was contrary to the strict canons of morality and she refused to abide by their decision. Modest, yet firm, Savitri, in defence of her choice, made some observations which could hardly be refuted. She cited that a shareholder could claim his share only once, that a daughter could be given away in marriage but once and the term 'given' (ददानी) could be used only once while giving away things to others.\* Her inexorable stand, unyielding determination, deeply impressed the celestial sage. He realized how very strong and unvacillating her sense of fidelity was. He blessed her and advised the royal couple not to interfere with her decision. The parents gave their consent at last and performed her marriage with Satyavan in the hermitage of the exiled King Dyumatsena with due grandeur, and they gave the newly wedded couple befitting presents.

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\* सकृदंशो निपतति सकृत् कन्या प्रदीयते ।

सकृदाह ददानीति त्रीण्येतानि सकृत् सकृत् ॥

King Ashwapati returned to his kingdom with a heart full of happiness and peace as he had been able to accomplish his parental duty by getting his daughter married to an eligible bridegroom. That he had left behind his darling daughter, a princess, in a hermitage where she would have to contend against conditions totally unfamiliar to her and face tremendous handicaps in her everyday life did not worry him even once. Such was India in those days. The worthiness in a person was not valued in terms of his mundane possessions. Mighty kings and emperors considered themselves highly privileged to get their daughters married to learned sages who, through the renunciation of externals, had attained the highest spiritual realization.

Princess Savitri after her father's departure, quietly removed all her jewels and took to wearing tree-bark clothes. Now that she had Satyavan as her husband, her heart's desire was fulfilled. She commenced an entirely new life in the hermitage, forgetting her maidenhood days spent under the tender care of her royal parents. Her rare qualities, her modest demeanour, her self-restraint and her flawless performance of various duties endeared her to all. Her self-effacing personality created a world of happiness for her near and dear ones. In this way, these good people lived in the hermitage in blissful happiness.

Months passed, but Savitri whether resting or busy with work never for a moment forgot the ominous prophecy made by the sage Narada. She was faithfully keeping count of the days without letting Satyavan know anything about it. The fear that was incessantly gnawing at her heart was not known to anyone. When only three more days remained for the fateful day to come, she took an austere vow of *triratra* and accordingly observed a fast and a night's vigil for the first day and night. Her father-in-law was distressed to see her in penance and affectionately asked her to forgo the vow as it was too rigorous for her. But Savitri, in her usual disarming way, assured him of her ability to fulfil the vow\*

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\* न कार्य्यस्तात सन्तापः पारयिष्याम्यहं व्रतम् ।

व्यवसायकृतं हीदं व्यवसायश्च कारणम् ॥

Standing at one place, erect and inert, completely indrawn, oblivious of her physical needs, she spent those long, silent, lone hours in continuous prayer till the first flare of the rising sun heralded the dreadful day. That morning at a very early hour, she completed her vow by offering her final oblation in the sacrificial fire. She quietly attended to her normal duties as usual and then stood with folded hands in the presence of her in-laws and other aged brahmins. They all blessed her from the bottom of their hearts to live happily with her husband forever. She eagerly received their blessings with a feeling of deep gratitude and prayed that it should be so.

For Savitri, it was an all-out effort to change the inevitable, and no sacrifice was too great for her. Her ascetic mind made her realize that if she wanted to achieve her objective she must have strength from within. Silent and resolute, she resorted to a path of inner discipline that demanded of her courage, unshaken faith, and extreme forbearance. Ultimately the young undaunted aspirant realized the nature of her true self. Thus awakened, and aware of the imperishable power within her, she was suitably equipped for the supreme struggle of her life.

That day Savitri was not prepared to leave Satyavan alone even for a moment. As such, when he came there with an axe on his shoulder ready to go, as usual, to the forest to collect fruits and fuel, she requested him to take her with him to the forest. Satyavan, unwilling at first, eventually agreed provided she had his parent's permission. She readily had their consent as it was their beloved daughter-in-law's first and only request after her marriage. Seemingly cheerful, Savitri followed her husband with a heart full of worry. But the unsuspecting Satyavan was delighted to have her by his side, and he happily showed her the beauties of the deep dense forest. The two of them gathered fruits and filled their bags. Soon after that, Satyavan started chopping wood but a strange feeling of exhaustion was gradually overpowering him. He complained of an excruciating pain in his head and of a sudden giddiness that made him incapable of standing any longer. He wanted to lie down. Savitri immediately held him with great care and made him lie down resting his head on her lap. She remembered the sage's prediction, calculated the hour and the moment and knew for certain what was coming next. A moment later a dark person of imposing personality, huge in stature, crimson-robed,

and bearing the brilliance of the sun stood by the side of Satyavan. He was holding a noose in his hand. Gently she placed her husband's head on the ground. Intensely anxious she stood up immediately with folded hands. With a trembling heart she appealed to the august visitor to kindly let her know who he was and what was his intention. She said that she presumed him to be a denizen of the celestial world because none but a God could be like him. The God of Death said that she should know him as 'Yama'. Since she was deeply devoted to her husband (पतिव्रता) and as she was an austere ascetic (तपस्विनी) he had condescended to talk to her. Her husband's life span was over, he told her, and he was there to tie him up and take him away with him. Then, as if to comfort her, he added that as Satyavan was pious, handsome, and endowed with all the virtues, he had himself come to take him instead of sending his emissaries to do so. So saying, he drew up Satyavan's soul from his body and having taken full possession of it, he set forth southwards. Extremely distressed Savitri quietly followed him. Yamaraja realized that she was following, so he asked her quite tenderly to return and perform her husband's last rites, for she had now fulfilled all her duties towards her husband and had come with him as far as possible. Savitri, in her gentle persuasive way, requested him to allow her to follow him and her husband's soul as it was prescribed by the eternal law (सनातन धर्म) that a wife should always go wherever her husband went of his own will or otherwise.\* She had confidence deep within herself that her piety, her devotion to elders, her husband's love and above all Yamaraja's unbounded graciousness would not be able to stop her from pursuing him. She further added that the great knowers of Truth were of the opinion that friendship grew between two persons even when they treaded only seven paces together. On that basis, she had the privilege of having the Lord of Death himself as her friend and as such she would request him kindly to give her a patient hearing. She tried to explain how very impossible it was for her, in the absence of her husband, to perform religious rites so highly recommended by the great sages for the observance of the householders. The God of

\* यत्र मे नीयते भर्ता स्वयं वा यत्र गच्छति ।

मया च तत्र गन्तव्यमेष धर्मः सनातनः ॥

Death was immensely pleased at the manner in which she presented her views, at her knowledge of the Shastras, at her astounding power of reasoning and command over language and phonetics and involuntarily addressed her as the blameless one (अनिन्दिता) and graciously offered her a boon of her choice—anything except Satyavan's life.

Even in that forlorn condition, Savitri glowed with inner radiance, and her intrinsic excellence of character was very clear. She did not think of her own self, nor even of Satyavan. Instead she requested the Lord of Death kindly to redeem her father-in-law's lost eyesight and make him as brilliant and powerful as Fire and the Sun. Her prayer was an eloquent expression of her sensitive awareness of propriety, a legacy of her noble breeding. As a daughter-in-law, she owed her first allegiance to her father-in-law who was blind and was deprived of his regal grandeur. Overwhelmed, and with a feeling of deep admiration, Yamaraja instantly granted her wish with great happiness and asked her to go back as she had already covered a long distance.

But Savitri was not inclined to return. She continued to follow him and addressing him as 'Lord Peerless' she entreated him kindly to listen to her supplication. She assured him that she did not feel fatigued as she was with her husband and that she would follow Yamaraja wherever he would take him. She mentioned that according to wise men even a casual meeting with a virtuous man was worthwhile as in that way he became a great friend, a well-wisher, and that feeling of friendliness could never go in vain. Hence one should always be in the company of noble persons. Yamaraja simply marvelled at her uncommon power of observation and the brilliance of her sublime thoughts. He again offered her a boon. This time Savitri asked for the restoration of her father-in-law's lost kingdom so that he might be empowered to discharge his royal duties effectively as a *kshatriya* king. Yamaraja granted her prayer with great satisfaction and once again pressed her to go back as the journey was too strenuous for her.

Savitri still followed him and at the same time went on pleading her cause faithfully. She said that the God of Death was universally acclaimed as 'Yama', i.e. one who exercised restraint. He was meting out justice to each one in the world according to his actions. Noble as Yama was, he was ever

merciful towards all mortal creatures afflicted with various weaknesses and he was ever forgiving and kind to his enemies who surrendered to him. Savitri's superb delineation of Yamaraja's character with a deep sense of understanding and appreciation enthralled the Lord of Death. He was completely won over. He hailed her as the auspicious one (कल्याणी) and asked her to solicit another boon, but not Satyavan's life. He confessed that her words were as welcome to him as life-giving water is to a thirsty man.

Thereupon, Savitri begged him to sanction one hundred valiant sons to her father for the propagation of his dynasty. Thus Savitri upheld the glory of her divine birth by being instrumental in perpetuating her father's lineage in the world. Lord Brahma's inscrutable design in sanctioning a daughter to King Ashwapati was at long last manifested.

Yamaraja again insisted on her going back as she had already traversed a long way. But Savitri went on following him and assured him that she was not tired as she was in the company of her husband. She requested him kindly to pay heed to what she was saying while he continued his march towards his destination. She said that Yamaraja was universally known as 'Dharmaraja' since he had enriched the entire world by establishing the right religion for all and it was experienced that human beings had more reliance on godly people than on themselves. Savitri's undaunted courage to face the God of Death whom she ardently believed to be a never-failing friend and an epitome of fairness and compassion made her talk to him in such a trusting manner that the Lord of Death's inner self spontaneously responded to her appeal. Yamaraja, great as he was, frankly expressed to Savitri that he had never before heard such wise and pleasing words and she should have the fourth boon of her choice, except, of course, Satyavan's life. Then she should finally depart. On previous occasions, Savitri had prayed for her father-in-law's and her father's progenies, but now, at long last, she asked a boon for herself. She requested him to grant her one hundred sons, strong and courageous born out of her wedlock with Satyavan. The Lord of Death unhesitatingly and with delight sanctioned to princess Savitri her desired boon. Then he again asked her to go no further with him, for she would be tired. But Savitri would not be dissuaded. She trudged along and continued to entreat him

in the same beseeching manner. At that critical moment, her discerning Intellect made her wistfully point out to him the nature of the virtuous people who always adhere to religion, who never feel remorse after giving away something extremely precious. It was their devotion to truth that kept the world going. The beings who are born and those yet to be born had refuge in them. No one ever felt deceived in their midst. They did not harm anyone, they did not expect anything in return, their blessings never proved futile and they always upheld the honour of others. That was why they were the eternal guardians of the world. The quiet, grim Lord of Death's regard for Savitri knew no bounds. His admiration for her reached its highest pitch. Compelled by an irresistible urge, he again asked her to solicit another boon that should have no parallel in the world.

The incredible moment had arrived. Savitri maintained the equanimity of her mind. She did not lose sight of her goal. In remarkably informal manner, she approached the great Lord of Death with the request to grant her his promised gift—a gift inconceivable in the truest sense of the word—the restoration of Satyavan's life to him. Savitri reverentially addressed him as 'Saviour of Honour' (मानद, मत्सम्मानरक्षक) an extremely significant address and a unique tribute that not only crowned him with supreme honour but simultaneously involved him in immense responsibilities. Her subsequent submission was equally compelling. She stated with all candidness that on earlier occasions Yamaraja had benignly bestowed upon her several boons as his wide-awake mind could easily discern her merit acquired through her life-long devotion to truth and piety. On the strength of that merit alone, she then prayed to him kindly to redeem Satyavan's life.\* She added that his act of profound consideration would not only vindicate her honour and prove to the world the infallibility of his benediction but his word would ever ring true to the world, and carry an eternal message of hope and security to suffering humanity.

Her next move was not any less startling or disarming. She unequivocally admitted that without her husband, she was as good as dead, that without him she did not want happiness, she did not care for heaven, nothing was dear to her without

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\*वरं वृणे जीवतु सत्यवानम् ।

him, not even her own life.\* She was no more the intelligent, powerful, argumentative advocate of her cause, she was his loving daughter who laid bare her intense grief before the great Lord with the implicit faith of a child.

The Divine Dispenser of Justice was captivated and deeply moved by the unconscious and spontaneous expression of her innate goodness and her unwavering devotion to her husband. This made her shine before him as divine love incarnate, and he was only too happy to fulfil her wish: he blessed her from the bottom of his heart to live ever happily with her husband for long four hundred years. And finally he departed, leaving Satyavan, his soul restored, in Savitri's care.

By granting her extraordinary wish Yamaraja displayed his own limitless magnanimity, and he proved his own divine greatness to the world. His act of submission was an unerring affirmation of the fact that ever since Yamaraja and Savitri began their colloquy, the Lord Death had keenly felt the warmth of her rich, radiant personality. His initial inner resistance had slowly and imperceptibly worn off, giving place to a sense of deep appreciation.

The glorious achievement of Savitri disclosed to the world that with courage, undaunted faith and one-pointed devotion, even a frail woman could master that mysterious power that finally enabled her to accomplish an impossible task, to win the heart of Yamaraja and conquer Death.

It is seen in different ages that the galaxy of Indian women who became great and conspicuous in life's different arenas, had one special trait. They were all fortified with a nimbus of undefinable strength, boundless and indestructible in nature. Their scintillating personalities, based on their purity and strength of character, can hardly be portrayed with full justice. The life of Savitri is no exception. The gradual unfolding of her inner self keeps one spell-bound. It acts as an eternal source of inspiration to ardent seekers after truth and perfection. Savitri is a living illustration of the virtues that ever make a perfect woman. No wonder that she has become the embodiment of ideal Indian womanhood, ever adorable, ever to be remembered by posterity.

\* न कामये भर्तुर्विनाकृता सुखं न कामये भर्तुर्विनाकृता दिवम् ।

न कामये भर्तुर्विनाकृता प्रियं न भर्तुहीना व्यवसामि जीवितुम् ॥

## Yonder is Your Home

SHIV DHAWAN

A man was proceeding alone one night on a jungle track,  
when ambushing him, three robbers his belongings began to  
plunder and sack.

Having reduced the hapless traveller to a penniless wretched  
state  
they now huddled together, conferring as to what ought to be  
his fate.

'No good will accrue by leaving him alive,' the first man roared,  
rushing angrily at the trembling traveller with his drawn sword.

'No!' admonished the second, 'This man we need not fear;  
don't kill him, tie him hand and foot and just leave him here.'

The other two finally agreed that the loot was sufficient price  
and abandoned the traveller, acting on their friend's advice.

A short while later the third robber, returning, announced  
apologetically  
that he would cut the bonds asunder and set the man free.

Helping the traveller to his feet, the robber led him by the hand,  
through the jungle, pointing to the road where his house did  
stand.

The grateful traveller begged the good-hearted robber to stay,  
while the latter declined, as the night was fast giving place to day.

The moral of this parable is more than clear.

The jungle is the world. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, the robbers  
prowling here.

Their endeavour is to rob man of his spiritual fruit.

the precious belonging they are after is the Knowledge of Truth.

Tamas the dark one, the awesome robber, wants to destroy man,  
but to bind man to the world is Rajas's plan.

Sattva is a strange fellow, very different from his friends,  
to rescue man from passions deep and inertia, is his sole end.

But Sattva also is a robber, he too is the evil one,

he cannot give the Knowledge of Truth, and he won't return  
the stolen goods.

Unable to reach the Supreme Abode he can only aimlessly roam,  
now and then setting someone on the path, 'Yonder is your  
home'.

## The First Translations of the Upanishads

PRAVRAJIKA PRABUDDHAPRANA

FOR MANY centuries translation of the Vedas was forbidden. But in the seventeenth century a Muslim translated them into Persian. Then followed a translation into Latin in the eighteenth century by a Christian. A third translation was made into English and Bengali in the nineteenth century by a most unorthodox Hindu. Extraordinary personalities with a sense of mission, these pioneer translators were aware that they were responsible for making Vedantic thought accessible to many. What would Vyasa, the compiler of the Vedas, think of the Upanishads being read in every language and in every corner of the world in the twentieth century?

Jesus warned his disciples in stringent words: 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet...' The most sacred doctrines are maintained in secret in every religious culture by an initiated élite who would not violate the trust of fellow initiates. It is not that these high truths are kept from the public out of pure selfishness or greed for power. *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, the Jewish *Kabbalah*, and the Christian *Philokalia* have always been guarded in secret codes and forbidden to be translated to keep them from either degenerating into occult practices or dissipating into speculation.

Like isostasy, the levelling process of the earth's surface in geological time, some force seems to have equalized the world culturally in the twentieth century. Since Swami Vivekananda's visit to the West, the spread of world-culture has accelerated in geometric progression. The privacy of the individual cultures has been transcended in a universal dimension. The 'New World' discovered by Columbus, who was seeking India to tap her physical resources, was the refuge of the Pilgrim Fathers in their quest for religious freedom and equality. Four hundred years later the discovery of America by Columbus was celebrated at the World's Columbian Exhibition. Swami Vivekananda's success at the Parliament of Religions at this exhibition was partly made possible because Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman had already appreciated Vedic thought

and partly because Vivekananda revived in Americans their aspiration for freedom and equality in a deeper sense. The natural course of the national karma of America was fulfilled by the gift of India's greatest resource, the Vedanta, the teaching of the Upanishads which Vivekananda made practicable in the West. The Vedantic wisdom which had been whispered into the ears of initiates in the age of the Vedas was loudly proclaimed by the prophets of India in the last century. It was the intention of Vivekananda, the apostle of Ramakrishna, that there be no more secrets.

Even before the Transcendentalists and Theosophists, Vedantic thought was disseminated by the first translations of the Upanishads which filtered into Europe and America in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Considering the age of the Upanishads, these translations were made very recently.

### Pioneer Translators

The Upanishads came to the West mainly through two pioneer translations. These two sources were the translations of Anquetil Duperron, which were read in Europe, and those of Rammohan Roy which were read in America. Duperron's Latin translation of the Upanishads directly influenced Schopenhauer and, through Schopenhauer's enthusiasm, Nietzsche's writings. In 1865 Nietzsche wrote that he discovered in Schopenhauer's work a mirror in which he saw the world, life, and his own nature depicted with frightful grandeur. He read in Schopenhauer's work a cry for renunciation and resignation. Through Rammohan's translations the Transcendentalists in America and those who could read Bengali and English in India became acquainted with the Upanishads. The history of Upanishadic translations has, however, an earlier beginning.

### Dara Shikoh

The very first of the pioneer translations of the Upanishads was made by Dara Shikoh, the son of Shah Jahan and the great-grandson of Akbar. Though a Muslim he believed the Upanishads were the first and best of all heavenly books and that they contained the 'source and fountainhead' of the ocean of unity in conformity with the holy *Quran*. A Wadiri Sufi, Dara Shikoh sought an explanation for the allegories of the *Quran*. He tried to find common ground in Muslim and

Hindu mysticism. He was therefore considered a threat to the religious integrity of Islam in India. Ultimately, this vastly broad-minded and erudite prince was declared a heretic and beheaded by his brother, Aurangzeb, in the spirit of the times. Nevertheless, he had managed to publish an immortal work, the *Sirr-i-Akbar*, or 'the Great Secret', a collection of fifty Upanishads translated into Persian, which was completed with the help of a number of pundits and *sannyasins* in Varanasi in 1657.

Although the *Sirr-i-Akbar* is generally thought to contain the commentary of Shankaracharya, it really has only a small part of his introductory commentary and contains none of Shankara's commentary on the verses themselves. Some important clues reveal Dara's accurate understanding of classical Vedanta, which none of the other early translators even approach. For example, in translating the word, Brahman, by the equivalent Persian term for 'Absolute Essence', Dara uses the impersonal pronoun, 'It', as Shankara does, and he uses the reflexive pronoun for 'Atman' which makes the difference between a monistic and a monotheistic reading. In *Kena Upanishad*, (II. 5) where Shankara interprets the text to mean 'renunciation', 'turning away from this world of I and mine' and which is the nature of ignorance, Dara has, 'whoever understands it in all has left this world, and becomes without decline and resurrected'. This Persian word for *left* is one which is used when someone leaves something behind, an object like one's eye glasses, extraneous and totally irrelevant, free or having escaped, and not a word used for leaving the world when dying, which is how other translators of the early nineteenth century have invariably understood it.

In the course of philological research there has been much controversy about the worth of the *Sirr-i-Akbar* and its Latin translation, made one and a half centuries later. The first translation of the *Sirr-i-Akbar* was made into English by Nathaniel B. Halhed in 1787, but this work was not published, and it is just as well, as it is sketchy and mostly illegible. The manuscript is in the British Museum. Although a copy was made of it by James Hindley, that too remained unpublished.

#### Anquetil Duperron

A translation into Latin of the *Sirr-i-Akbar*, called the *Oupnek'hat* (a transliteration of the word Upanishad) was

published in 1801-2 by Anquetil Duperron. This is the translation about which the philosopher Schopenhauer was to say: 'It is the solace of my life and shall be the solace of my death'. He wrote:

'Indeed how very much is one moved in one's innermost being when one has imbibed this incomparable book . . . every line is full of solid, precise and entirely harmonious sense! And in every page we encounter deep, original, sublime thoughts; while a lofty and sacred earnestness permeates the entire book. Here it breathes of the Indian atmosphere and of primordial, natural existence. . . . It is the most rewarding and sublime reading—excepting the original text—possible in the world . . .'

This translation was a literal one, however, and was bitterly criticized for being awkwardly word-for-word, and in Surendranath Das Gupta's estimation, largely unintelligible.<sup>1</sup>

Alexander Hamilton, a contemporary of William Jones, had learnt Sanskrit in India and introduced the language into Germany through Friedrich von Schlegel. In a review published in 1802, Alexander Hamilton's opinion of Duperron's translation is mercilessly critical:

' . . . nothing less than the beatitude promised by Dara Shecuh, at the conclusion of his preface, to those who shall read and understand it, could induce anyone to persevere in such an attempt, through the medium of M. Anquetil's version . . .

'We are of the opinion that a translation of an Upanishad, from the Sanskrit into English, would prove a performance of some interest; but that the value of the work before us is considerably diminished by coming through the medium of a Persic translation.'<sup>2</sup>

This statement is followed by a list of Duperron's errors in translation by which Hamilton means to prove Duperron's lack of knowledge of Sanskrit. At that time there was no universally standardized transliteration of Sanskrit as there is at present.

Sir William Jones' reading of the *Sirr-i-Akbar* in Persian led him to remark:

'... through the sublime and majestic features of the original were discernible, in parts, through the folds of the Persian drapery; yet the Sanskrit names were so barbarously written and the additions the translator has made on the work so deformed that I resolved to postpone a regular perusal of it till I could compare it with the Sanskrit original.'<sup>3</sup>

### The British Orientalists

William Jones, Charles Wilkins, the College of Fort William and the Serampore missionaries were lauded by many contemporary Western Indologists for awakening the Bengali intelligentsia to the treasures of Vedic and Puranic literature by getting it translated into the vernacular languages as well as interpreting and translating legal codes, such as the Gentu Code. Their motives were not all academically inspired, however. Theirs was a project begun in anticipation of religious conversion and political control. The first grammars of some Indian vernacular languages were written by the Orientalists, especially the Serampore missionaries, in an effort to learn them well enough to translate the Bible for Indians. Though they produced useful grammars their efforts to gain many converts were unsuccessful. These Orientalists claimed the responsibility, directly or indirectly, for providing the incentive in Indians to value their regional languages and to generate a search for style in the preparation of what constituted a literary renaissance. They accomplished this by offering prizes and payment to writers for translation and for teaching their languages to British Civil Servants at the Fort William College.

In this way the British Orientalists learned Sanskrit and, in 1807, Sir William Jones wrote his *Extracts from the Vedas* in which he includes a translation, for first time in English, of the entire text of an Upanishad, the *Isha Upanishad*. It is a paraphrase of the text and there is no commentary. It is not known whether or not he saw Shankara's commentary, but he did see a copy of the *Sirr-i-Akbar*, though judging from his opinion of the latter, it is unlikely that he would have used it in his own translation. Jones' translation is marked by Christian concepts, for example, in verse 16, Jones adds, 'Thou who restrainest sinners, . . . ' where there is no such

reference in the original text. Other Orientalists of the early nineteenth century like Wilkins translated parts of the Vedas but no complete Upanishadic text. Only H. T. Colebrooke did not translate the *Isha Upanishad* so it is difficult to make any comparison but there seems to be a closer correlation between Colebrooke's *Altareya Upanishad* translation and the Sanskrit text than it is likely Jones would give. However, Schopenhauer had a poor opinion of it. He felt he was not able to receive more than the outlines of the original thought, so obscured was it by additions which were of an 'alien character'; and he described it with such adjectives as modern, empty, dull, superficial, senseless, Westernized and so on. He believed that one could get a genuine knowledge of the Upanishads only from the *Oupnek'hat*; and that one may well have read all other translations and still have no idea of what it was all about.

### Rammohan Roy

Rammohan Roy, one of the most outstanding personalities of the nineteenth century, has been called the father of the Bengal renaissance, the great mediator between Hinduism and Christianity, and a social and political reformer not only of Bengal but of all of India. He is famous for his efforts to abolish the *sati* rite, the burning alive of widows, for introducing English education in place of classical subjects, for starting various journals, and above all for the establishment of the Brahmo Samaj.

Recent critics such as David Kopf and R. C. Majumdar have tried to de-mythologize him but they could not diminish his little-remembered but historically important achievement as a pioneer translator and commentator of the Upanishads. He was the first ever to have translated the *Kena Upanishad* into English and to have made available in a vernacular language this and other Upanishads following Shankara's commentaries. He is also unique in having almost simultaneously brought out versions in two languages, English and Bengali. After Duperron, Rammohan Roy was the most influential writer in making the Upanishads available to the Western World.

Rammohan's English and Bengali translations were published in 1816 and widely distributed in Europe and America as

well as in India. He wrote about his *Isha Upanishad*: '...during the last twelve months I have distributed nearly five hundred copies amongst all descriptions of Hindus...' <sup>4</sup> Surendranath Das Gupta writes: 'The study of the Upanishads has, however, gained impetus by earnest attempts of our Ram Mohan Roy who not only translated them into Bengali, Hindi\* and English, but published them at his own expense.' <sup>5</sup> Copies and translations of his Upanishads were distributed free to those who would accept them.

Though it seems a generous gesture it is doubtful that many Hindus were greatly influenced by these translations. Though they may not have started a religious revolution in Bengal, they stirred up an interesting controversy between Rammohan and various educated traditionalists. Again, his popularity in Europe and America was because of his active part in the Christian Unitarian-Trinitarian controversy in 1820 which was also going on in Europe and America. It was largely for this reason that his works were popularly read, not primarily because they were translations of the Upanishads.

By comparison, 'The reviewers seem to be totally unaware of Duperron's *Oupnek'hat* in America. And Americans showed only romantic poetic appreciation of Sir William Jones' work and they paid no attention to H.T. Colebrooke's.... "On the Vedas".' <sup>6</sup>

The importance of Rammohan's translations and through them the availability of Vedanta philosophy to American and English readers is well-documented. Reports of his activities appeared in *The Monthly Repository of Theology*, popular among American Unitarians in 1816 and subscribed to by Harvard University, and also in the *Periodical Account of the Baptist Missionary Society* and the *Missionary Register*, all London publications.

His English translations were well received also because they were heavily flavoured with Christian theological jargon which made them digestible to their Western readers: for example, one would 'enjoy everlasting beatitude' in place of *mukti* or liberation and have 'the spirit of God' instead of the *Atman*. Wherever he could, Rammohan used rational, empirical language for what he believed would be otherwise misleading

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\*No Hindi translation has been found by this writer.

to Europeans. In the *Kena Upanishad* (I.1) for 'effulgent being' (देव) he has 'immaterial being', for 'all wise men' in the next verse and for 'knowers of Brahman' elsewhere, he has 'learned men'; for 'liberation' (अमृतम्) (II.4) he has 'everlasting happiness' and finally for '*maya*' he has 'appearance beyond description'. His English version of this Upanishad excludes some particularly Hindu ideas mentioned in the Bengali one, such as that of previous births (IV.8.28). Unlike Jones and Colebrooke, his contemporary British Orientalists, he was fully aware of his literary aberrations. He wrote:

'Metaphorical expressions having been very common among Oriental nations, Mohammedans could not fail to understand them in their proper sense, although the expressions may throw great difficulty in the way of an European Commentator even of profound learning.'

Allegedly, at the age of nine Rammohan studied the *Quran*, Mohammedan Law and all the sixty-three schools of Mohammedan theology. He was influenced by the universalist outlook of the Mohammedan rationalists (Mutazalīs) of the eighth century, and the iconoclastic ideal of the Mohammedan Theists (Muwahhiddin). From them he took the conception of the 'One Almighty God' as the fundamental principle of every religion; and a warning against deception by spiritual guides, ascetic practices, and following blindly the ancient ceremonies and creeds.

These ideas and the moral precepts of Christ reinforced Rammohan's abhorrence of Hindu 'idolatry' and its religious and social evils which he mentions in his preface to his English edition of the *Isha* and *Kena Upanishads*. In the latter he wrote that the real spirit of the Hindu scriptures is the declaration of the unity of God; and that 'allegorical language or description was frequently used to represent the attributes of the Creator, which were sometimes designated as independent existences.' This, he said, 'had the most mischievous effect when literature and philosophy decayed, producing all these absurdities and idolatrous notions which have...destroyed every mark of reason, and darkened every beam of understanding.'

The necessity of a guru for the attainment of *Brahmavidya*, the knowledge of Brahman, is accepted by all the schools of

Vedanta. Even the gods required teachers. However, in his introduction to the *Isha Upanishad* Rammohan warns Hindus against the traditional gurus—'self-interested guides, who in defiance of the law as well as of common sense, have succeeded but too well in conducting them to the temple of idolatry. . . .'<sup>9</sup>

It is obvious that Rammohan had different messages for his Western and Indian readers. Rammohan and his followers founded the Brahmo Sabha in 1818. In 1828 the name was changed to the Brahmo Samaj, the Society of God. The new religion was based on Rammohan's puritanical view of the Vedic golden age. Because of his conviction that Vedantic knowledge should be available to all, he insisted that the texts be read in Bengali. Rammohan blamed the Brahmins, as did Jones and Colebrooke, for concealing the wisdom of the Vedanta within the Sanskrit language. Of this there is evidence in *The Asiatic Journal* for January 1832:

'The Brahmo Shubha, a Vedant Institution, was established in the year 1818, by our enlightened and celebrated countryman Baboo Ram Mohan Roy, . . . Christians and men of every other persuasion are permitted to be present at the religious acts that are performed within this sanctuary, and as the preaching from the text of the Vedas is in *pracrito bhasa* or the Vernacular Bengalee, all can understand what is said. No image of any kind is allowed to enter this house, nor is there any kind of sacrifice.'<sup>10</sup>

To gain a perspective of early Upanishadic scholarship one may look at the translations which appeared after the first quarter of the nineteenth century when scholars are found to be more interested in the philological aspects of Upanishad translations: the etymology of some words in the text, speculation on the relative dating of the *khandas* or chapters, and the concordance of significant terms. They made many interesting comparative studies on the surface of the texts but did not touch the depth of understanding. It is the early translators, those who prepared the ground for the spread of Vedantic thought, to whom we are indebted. These pioneers, whose efforts have been forgotten, had given out once for all the ancient secret, making Indian spirituality available to the common man everywhere.

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## Predestiny and Evil in Hindu Myth

JEANINE MILLER

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## An Enquiry into

## The Symbolism of the Vena-Prithu Legend

THE LEGEND of Vena-Prithu, mentioned in the *Manu Smṛiti*, is related in the *Mahabharata* and the Puranas, and can be traced back, in the form of Prithi Vainya, to the *Atharva Veda* (VIII.x), to the *Satapatha Brahmana*, and the *Taittiriya Brahmana* where it gets several mentions, and finally to the *Rig Veda*. This shows that it had been known at least in its broad outlines for a very long time and it seems that originally Vena played the role of Prithu. Certainly the legend must be based upon historic facts which subsequently became confused, embroidered upon, and mixed up with other unrelated facts. But whether historically true or not, its implications, sociological,

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psychological and ethical are of fundamental importance and reveal the basics of ancient Indian civilization.

Like all ancient legends or myths, the story has many levels of meaning:

- 1) from its historical and sociological point of view, it can be seen
  - a) as the origin not only of kingship but of the divine rights of kings as descendants of godly kings, and also of the relationship between kings and people, what it should and should not be; of the duties of kings who are the fosterers of civilization; and of the rights of the subjects to demand protection from their kings and the provision of the bare necessities of existence; and also of the right of deposing kings, whatever their origin, should they prove inadequate or tyrannical;
  - b) as a justification for the maintenance of the classes and thus of the structure of the Hindu social order; each class had its specific task to perform, just as each group and each individual was supposed to have the overall harmony depending upon each one following his particular path, avocation, calling, or dharma.
- 2) from its cosmological point of view, the story is concerned with the rebuilding of a world after a period of disruption, destruction, or stagnation, and the teaching of the arts of civilization to child humanity by more enlightened rulers.
- 3) its ethical core concerns the problem of good and evil which involves not merely the individual but the whole of society, the sociological aspect of which has direct bearing on the Hindu social structure, and the great questions of sin, of karma, and of the transference of merit and demerit.
- 4) viewed from a psychological standpoint the story shows two heroes as symbolic of two extreme facets of the human personality, the negative side sliding downward towards complete disintegration through over-inflation and overweening ambition, ruthlessness and selfishness; and the positive side striving towards wholeness leading to reintegration and individuation; the process of human maturity from the wild aggressive savage who knows no laws, submits to none, and understands nought, to the

tame, civilized man who lives by law and understands that to live truly is to benefit others.

The present inquiry will concern itself more especially with the last two standpoints and only indirectly with the others in so far as they are bound up with the problems investigated.

The story in its details is obviously not meant to be taken literally. It is symbolic, as indeed are all myths and legends, of certain great truths with which the human mind has tried to grapple ever since thought began. The richness of the material is evident and is peculiar to the manifoldness of myths and legends whose multi-levelled meaning is their essential value and contribution to human lore. In the present instance the story pertains rather to legend than to myth, although the gods do play a preponderent role, but the heroes are essentially human beings even though one, Prithu, is considered a part emanation of Vishnu. In myths, the focus is upon the gods whom the human mind projects upon the screen of the cosmos in the guise of heroes performing heroic actions, fashioning the cosmos, warring against the forces of opposition, of chaos, of stagnation, and always gaining the victory—in the Vedas, Indra being the great heroic god of epic stature. In legends, all these daring exploits are ascribed to heroes, who are demi-gods, but fundamentally human beings. This is the core of the Vena-Prithu story; it deals with the essential human condition, with human frailty and greatness; with the human predicament and its capacity to rise above it, or indeed to sink beneath it, to achieve greatness through humility, or self-destruction through ambition. The gods play their part too, but only as symbolic of forces beyond human control.

### Vena

The story unfolds itself naturally as one proceeds to examine the problems it poses. So only the few, important, introductory facts will be stated.

Vena, the hero of the first part of the legend, is born to Queen Sunitha and King Anga, a boy whose illustrious ancestry does not prevent him from being thoroughly evil. His father tries again and again to correct him but to no avail. The boy is bent on evil and thinks of nothing but to impose his perverted will on others even to the point of killing. Finally, disgusted, the father walks

out of his kingdom to disappear for ever. His courtiers scour the whole country but cannot find him. The sage-priests feel obliged, rather than leave the kingdom without a ruler, to consecrate his heir, Vena, as rightful king.

Generally speaking, names in myths and allegories, have a meaning that gives a clue to the overall quality of the person.

For example, Vena's father was Anga. Anga means 'limb' which of course directs the attention to the physical body. From the psychological standpoint this outer aspect of the person, emphasizing physical strength, activity, vitality, would point to a greater stress of the masculine side of the personality with its rationality, logic and physical activity, to the exclusion of feeling, intuition and the subtler emotions. In Hindu philosophy *rajas* denotes this active quality. This Anga has himself, in some versions (*Vayu* and *Vishnu Puranas*) as father *Uru* (thigh) the name further emphasizing the outer or physical and, here, lower aspect. In another version—that of the *Mahabharata*—Vena's father is the son of Ananga, the opposite of Anga, hence the bodyless one. This name refers to the myth of Kama, the God of Desire whose body was shrivelled up by one glance from Shiva's third eye as he was trying to divert Shiva's attention away from his austerities. Thus in Vena's paternal ancestry we have two specific emphases, the body or flesh doomed to corruption, and desire the source of that corruption.

This one-sidedness of the personality is to be offset by its very opposite, as to Anga is given in marriage Sunitha, daughter of Death, who herself—indeed like her husband—is not considered evil at all<sup>1</sup>, the name itself implying giving or receiving good guidance. But her paternal parentage poses a problem: for her father, Death, not only represents the very negation of physicality but is also considered evil; in philosophical terms she, as his daughter, would symbolize the *tamas guna*, the static aspect of matter, as against the dynamic, the lethargic as against the vital.

### Death in Hindu Mythology

In Hindu mythology *death* is generally closely related to *evil*.<sup>2</sup> We may presume that death, as premature or violent death, is deemed evil because it is intimately related to punishment for evil doing—and this not only in the Hindu but in all

the religious traditions of the world—lust and death being always identified. Whereas death, as the culmination of a well-spent life is natural and therefore a well-earned release.

The *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanishad* tells us: 'One should not go to foreign people, one should not go to the end of the world, lest he fall in with evil, with death,' (I. iii. 10) lest he, falling in with evil, bad company, bad practices, should meet premature death. The decrease in the span of human life in each of the four ages of Hindu cosmology was taken as a sign of the waning of dharma. Human life becoming more and more a prey to evil as the cycle goes on, and men more and more enmeshed in matter, the span of life is cut short to prevent a further accretion of evil; in other words, human beings are allotted fewer years so that their evil propensities may not wax to unwieldy proportions. Prajapati<sup>3</sup> is even said to have fought with Death, and the gods are related to have 'struck' and 'thrust it off', thereby reaching heaven, the abode of immortal light (*Jaiminiya Upanishad Brahmana*, (II.x.1-22). However, as it is true that in the Vedas and the Brahmanas, as against the general trend of the Upanishads where death means the end of suffering, the wish is for a full span of active life, or of Immortality like the gods. Any obstacle that prevents life being lived to the full is considered nefarious, so in the Puranas sudden death is regarded as the worst obstacle. The ambivalence of this attitude is reflected in the *Matsya Purana*, where Brahma is made to rebuke Shiva for creating immortal creatures and to ask him expressly to create 'beings who would be subject to death for . . . creatures free from death will not undertake actions or holy rituals.' (IV. 30-33).<sup>4</sup> It is here taken for granted that the threat of death compels creatures to be virtuous and to offer those sacrifices that in the later part of Vedic civilization were deemed necessary to the gods to keep them immortal. Death as a deterrent among humans is useful to the gods.

So, on the mother's side of Vena's parentage, the emphasis is on negativity and the dark abyss of death in its most negative meaning; on the father's side, on excessive physicality, the outward bound psyche that ignores the pulls of its depths. The offspring of the union of these two, excessive *rajas* and excessive *tamas*, is not what our logical minds might expect—a balance between the two, but Vena, anxiety, desire, the

unsatisfied one, who, it is said, took after the maternal grandfather in that he was obsessed with death, playing the role of a hunter and killing animals uselessly, and violently strangling children of his own age. His completely outward bound egocentricity uses outer objects, i.e. living creatures to satisfy his own malevolent cravings regardless of the moral implications. The *Vishnu Purana* states that Vena 'inherited the evil propensities of his maternal grandfather' thereby again identifying death with evil, from which one may conclude that *death* in this aspect means the *negation of every quality*. The union of *rajas* and *tamas* in this particular case emphasizes the worst aspect of both. The offspring, Vena, not only takes after the maternal grandfather on the one hand, i.e. death with its negations of everything considered worthwhile, but also, on the other hand, after the father and the father's father, the father's excessive masculinity manifesting in Vena as *ahamkara* or *self-assertive I-am-ness*, a result of excessive *rajas*, devoid of any feeling for others, leading Vena to usurp the fruit of the sacrifice for himself with the intention of making himself immortal at the physical level. So we have in Vena an example of egotism in its most violent form: death inflicted upon others and an unwillingness to die for oneself, face up to death in its inner meaning—the negation of *ahamkara*. The last thing Vena was capable of was 'dying to one's self'.

The *Bhagavata Purana*, again emphasizing the evil aspect of death and Vena's baneful heredity, makes a further point of great importance. 'Vena took after his maternal grandfather, Death, who was born of a portion of *adharma* and so Vena was devoid of *dharma*' (IV. xiii. 25ff).

### What is Dharma?

If death be considered the negation of every good, it would then be *adharma*. Observe that Vena, taking after his maternal grandfather, is thereby devoid of *dharma*; his destiny is sealed from his very conception. Because of this baneful ancestry he cannot be righteous. Vena is thus *predestined* by his very ancestry to act in a way contrary to accepted norms, to *dharma*. When the time comes for him to choose between behaviour that is in accordance with *dharma*, or behaviour that is its opposite, he has perforce to choose the latter, if indeed he has

any power of choice; in fact he is bound to act against dharma and therefore fundamentally has no choice, or rather no real capacity to choose.

What is dharma? The *Maitri Upanishad* tells us: 'Pursuit of the duties of the stage of life to which each one belongs, this is the rule for one's duty.' (IV.3) John Bowker defines it thus: 'Very roughly, the idea of living according to the pattern of life appropriate to one's own level of attainment and position in society is what is meant by dharma.'<sup>6</sup> Vena's dharma as 'head' or 'king' is to uphold the 'order of society' such as it is, to pay tribute to the gods through the priesthood and be an 'example' of righteousness to his people, all of which he failed in doing. So straight after his inauguration as monarch 'he caused it to be everywhere proclaimed that no worship should be performed, no oblations offered, no gifts bestowed upon the Brahmins' (*Vishnu Purana* I.13.13, 14).

The first step on the path of self-inflation and self-destruction was thus taken. Upon being remonstrated with by the sage-priests who declared that such a course of action was unthinkable, he decreed that sacrifice should be offered to him as the one responsible for the welfare of all, as the sustainer of the people, that he should therefore be worshipped as the lord of all. The second step in self-inflation is here being taken. The sages then point out that for the preservation of his kingdom and his life,<sup>7</sup> they should be permitted to worship Hari, the Lord of all sacrifice with solemn rites, a portion of the fruit of which would revert to him, Vena: 'Vishnu, the god of oblations, being propitiated with sacrifice by us, will grant you, O King, all your desires. Those princes have all their wishes gratified in whose realms Hari, the Lord of sacrifices, is adored with sacrificial rites.' (ibid I.13.17-19)

This is a reminder to Vena of the meaning of the sacrifice—an offering to the deity as a result of which the deity sends its blessing on men—as well as a statement of the function of priesthood. But Vena is so inflated with his own conceit that he asks: 'Who is superior to me? Who besides me is entitled to worship?' He remains adamant, claiming that all the gods 'are present in the person of a king; the essence of a sovereign is all that is divine'; therefore the brahmins must obey his new decree. But they plead further and this time emphasize dharma:

'Give command, great king, that dharma may suffer no

decrease. All this world is but a transmutation of oblations and if devotion be suppressed the world is at an end.' (ibid. I.13.25) In these few words is contained the essence of the philosophy of the sacrifice, the perpetual 'give and take' offering up and receiving, that forms the web of universal life hence the very structure of the cosmos.<sup>8</sup>

Vena is obviously confronted with a choice of conduct and a stern warning. It is the sages' last warning which goes beyond the narrower implications of social structure with its distinction of classes and their specific functions, but embraces the whole world in its stress on dharma and the fulfilment of dharma and man's relation to duty. The king should be the first to show the example of dharma in his conduct, decrees and worship.

### Vena's Sin

But devoid of dharma from his very birth, i.e. of the capacity to relate to what is righteous and act accordingly, Vena is preconditioned to take the path of *adharma*. When confronted with the sages' stern warning, and when given a kind of ultimatum to take the path of dharma, he refuses and gets himself more and more enmeshed in sin. He sinks deeper and deeper in his inflated egohood, seeing nothing except himself and his self-aggrandisement, and understanding nothing of the seriousness of the situation thus brought about by his rash action and its disastrous consequences both for himself and those who depend upon him as their sovereign.

This evil of inflated ego-centredness manifests itself as complete psychological blindness and lack of understanding of the implications of what one is doing or is about to do. Sweeping aside all reason, intelligence and even common sense, Vena falls headlong into the abyss of his own negativity.

The sages are said to destroy him 'who had first been destroyed by his impiety towards God' (*Vishnu Purana*, I.13.29) either through the power of sound (*Bhagavata Purana*, IV.14.34) or through blades of grass (*Vishnu Purana*, op.cit) consecrated by prayers. These are symbolic of powers and processes going on within the psyche. Psychologically, the implication is that the worship Vena arrogates to himself turns against him and destroys him. Total self-inflation, or self-aggrandisement, or

delusions of grandeur end in megalomania or madness. Whether Vena is literally killed or not is not the point. Indeed, in one version, his body is said to be magically preserved by his mother; in others it is the churning of his limbs that produces his death. The versions vary. The point at issue is not the physical death or the way it is brought about, but the fact that Vena is psychologically killed through the power of his own actions, the sages symbolizing certain processes that act upon the psyche in crisis.

Western critics seem to make light of Vena's sin. Dumézil asks what is that sin that Vena committed? He answers that Vena sinned against the brahmins in arrogating to himself the prerogative of the sacrifice as a result of which he mixed the classes:

'Vena, moved by pride, opposed himself to the brahmins; he wanted to prevent these from sacrificing and reserve for himself alone the monopoly of the ritual, thereby destroying the function of the brahmins as a social class. The core of his sin consisted in destroying the fundamental structure of society, its division into specific classes. This is confirmed in Manu which says: "This eminent royal sage who once ruled the entire earth, caused a confusion of the castes (*varna*), his intellect being destroyed by lust".'<sup>9</sup>

In Western eyes Vena's sin is not so terrible and possibly would not deserve the death penalty. If one considers the story psychologically as a deterioration of the personality through lack of moral judgement and over-inflation, then 'death', whether symbolical of madness or whether literal death is meant, is the inevitable consequence. The main point, however, is that to the ancient Hindus, the sin committed by Vena was against dharma pure and simple, whatever that dharma might imply—whether the taboo against mixing the classes, or the taking over of the special prerogatives of the brahmins, or the raising of one's self to the level of a god, or anything else. Vena failed in his dharma as king. Therefore Vena's sin was both 'personal and traditional' to use Wendy O'Flaherty's own words. Psychologically, his sin is in making himself a god, an overweening ambition which disregards all common sense and results in madness and is thus self-destructive.

Although Vena was intrinsically devoid of dharma and

therefore incapable by his very heredity of acting otherwise than he did, he yet had to pay the penalty of going against dharma, for the wages of sin, sooner or later, is always death. We are reminded in this connection, of the story of the Kauravas, in the *Mahabharata*, where this firmly entrenched belief of the Hindus finds embodiment in the lofty figure of Gandhari, the wife of the blind king Dhritarashtra, and mother of the hundred sons whose eldest, Duryodhana, is also an embodiment of adharma; whom his mother again and again rebukes for his evil conduct, and during the battle, day after day, when he comes for her blessing, warns him that righteousness always inevitably triumphs and he, not being righteous, cannot expect to win. In both the Vena and the Duryodhana episodes, the two protagonists allow themselves to become inflated with their own conceit and plunge into the abyss of evil, in spite of stern warnings of disaster as the inevitable consequence of adharma.

A question springs to mind in this respect: if anyone born of dharma can act in a way contrary to dharma, would this not be worse than the sin of someone born of *adharma* who cannot help, through his very conditioning, but act in a way contrary to dharma? Does not the fact that Vena takes after his maternal grandfather mitigate to a certain extent the evil tinge ascribed to his action? The Puranas are silent on this issue.

Going against dharma is thus the sin of Vena, for which the wages is death. One evil, death, counteracts another evil, sin. But it is violent, premature death that is here in question; it is the outcome of sin. Dr. Panikkar remarks:

'It is a universal belief that misfortune is a consequence of sin and thus that pain-suffering is always pain-punishment and so pain-purification. It all rests on the myth of pain. Since there is no pain without suffering, the implication is grave; suffering seems to be the ultimate structure of the world, because it is through this suffering that the afflicted order seems to be restored.'<sup>10</sup>

#### References

1. Bhaktivedanta in *Srimad Bhagavatam* (Los Angeles 1975) dismisses her as evil because of her parentage which shows a very superficial kind of judgement; he contradicts this judgement in another passage where he refers to her as a 'faithful wife' which, in Hindu terms, is the greatest compliment one can pay to a married woman in her role as wife.

2. As A. Wayman says: "Mara has built up an evil connotation in Buddhist literature, while Yama is 'King of the Law' (*Dharmaraja*), a model of justice." "It is clear enough that there are two strains of Yama: 1) a divine Yama of solar nature—the prototype of immortality; 2) a fearful Yama, personification of the evil, in man and of his inevitable death. . . ." 'Studies In Yama and Mara' *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 1959, III. 55,131. In the Vedas the wish is constantly for long life on earth. cf *Rig Veda*, X.xcvi.16. 'Free me from Yama's fetters' or 'Like the cucumber from its stem, even so may I be released from death, not from immortality'. *Ibid.*, VII lix.12. cf *Atharva Veda*, III. 31. See J. MILLER, *The Vedas: harmony, meditation and fulfilment*, (1974) chapter on 'Vedic Eschatology'. of *Satapatha Brahmana*, VIII. iv.2. 1-2; X.iv. 3.1-9; X.iv. 4.1-3; X.vi. 5.1-7; *Taittiriya Samhita*, II.1. 4.3-4. Also *Bhrhadaranyaka Upanisad*, I. v.23. See also W.O' Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil In Hindu Mythology*, (Berkeley 1976) Chapter on 'The Birth of Death'.
3. Cf. "Prajapati created death above the mortal beings as their devourer. Half Prajapati was mortal, the other half immortal; With the half that was mortal he was afraid of death." *Satapatha Brahmana*, X.i. 3.2. Prajapati is here identified with Man who in his corrupt nature is mortal and afraid of death, and in his incorrupt nature is immortal. (cf. Virat Purusha, three quarters of whom is in heaven and one quarter on earth).
4. Cf. *Linga Purana*, I. 70.300ff.
5. According to Bhaktivedanta, (op. cit) "Generally the daughter receives the qualifications of her father, and the son acquires those of the mother". "So . . . the child born of King Anga became the follower of his maternal grand father . . . *naranam matula karma* means that a child generally follows the qualities of his maternal family. If the maternal family is very corrupt or sinful the child, even though born of a good father, becomes a victim of the maternal family." *Bhagavata Purana*, IV. 2.574; also IV. 3.849.
6. *Problems of Suffering In Religions of the World*, (Cambridge 1970), 196. Cf. also "Appropriate action is a vital element in Hinduism. It means acting according to the pattern of life that belongs to one's present circumstances, concerned with the action only, and not with the fruits or rewards that might accrue from it." p. 217.
7. The Ancient Indians considered that man is born with four debts to pay: 1) the debt to the gods by way of offering sacrifices as a means of cooperating with the gods for the sustaining of the world; 2) the debt to the *rishis* by way of acquiring wisdom through the study of the Vedas, their legacy; 3) the debt to the ancestors, *pitris*, by prolonging life through begetting children, thereby keeping up the link between our ancestors and our descendants; 4) the debt to humanity involving civic duties, social duties and good manners, hospitality, morality and so on.
8. See J. Miller, *The Vision of Cosmic Order in the Vedas*, (New York 1985), part IV, 'Rita as the Sacrifice'.

9. Trans. J. Miller. Similarly Wendy O'Flaherty asks: 'What did Vena do? The sins attributed to him are traditional (he mixed the casts, he cheated the priests) but not personal. The flaw is sought first in genetic inadequacies (his mother was the child of death) and then in the first event, the first mistake. This obsession emerges also from the myths of the loss of the Golden Age, where, again there is 'no first mistake'; man is doomed before he commits his sin of lust or hunger.' (op. cit. 363). Dumézil further says: "... Puranic tradition tended to make Vena's sin banal, to make it the typical sin of proud kings ...". *Servius et la Fortune*, (1943), 60. In this particular case Vena is certainly doomed or predestined to evil from the first. See also *Bṛhaddharma* 3.13.1-60; 3.14.1-45.
10. *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (New Jersey 1979).

## Utpala His Philosophy of Recognition Leading to Divine Ecstasy

JANKINATH KAUL 'KAMAL'

THE FIRST propounder of Shaivism in Kashmir was Vasugupta who flourished in the middle or late eighth century A.D. Worship of the different deities, the Yoga system and the Shaiva faith were already in practice there. According to Dr. K. C. Panday, the Kula and Krama systems of Kashmir Shaivism existed there long before Atrigupta and Sangamaditya were invited by King Lalitaditya (cf. Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*) to settle in Kashmir. The Agamas are believed to be as old as the Vedas. After the lapse of a certain period of time, a particular system of thought naturally begins to fade away. Its revival, which emanates from God Himself, is also natural. Shaivism was thus revived in Kashmir when Lord Shiva Himself revealed the Shiva-Sutras to Vasugupta in the vicinity of Harwan village. Vasugupta re-established the faith by explaining the Sutras to his disciples. This teaching developed into two divisions: one, the Spanda system of thought and the other, the Pratyabhijna philosophy.

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Sri Jankinath Kaul 'Kamal' was in educational service in Kashmir till 1979 and has written many books including *Vikshipta Veena*, *Shiva Sutra Vimarsa* and others. He has also contributed papers and articles and journals in Sanskrit, Hindi, English and Kashmiri.

Siddha Somananda's *Shiva-dristi* explains the latter. His teachings were imbibed well by his disciple, Utpala, who had a sharp intellect. This brilliant disciple re-established the thought of Recognition with his illustrious work, *Ishwara-Pratyabhijna*. It is stated that Utpala wrote the *Karikas* at the request of his son Vibhramakara. In this treatise, he reflects the wisdom taught to him by his preceptor. It is an exhaustive exposition of the philosophy of Recognition. Persian scholars of Kashmir have termed it *Khird-i-Kamil*—wisdom of the sage. With the various commentaries on this book and other such works, there grew up a mass of literature round these *Pratyabhijna Karikas* of Utpala. This work assumed such importance that the whole system of Kashmir Shaiva Philosophy began to be known in India and abroad as *Pratyabhijna Darshana*.

We know little about the early life of Utpala, who came to be regarded as one of the greatest mystic saints of Kashmir. Tradition, however, says that he lived somewhere at Nowhatta (Navyut) in Srinagar and that he lived in the middle of the ninth century A.D. Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* also confirms this date. From the colophons of the works of his contemporary authors and those who followed him, we know that he was a brahmin and lived a married life. His father's name was Udayakara. Utpala was followed by his disciple, Lakshmana Gupta, one of the preceptors of the great Acharya Abhinavagupta, who wrote an exhaustive commentary and gloss on his work, *Pratyabhijna Karikas*.

### Philosophy of Recognition

Although Utpala's *Ishwara-Pratyabhijna* is hard to assimilate as it deals with abstruse logic, yet it is a perfect work on this philosophy. It is not only a set of philosophic doctrines, but also contains instructions on practical yoga. It is, therefore, preached for aspirants of high ability, who can develop constant awareness of the Supreme Consciousness. None of the three means advocated by Kashmir Shaivism in general is recognized in this philosophy. It is, however, known as Anupaya, the means without any means. 'Only the five great functions are to be followed: since there is no existence of impurity, whence can there be any erosion? It is only a change in point of view. Otherwise, nothing has happened to Shiva. No *jiva-bhava* has been assumed by him.' This doctrine of Recognition was

explained by Somananda to Utpala with the following illustration: 'A girl and a boy whose marriage had been fixed, but who did not know each other, happened to sit together one day with their relatives and friends at a fair. During this short time the girl served tea to the group of which one was her would-be groom. There was no stir of feeling in either of them. But while tea was being served, a common acquaintance hinted at the scheduled marriage to the one sitting by his side. Instantaneously a wave of the feeling of love ran through the bodies of both. The girl recognized her lover.' In the same way the *jiva* recognizes himself in Shiva with the help of the preceptor. This is the philosophy of Recognition in a nutshell. Utpala preached it more comprehensively than his teacher. He sat and wrote his abstruse aphorisms during calm moments. This was his self-introspection, ultimately established as philosophy. Gaudapadacharya, the grand-preceptor of Adi Shankaracharya, had also expounded a similar philosophy earlier. It is known as Ajatavada in the Advaita Vedanta philosophy. He says that nothing is born and so nothing dies. It is only due to the change in vision that the world appears to come and go. Utpala explained the philosophy in his own way and convincingly too.

### Ecstasy

Tradition goes that Utpala, during the later period of his life, would often be in spiritual ecstasy. His practices had ripened, by the grace of Lord Shiva and as a result he uttered words full of divine rapture, intensely musical, and pregnant with esoteric meaning. These utterances truly revealed the heart of Utpala. His philosophical doctrines are basically devotional. He sang verses in different tunes in praise of his Lord, expressing non-dual devotion, *abheda bhakti*. He was so engrossed in his ecstasy that he did not keep a record of his compositions. He floated above body-consciousness.

Since divinity also recedes to duality, more often than not, while the soul resides in the body, Utpala would sometimes come down to it and open his eyes to look around. Filled with divine consciousness he would find his own mental reflection outside and get instantly drawn within. Once in spring, after being in his ecstatic mood for long, Utpala opened his eyes and saw almond blossoms strewn by the wind on the ground.

At once, he said to himself 'Ah ! the devotees have performed the worship and adorned Lord Shiva with flower wreaths. Only I fall back.' Thinking thus he instantly went into *samadhi* again.

Another time, while running in divine ecstasy, Utpala's locks got entangled among the bushes. He felt that his beloved Shiva was catching hold of him. Imagining thus he went into *samadhi*. Now he did not need to sit for meditation. Shiva was always in his heart just as Mother Kali's divinity was always present in Paramahansa Ramakrishna's heart. He sang in melodious tunes while panting for the final beatitude of Shiva, addressing him with earnest devotion. This speaks of the divine ecstasy of the sage which the Persian scholars term *Janun-i-Kamil*. Thus, Utpala is said to have composed a large number of verses, many of which were collected and compiled by Sri Rama and Adityaraja. Finally, these were classified into twenty hymns by a great scholar named Vishwavarta who gave each hymn his own heading. The compilation is named Utpala's *Shiva-stotravali*. This information comes down to us from Kshemaraj, a later author and disciple of Abhinavagupta. In his exhaustive commentary he tells us in the very outset of the book that Utpala himself had, however, named three hymns. These are 'Samgraha-stotra', 'Jaya-stotra' and 'Bhakti-stotra', the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth chapters respectively as arranged in the book.

### *Shiva-stotravali*

Unplumbed deeps get stirred as the rhythm, on reciting or listening to the verses of *Shiva-stotravali*, touches one's ears. One sits rapt and breathless. A new life, a life of study and meditation seems to begin. The centre of interest gets shifted. You continue to sing to yourself or muse on the versified lines. Tears of joy, like pearls, trickle down the eyes and one virtually forgets oneself. To quote an example:

O Lord! spare just a while to be on my side,  
I tell you of my pleasure and pain in a nutshell;  
Being with you is joy supreme,  
Seperation from my Lord is misery \*

\*संग्रहेण सुखदुःखलक्षणं मां प्रति स्थितमिदं शृणु प्रभो ।  
सौख्यमेव भवता समागमः स्वामिना विरह एव दुःखिताः॥

Here one has a feeling of isolated joy that one experiences by listening to the shrill voice of a morning bird or the continuous flow of a waterfall. Utpala, for all purposes, was a mystic, a loving and pure-hearted soul. As the chief characteristic of his language is symbolism, it appeals to all sections of people, especially to those who understand it. His power of penetrating the human heart enraptures one with his dynamic touch while he says:

O Lord! I may possess, like common people, desire for objects of enjoyment in the world, but with only this difference that I should look upon these as yourself, without the least idea of duality. \*

Utpala laid stress on reconciliation of knowledge and devotion. Devotion, mentioned in this context, is earnestness in knowing the Self. 'Para-Bhakti and Jnana are one. The devotee of Para-Bhakti does not perform any rituals. He beholds his Lord everywhere. The whole world is the form of the Lord.' This was quite true of Sri Ramakrishna, whose example was explained by Srimat Swami Lakshman Joo, the ardent exponent of Kashmir Shaivism, in the following verse:

The knowledge of things as they are disposed and the joy of the supreme festival of your worship, these two interdependent states are ever manifest within the hearts that are fully devoted. †

In another verse, from the most favourite of his hymns, he says:

All their actions bear fruit, who worship you for their fulfilment, but every act of devotees who reside in you, is a fruit by itself. ‡

Thus these lyrical songs of Utpala are pithy. They pierce through the very recesses of the heart of a devotee, who by divine grace is endowed with a superfine intellect. Immersed

\* लोकवद्भवतु मे विषयेषु स्फीत एव भगवन्परितर्षः ।  
केवलं तव शरीरतयेतात् लोकयेयमहमस्तविकल्पः ॥

† यद्यथास्थितपदार्थदर्शनं युष्मदर्चनमहोत्सवश्च यः ।  
युग्ममेतदितरेतराश्रयः भक्तिशालिषु सदा विजृम्भते ॥

‡ व्यापाराः सिद्धिदाः सर्वे ये त्वत्पूजापुरःसराः ।  
भक्तानां त्वन्मयाः सर्वे स्वयं सिद्धय एव ते ॥

in the Divine he sang these notes like a bird, not for, others but for himself. His own feelings and emotions, joys and sorrows and above all, his intense longing as an earnest seeker of the Spiritual Truth are vividly pictured in the hymns.

### 'Sangraha-Stotra'

The thirteenth hymn called 'A Hymn in a Nutshell', is the most popular of all the twenty hymns of Utpala's *Shiva-Stotravali*. It gives the essence of his profound thought and experiences. The soothing melody of its recitation brings about divine ecstasy. All the limited experiences of pain and pleasure of the world get dissolved into joy, and awaken the supreme consciousness beyond the humdrum of life. The translation of a few verses of this hymn are given below:

Howsoever slight shadow of darkness, caused by your non-presence is found within my consciousness, even that be pleased to wipe out from all sides and then reveal your blameless form to me. \*

I am the lord, I the all beautiful, I the wisest, also the most well-endowed. Who else shines like me upon this earth! This indeed is the assertion of one who is utterly devoted to you. †

Where there is contemplation followed by actual vision, and then the embrace of the Lord Himeself, may such a grand festival of devotional worship be mine for all time to come, with your grace. ‡

Where there is no knowledge of anything other than yourself, where the universe is pervaded with your effulgence, place me in that region of yours my Lord, I who adore you always. §

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- \* अन्तरप्यतितरामणीयसी या त्वदप्रथनकालिकास्ति मे ।  
तामपीश परिमृज्य सर्वतः स्वं स्वरूपमंगलं प्रकाशय ॥ 2
- † ईश्वरोऽहमहमेव रूपवान् पण्डितोऽस्मि सुभगोऽस्मि कोऽपरः ।  
मत्समोऽस्ति जगतीति शोभते मानिता त्वदनुरागिणः परम् ॥ 4
- ‡ ध्यायते तदनुद्श्यते ततः स्पृश्यते च परमेश्वरः स्वयम् ।  
यत्र पूजन महोत्सवः स मे सर्वदास्तु भवतोऽनुभावतः ॥ 6
- § अन्यवेद्यमणुमात्रमस्ति न स्वप्रकाशमखिलं विजृम्भते ।  
यत्र नाथ भवतः पुरे स्थितिं तत्र मे कुरु सदा तवार्चितुः ॥ 9

My Lord, it was your own sweet will to appoint me in the position of a servant, then why, my Supreme Master, am I not considered fit to have your vision, or else worthy of rendering service to your feet? \*

This Universe in its entirety has its evolution in your divine rapture; it is sustained and expanded in your blissful Self; in its joyful flowering you exist absolute. †

There is no counting of the ways, O Lord, in which I wish to worship you. You have blessed me with full cup of nectar of your devotion and yet you do not permit me to drink it deep! ‡

O Lord of the universe, you are beyond measure, you are above the states of being and non-being, union with you extinguishes all duality; having absorbed myself completely within such a one as you, O Lord of Uma, may I everlastingly worship you with fervour and sing loudly your praises. §

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\* दासधाम्नि विनियोजितोऽप्यहं स्वेच्छयेव परमेश्वर त्वया ।  
दर्शनेन न किमस्मि पात्रितः पादसंवह्णकर्मणापि वा ॥ 10

† स्फारयस्यखिलमात्मना स्फुरन् विश्वमामृशसि रूपमामृशन् ।  
यत्स्वयं निजरसेन घूर्णसे तत्समुल्लसति भावमण्डलम् ॥ 15

‡ ईहितं न बत पारमेश्वरं शक्यते गणयितुं तथा च मे ।  
दत्तमप्यमृतनिर्भरं वपुः स्वं न पातुमनुमन्यते तथा ॥ 19

§ त्वामगाधमविकल्पमद्वयं स्वं स्वरूपमखिलार्थघस्मरम् ।  
आविशन्नहमुमेश सर्वदा पूजयेयेमभिसंस्तुवीय च ॥ 20

# Brahma-Sutra-Bhashya of Sri Shankaracharya

M. R. YARDI

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## The Individual Self

WE SAW in the last two articles that according to the *sutrakara*, Brahman is the material cause of the world, and that space and other material elements have originated from It in a definite order. The world, however, consists of living beings in addition to material things, and so the question arises whether a living being is a material product like space, and, if not, what is the nature of his true Self? Some scriptural passages, such as the *Mundaka Upanishad* (II.1.1), mention that living beings are produced from Brahman like sparks produced from fire, which lends support to the view that they are products of Brahman. The *sutrakara* denies this in *sutra* (II.iii.17) and says, 'The (living) Self is not produced, as there is no scriptural statement (to that effect), and is eternal according to them (i.e. scriptural passages)' (नात्माऽश्रुतेनित्यत्वाच्च ताभ्यः) For in the chapters which treat of creation, the production of living beings is, in most cases, not mentioned. True, this non-mention does not invalidate the few passages which imply production of living beings, but the latter can be explained away as referring to the material adjuncts of the living Self such as his body and mind. There are also scriptural passages which declare the eternality of the individual Self. The particle *cha* in the *sutra* implies non-origination and similar characteristics such as its unchanging nature. Thus it is stated, 'the living Self does not die', *Chhandogya Upanishad* (VI.ii.3), 'This great unborn Self is undecaying, undying, immortal, fearless, Brahman' *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, (IV.iv.25), 'The knowing Self is never born, nor does It ever die', *Katha Upanishad* (I.ii.18), and so on. The living Self cannot be a material product which is subject to change and destruction by its very nature. In ordinary usage, however, we say that a man named Devadatta is born

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or has died, and that certain ceremonies are also prescribed after the birth or death of a person. The *sutrakara* denies this in his *sutra* II.iii.16, saying, 'But the mention (of birth and death) is in regard to the bodies of moving beings and non-moving things and is applied only in a secondary sense to the living being, as his existence depends upon the body' (चराचरव्यपाश्रयस्तु स्यात्तद्व्यपदेशो भाक्तस्तद्भावभावित्वात्). Birth and death do not belong to the individual Self, but only refer to the body with which he happens to have a lifelong connection.

The *sutrakara*, therefore, says in *sutra* II.iii 18 that 'the individual Self is sentient for this very reason' (ज्ञ अत एव). Sri Shankara takes *jna* to mean pure intelligence in view of his monistic theory about the identity of the individual Self with Brahman. On the other hand, Sri Ramanuja interprets *jna* as *jnatri*, i.e., knower, and uses this *sutra* to rebut the Samkhya and Advaita Vedanta views. Grammatically the latter meaning seems to be right in view of Panini *sutra* III.i.135, *Siddhanta Kaumudi* 2897, as explained by Jnanendra Sarasvati in his 'Tattva-bodhini' commentary. The word *jna* has, therefore, been translated as 'sentient' and not as pure 'intelligence'. The Vaisheshikas argue that the Self is not conscious in the state of deep sleep (*sushupti*), since on waking up from it one says that one was not conscious of anything. They, therefore, hold that intelligence is only intermittent and so adventitious only and is not of the nature of Self. Sri Shankara explains that the absence of intelligence in deep sleep is only due to the absence of objects, as the light pervading the space is not apparent owing to the absence of things to be illuminated. Moreover, if intelligence were non-existent in deep sleep, the individual could not have said that he was not conscious of anything. That the individual Self is sentient is clear from the following scriptural passages: 'He, not asleep himself, looks down upon the sleeping senses' (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* IV.iii.2); 'In the dream state, the Self is self-illuminated' (*ibid.* IV.iii.14); 'For there is no intermission of the knowing of the knower' (*ibid.* IV.iii.30); 'Now he knows let me smell this, that is the Self' (*Chhandogya Upanishad* VIII.xii.4) and so on.

In *adhyaya* II, part iii, *sutras* 19-32 deal with the question whether the Self is of minute size or all-prevading. Here we meet with the diametrically opposite views of Sri Shankara and Sri Ramanuja. Sri Shankara maintains that the *sutras* 19-28

state the *prima facie* view, which the *sutrakara* refutes in *sutra* 29. Sri Ramanuja, on the other hand, takes these *sutras* as setting forth the *siddhanta* view, according to which the Self is of minute size. It is proposed to give only a gist of these *sutras*, as the explanation of each and every *sutra* will occupy too much space, without in any way adding to our comprehension of them. There are scriptural passages which talk of the going and returning of the Self, *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (IV.iv.6), *Kaushitaki Upanishad* (III.iii.1, 2). Such movement is possible only if the Self is of limited size. If it is said that some scriptural passages mention the all-pervading nature of the Self, the reply is that they only refer to the Supreme and not the individual Self. There are also direct statements about the atomic size of the Self, *Mundaka Upanishad* (III.i.9) and the latter is compared to the part of a hundredth part of the point of a hair divided a hundred fold and to the point of a goad, *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* (V.viii.9). It is, however, objected that a person feels cool and pleasant all over the body when he bathes in a river or feels hot all over the body in summer, and that this is not possible if the Self is atomic in size, and resides in the heart. This is explained on the analogy of the sandal paste which, when applied to a particular part of the body, gives a pleasant sensation all over the body. The atomic Self pervades the whole body, on account of the quality of intelligence, which is separate from the Self. This is on the analogy of light, which when placed in the corner, illumines the whole room.

According to Sri Shankara, the above statements present the *purvapaksha*, which the *sutrakara* rebuts in *sutra* 11.iii.29. He says therein, 'But its declaration (as atomic) is due to its having for its essence the qualities (of the mind) as in the case of the Supreme Self' (तद्गुणसारत्वात् तदव्यपदेशः प्राज्ञवत्). Thus the atomic nature of the individual Self is because of its association with its limiting adjunct, the mind. In *sutra* 30, according to Sri Shankara, it is explained that the Self is called atomic because of its connection with the mind in its *samsara* state. *Sutra* 31 indicates that the mind exists potentially in the state of sleep, as otherwise it cannot become manifest in the waking state. In *sutra* 32, we are told that if we do not admit the existence of the mind, there would result constant perception or non-perception, in which case we have to accept the

limitation of either the Self or the senses. As the Self is always conscious and the senses are always in contact with their objects, we have to concede an internal organ through whose connection and disconnection perception and non-perception would arise.

According to Sri Ramanuja, *sutras* 19-25 set forth at great length the view that the Self is of a minute size, and so they embody the *siddhanta* view. *Sutras* 26-28 then discuss the relation between the Self as the knowing agent, and knowledge as his quality. There are scriptural passages such as in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (II.i.7), which declare that the Self and intelligence are separate. This naturally raises the question as to how the scriptures describe the Self as *vijnana* in some places. The reply, according to Sri Ramanuja, is given in *sutra* 29, which states, 'The Self is designated as knowledge, because It has that quality for Its essence.' Then the *sutras* 30-32 are also interpreted to suit the above explanation. Thus *sutra* 30 tells us that the Self may be called knowledge, because the latter constitutes Its essential quality so long as It exists in Its embodied state. *Sutra* 31 teaches that this *jnatritva*, the quality of being a knower, inheres in the Self although it is actually manifested in the waking state. According to Sri Ramanuja, *sutra* 32 means that if the Self were pure intelligence and all-pervading, it would be permanently cognizing or non-cognizing. It must be acknowledged that the interpretation given by Sri Ramanuja is also self-consistent.

In order to decide between these two conflicting interpretations given by the two *acharyas*, it is necessary to examine their arguments in depth. It is true that it is somewhat unusual for an author to discuss at length a view which he wants to discard in the end. Perhaps for this reason Sri Ramanuja thought that the *sutras* II. iii. 19-28 contained an essential doctrine of the system. But these *sutras* also state the various objections which could be conceivably raised against that view. Moreover the *sutrakara* invariably states the *purvapaksha* and then introduces the *siddhanta* by means of the particle, *tu* (but). Since *sutra* 29 fulfils this condition, we have to accept it as the *siddhanta* view in rebuttal of what has preceded it. Sri Shankara also critically examines the replies given to the objections raised to the *prima facie* view and proves them to be untenable. If the Self were of atomic size, it could not

experience the sensations extending over the whole body. Even though the skin extends over the whole body, a prick in the sole of the foot is felt only in the foot, and its sensation is not felt all over the body. The quality of an atom cannot extend itself beyond the confines of its size. The light emitted from a lamp is not its quality, but a different substance which fills the surrounding area. Even when the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* (V. 9), says that the Self is atomic, it ends up by saying, 'Yet It is infinite.' This Upanishad mentions very clearly, (V. 8), that the Self, endowed with a mind and a body, seems small like the point of a goad. There is also a clear statement in the *Chhandogya Upanishad* that he who consists of a mind and body is one's Self, within the heart, smaller than a mustard seed, (III. xiv. 2, 3). Most of the scriptural passages which refer to the all-pervading nature of the Self do not relate to the Supreme self. For instance, the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* text, 'That great unborn Self, which is consisting of knowledge among the senses' (IV. iv. 22), clearly relates to the individual Self. Further, two contradictory statements such as, 'The Self is all-pervading' and 'the Self is of minute size' can be harmonized in one way only, namely, that the Self, in reality, is all-pervading, but appears to be small because of its limiting adjunct, the mind. So also, since there is no difference between a thing and its quality (धर्मधर्मिणोरभेदात्), the Self is the same as knowledge, even though they are mentioned separately in some texts.

Next the *sutrakara* discusses the question whether the individual Self is an agent, as held by some systems. The Mimamsakas argue that scriptural injunctions like 'he should sacrifice', 'he should give', would become meaningless, if the Self were not an agent. The *Jaimini Sutra* III. vii. 18 declares that the fruit of the performance of an injunction belongs to the agent. Against this belief, the Samkhyas believe that action belongs to the qualities or *gunas*, with which the Self has come into conjunction. The *sutrakara* states his view in *sutras* 33-39 in the third section of the same chapter. He says in *sutra* 33, 'The Self is an agent, because then only the scripture has a purport, (कर्त्ता शास्त्रार्थवत्त्वात्). 'There are scriptural statements about the movement of the Self' (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* IV. iii. 12) or its use of sense organs in the dream state (ibid. II. i. 10). The *sutrakara* further adds that the Self is designated as such

in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* II. 5 (विज्ञानं यज्ञं तनुते कर्माणि तनुतेऽपिच), where *vijnana* refers to the Self as an agent. Wherever *vijnana* is used in the sense of intellect or *buddhi*, it is used in the instrumental case, being the instrument through which the Self acts (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* II. i. 17). It may be argued that if the Self were a free agent, It would bring about what is useful and pleasant to It and not the opposite. The *sutrakara* says that there is no such restriction as in the case of perception. As the Self perceives agreeable and disagreeable things without restriction, so It can bring about and face what is pleasant and unpleasant. Even though in bringing about a result It has to depend on place, time and other instrumental causes, It does not cease to be the agent merely on that account. The Self as distinct from intellect or *buddhi* has to be viewed as an agent for the following reason also. If the intellect or *buddhi* were the agent, this would involve the reversal of power, as the intellect then will cease to be an instrument and have the role of an agent. We shall then have to credit it with self-consciousness (अहंप्रत्यय), as every activity is preceded by self-consciousness in the form, 'I go, I come, I eat, I drink', and so on. In that case we shall have to assume for it another instrument by means of which it effects everything. This only boils down to a change in terminology, as in either case we have to admit of an agent different from the instrument of action.

But this agency cannot be the true nature of the Self, as in that case a person can never free himself from it, and his final release would then become impossible. As long as man cannot divest himself of activity, which is essentially fraught with pain, he cannot attain the highest bliss. This the *sutrakara* explains in *sutra* II. iii. 40 (यथा च सक्षोभयथा). 'Cha' is used here in the sense of 'but'. One should not suppose that agency belongs to the true nature of Self, as heat belongs to the nature of fire. In ordinary life a carpenter is active and suffers pain so long as he works with his tools, but as soon as he lays his tools aside and returns home he rests and enjoys leisure and ease. So also the Self is the agent when It is connected with *buddhi*, which is Its instrument of action, and ceases to be so when It is dissociated from it. The Self in reality is inactive but It becomes active as long as It is connected with Its material adjunct.

The Self is, however, not a free agent. *Sutra* II. iii. 41 states very clearly, 'But (the Self's agency is derived) from the Supreme Lord, so the scripture says (परात्तु तद्भुतेः). The scripture teaches that the Lord is the common causal agent in all activity. For instance, we are told in the *Kaushitaki Upanishad* III. 8, 'This One, truly causes him whom this One wishes to lead up from these worlds to perform good actions. This One indeed also causes him whom this One wishes to lead downward to perform bad action.' In support of this, Sri Ramanuja quotes the *Gita* (XVIII. 61), which says that the Lord abides in the hearts of all and causes them to turn around by His power, as if they are mounted on a machine. However, the Lord directs the Self after taking into account a person's previous good and bad deeds. This the *sutrakara* clarifies in his *sutra* II. iii. 42, 'However, (the Lord's direction) is dependent on the effort made by the Self. Only thus the injunctions and prohibitions and so on of the scriptures are rendered meaningful.' (कृतप्रयत्नापेक्षस्तु विहितप्रतिषिद्धावैयर्थ्यादिभ्यः). The Lord is thus only the general instrumental cause in allotting to everyone the fruits of works unequally in accordance with the individual's previous work. Sri Shankara explains this by an analogy of rain. The rain helps shrubs, bushes, plants, corn and so on, which belong to different species, to grow. The resulting difference of sap, leaves, flowers and fruits is caused by the special seeds, and not by the rain which constitutes only the common instrumental cause. Although the Lord causes the Self to act, the Self itself acts. Since the *samsara* is without beginning, the objection of infinite regression cannot be raised. In view of this, the Lord is absolved of any possible charge of cruelty or injustice, nor are the injunctions and prohibitions laid down by the scriptures rendered devoid of purport. Then the Lord would requite with good those who act according to the injunctions and with evil those who do what is forbidden. In the next article, we shall discuss the *sutrakara's* views on the relation of the individual Self with the Supreme God.