



SAMVIT

[Knowledge that leads to enlightenment]



Sri Sarada Math, Dakshineswar, Calcutta - 700 076

No. 18, September, 1988

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CONTENTS

	Page
Universal Prayers	1
Reflections	2
Swami Vivekananda (A Poem) <i>K. Vaidyanathan</i>	5
A Hundred and Twenty-five Years Ago <i>Sreela Das</i>	6
Sister Christine <i>Boshi Sen</i>	10
Indian Women in the Modern Age <i>Swami Ranganathananda</i>	17
The Churning of the Ocean <i>Pravrajika Vivekaprana</i>	24

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	Page
Brahman and Shakti in the Shastras and in Science <i>Brahmacharini Sudipta</i>	31
The Lord is My Bridge (A Poem) <i>Shiv Dhawan</i>	35
Predestiny and Evil in Hindu Myth-III <i>Jeanine Miller</i>	36
Brahma-Sutra-Bhashya of Sri Shankaracharya-12 Saguna Brahman <i>M. R. Yardi</i>	41
Vedanta: Voice of Freedom (A Review Article) <i>Irene Ray</i>	47
The Vision of Cosmic Order in the Vedas (A Review) <i>G. Feurstein</i>	54
Sri Sarada Math & Ramakrishna Sarada Mission	55

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Information for contributors, subscribers and advertisers on p. 56



SAMVIT

स नो बुद्ध्या शुभया मनुनक्तु ।

May He endow us with good thoughts.

Shvetashvatara Upanishad III. 4

Universal Prayers

इदं श्रेष्ठं ज्योतिषां ज्योतिरागाच्चित्रः प्रकेतो अजनिष्ट विभ्वा ।

यथा प्रसूता सवितुः सवायँ एवा रात्र्युषसे योनिमारैक् ॥

Usha, the Dawn, the supreme luminary among celestial lights has come. On Her arrival all things become perceptible. As Night is born of the Sun (because She arrives after the Sun sets); similarly for Usha, Ratri, the Night, is the place of birth.

* * *

भास्वती नेत्री सूनृतानामचेति चित्रा वि दुरो न आवः ।

प्राप्या जगद्वयु नो रायो अख्यदुषा अजीगर्भुवनानि विश्वा ॥

We have known Usha, the brilliant one who is the herald of joy. She of variegated splendour has opened out for us the doors of the whole world (by removing darkness) and manifested our wealth. It seems she brings forth the worlds which were swallowed (by Night).

Rig Veda I. viii. 1, 4.

REFLECTIONS

'Women and the People'

SISTER NIVEDITA described a scene in the Verinag forest in Kashmir: 'The darkness of night and the forest, a great pine fire under the trees, two or three tents standing out white in the blackness, the forms and voices of many servants at their fires in the distance and the Master with three disciples . . . ' The three disciples were women: Sister Nivedita herself, Mrs. Bull, and Miss Josephine MacLeod. Their Master, Swami Vivekananda, was talking to them at that moment about Sister Nivedita's work and the trust he had placed in her. Nivedita then discussed with him some details of her plans for the education of women, and asked for his approval. Readily giving his approval, Swamiji turned to the other women and told them that the responsibility he was giving to *this* disciple, the responsibility of the work for women, was greater than the responsibility of the work for men. At a later date, to two of these women, Sister Nivedita and Mrs. Bull, he gave *gerua* cloths, and as he gave them he said: 'I give you *all* that Ramakrishna Paramahansa gave to me. What came to us from a woman (the Divine Mother) I give to you two women. Do what you can with it . . . women's hands will be best to hold what came from a woman—from Mother.'*

What, then is the responsibility that Swamiji gave to women? It is nothing less than the education of the whole world, that the world may *live* Vedanta. He declared: 'The new cycle must see the masses *living* Vedanta, and this will have to come through women.'

After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda travelled extensively in India and the West. What he foresaw, less than a century ago, was a spiritual interaction. He observed that in America and Europe spiritual power as the Divine Mother or Shakti was worshipped, but in an ignorant way. 'Imagine, then,' he said, 'what a lot of good they will achieve who will worship Her with all purity in a *sattvika* spirit, looking upon Her as their Mother.'

*Letter from Sister Nivedita to Miss MacLeod dated 11 November 1899.

Today there is a deepening level of interaction between India and the West in science and technology, business and industry, education, medical research, and the arts, and, recently, an exchange on the cultural level. Swamiji knew that every nation had its own particular characteristic, its life force, and that India's life force was her spirituality. If the whole world, not only India, is to advance, and not degenerate, India must be the nation to lead the world with her message of spirituality. But first India herself has to be awakened to this ancient treasure of hers. And this is the task of women today. Awareness and knowledge of India's spiritual message will have to be given to Indian women, and they, in turn, must present it to the rest of the world. Vivekananda's slogan to awaken India was, 'Women and the People'.

Sacrifice is the Law of Life

All beings in the world evolve by natural law. Spiritual evolution, like physical evolution, is inevitable but the function of religion is to quicken this evolution. The Holy Mother said: 'He who cooks early, eats early'. A person who practises *sadhana* intensely will see its result the sooner. The masses are evolving, but significant change or revolution is never brought about by the masses; it is brought about by the few, by individuals. It is the masses who reap the benefit, but it is the few who are sacrificed. Swamiji asked, 'When will that blessed day dawn when my life will be a sacrifice on the altar of humanity?' According to Vedanta, existence is One and the order of existence is based on self-sacrifice, or renunciation. The experiences of the *rishis*, *avatars* and prophets are testimony to this truth. The fundamental unity of mankind, based on a common spiritual identity, must be realized by as many people as possible today if the world is to be saved for tomorrow.

When Swami Vivekananda visited Rameswaram on his return from America, he said, 'It is in love that religion exists and not in ceremony. . . . External worship is only a symbol of internal worship; but internal worship and purity are the real things. . . . He who sees Shiva in the poor, in the weak and in the diseased, really worships Shiva.' Without this love which entails the sacrifice of selfishness, even in an abundant world, everyone will not get enough food to eat. Politics cannot make

people realize their oneness. It is religion that can do this. In this oneness no one is a stranger; no one is alienated as 'the other'. This oneness, this love, this spirit of sacrifice, must be taught to every man, woman, and child in every country: it must be taught in schools and colleges, by the press, from the platform, on the radio and T.V., and through films. As Sister Nivedita said, 'Our work is to create an idea, the idea that was Swami Vivekananda's. But ideas are brought to birth in the dust of printing offices and the offensive air of crowds. . . . ' Those who follow this idea look upon hospitals, offices, factories, studios and schools as altars for the worship of the *virat*, the universal divinity.

Above all, this idea should be taught by every mother to her child from the time it is rocked in the cradle—as Queen Madalasa repeated to her children, '*Tat tvam asi niranjana*', 'Thou art the pure One'. This must be done until everyone knows that he and his neighbours are children of one immortal Bliss. This is the gospel of practical Vedanta taught by Swami Vivekananda. It is the mother who gives the child's life direction. Children are told that they are good or bad in order to reinforce certain ideas, skills, or behaviour, but they are not taught that they are good, pure, and divine whatever they do. It is this faith in one's inherent divinity that is called *shraddha*. Vivekananda spoke of the necessity of two types of learning: one is the development of *shraddha*, the second is formal education. Mere education is not enough. *Shraddha* is of primary necessity; then, along with this, formal education has to be imparted.

Before Sister Nivedita began her work, she wrote to Swamiji to find out what she should do. He replied to her in a letter dated 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.

'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.'

Another time, Vivekananda said, 'Sri Ramakrishna came and gave his life for the world. I also will sacrifice my life, you also, every one of you, should do the same.'

* * *

This year marks the hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's birth. Sri Sarada Math, formed by his decree, gratefully acknowledges the responsibility he has conferred on women.

Swami Vivekananda

K. VAIDYANATHAN

O orange-robed *sannyasi* of universal fame,
Thou didst roar the truths of Indian Vedanta
Fearlessly but fiercely that shook slumbering souls
From out their luxurious beds caressed by cunning Maya,
Who when they saw and heard Thee
Rose to their feet and with tears of love formed into a holy band
Of workers, yea, servants in the cause of ancient Truth,
Proclaimed by sages and sung by saints;
Preached and practised by sadhus and scholars great!
Today, we of the common clay observe Thy birthday
Hoping to rekindle our languishing hopes and aspirations,
And redouble our endeavours to live the truths
Voiced by Thee for the welfare of humanity
And for the glory of Mother India!

K. Vaidyanathan was popularly known as the South Indian Tagore. He organized a society in Vellore to spread Sri Ramakrishna's message. He published many poems in Telugu, Tamil and English, some of which are included in the Oxford University Press's *Anthology of English Verse*. Among his books are *Smiles and Tears* and *Songs of Devotion*.

A Hundred and Twenty-five Years Ago

SREELA DAS

THIS YEAR celebrates the hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of the birth of Swami Vivekananda. In today's context of economic and social instability, the life and thought of Swami Vivekananda are important for their ability to give shape and impetus to the progress of humanity. His thought has endured over all these years because it has an all-encompassing relevance to healthy human advancement. It is, additionally, encouraging that when we talk of Swamiji's life and work, we talk of a man of our age—someone we can understand in the context of the modern world. He is not a mythical hero.

Swami Vivekananda lived for only thirty-nine years, from 1863 to 1902, but in this very short time his dynamism affected the lives of millions of people, in India and in the West, and the process still continues. The tremendous ability he had to teach, to inspire and to encourage, was his because of the coexistence in him of complete idealism, immense faith and fearless practicality. He truly lived the dictum from the *Mahabharata*: 'It is better to flame forth for an instant than to smoke away for ever.'

The time of Swami Vivekananda's birth was one of intense suffering for the people of India. Foreign conquest and the pressures of the ruling materialistic society had left the people confused, broken and devoid of any faith in their own national identity. The high ideals of the Vedas and the Upanishads, tested and experienced by our sages, had fallen prey to the soft luxuries afforded by the advent of the new materialist culture. Yet it was in this atmosphere of despair that some great men were born whose vision brought forth a great resurgence of nationalistic ideals. Amongst them, the most representative of the country's intellectual and spiritual culture as a whole, were Sri Ramakrishna, the teacher, and Swami Vivekananda, the disciple.

Sreela Das is a freelance journalist. She is deeply devoted to the ideals and philosophy of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, and also to the Vedanta philosophy.

Sri Ramakrishna lived from 1836 to 1886. His total spirituality and deep humanism brought around him men and women from a cross section of humanity. He met them all—believers and agnostics, the old and the young, intellectuals and the uneducated—and drew them towards himself with unconditional love. And it was from this sage that young Narendra, later to become Swami Vivekananda, learnt of the philosophy of universal humanism based on the Vedantic vision of the indivisible divine spirit in man.

The uniqueness of Swami Vivekananda arises from the faithful practice throughout his life of the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. As a spiritual teacher he immersed himself in untiring work for all-round development—not just for the salvation of souls—but for the physical, social, economic and intellectual well-being of all humanity.

Vivekananda's Love for Humanity

Young Narendra's assimilation of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings found expression later, in Swami Vivekananda's inward and outward reverence for man as God. After his teacher passed away, Swamiji travelled throughout the country as a wandering monk. It was then that he had the opportunity to interact and empathize with the masses—the poor people who were exploited all their lives by the ruling classes. Then when he sat to meditate on the rock that comes out of the sea at the southernmost point of the country, Kanyakumari, the subject of his meditation was not a God sitting high above in heaven, nor even the God within his own heart, but humanity below on earth. His great concern was how to give mankind back its dignity and glory as the 'child of immortal Bliss', in keeping with the direct experience of the sages of old and of his own teacher.

It was this Vedantic philosophy that Vivekananda later preached—the vision of the infinite divine possibilities in man and his latent capacity to realize them in his present life. He constantly projected man in his universal aspect, unrestricted by creed and community. He preached the true glory of man as the ever-free, ever-awake and the ever-pure Atman—the great, infinite Self behind his fleeting presence.

He taught the wisdom that India developed in her ancient books. In the words of the *Katha Upanishad*:

'This infinite Atman is present in every being, but lies hidden and therefore is not manifest, but it can be perceived by the subtle and penetrating reason of those who are trained to perceive more and more subtle truths.'

It was this philosophy that Vivekananda expounded in the East and West, in all its relevance to the present-day needs.

Man needs education which is both secular and spiritual in order to help him realize his divine possibilities. Swamiji repeatedly emphasized the warning of the Vedanta—if a man grows only in body and mind and not in spirit, he will use his strength to exploit, violate and hurt others and himself. In our present world we come to realize the truth of this very often. But, Vedanta adds, when a man grows spiritually to manifest his divine dimensions, he becomes capable of expressing himself in total love and compassion towards all beings to the exclusion of himself. The fact was that in India itself, the propagator of this wonderful vision, those ideas were no longer applied to solve her human problems, and this fact caused Swamiji a great deal of despair. He felt that a truly humanistic society which would enable man to enjoy total freedom, equality and dignity had failed to evolve. For man does not know that he is the ever pure Atman. He writes in one of his letters from America:

'No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low as Hinduism. The Lord has shown me that the religion is not at fault, but it is the . . . hypocrites, who invent all sorts of engines of tyranny. . . . I pity them Their sleep is never disturbed, their nice little brown studies of lives never rudely shocked by the wail of woe, of misery, of degradation and poverty, that has filled the Indian atmosphere—the result of centuries of oppression. They little dream of the ages of tyranny, mental, moral, and physical, that has reduced the image of God to a mere beast of burden; the emblem of the Divine Mother, to a slave to bear children; and life itself a curse.'

Swamiji's overwhelming love for people touchingly unfolds in his conversation with his brother monk, Swami Turiyananda just before his departure to the West:

'Haribhai, I am still unable to understand anything of your so-called religion. But my heart has expanded very much and I have learnt to feel the suffering of others. Believe me, I feel intensely indeed.'

He wrote to Miss Mary Hale of Chicago, in July 1897:

'I have lost all wish for my salvation. I never wanted earthly enjoyments. . . . may I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.'

The humanism that Vivekananda preached was universal—based on the Vedantic vision of man as the Atman. In his treatment of humanity, he repeatedly shrugged off any dualistic overtones. In reply to a letter asking him to return to India, he wrote in August 1895:

'Doubtless, I do love India. But every day my sight grows clearer. What is India, England, or America to us? . . . There is but one basis of well-being, social, political or spiritual—to know that I and my brothers are *one*.'

This beautiful idea was what made Swamiji acceptable to the people of any culture as one of their very own. So when he gave voice to the wisdom of the sages, calling man to 'Arise, Awake!' the whole world reverberated with these words. And today, again, as always, for the good of humanity, and, as importantly, for ourselves, we need to remind ourselves of our divine nature and respond to Swamiji's message:

'Arise, Awake! Awake from this hypnotism of weakness. *None* is really weak; the soul is infinite, omnipotent and omniscient. Stand up, assert yourself, proclaim the God within you, do not deny Him!'

This year, on the hundred and twenty-fifth birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, the greatest mark of devotion and love

for him will be in our genuine attempt to incorporate the truth of the Vedantic philosophy into our lives. Swamiji himself gave his life to spread the message of man's divine potential, and the only fit memorial to this great man will be in our acceptance of our human responsibilities. We must remember, for our own sakes, Swamiji's constant prayer, 'Mother, make me a man'.

Sister Christine

BOSHI SEN

Samvit has been offering a series of articles about Swami Vivekananda's Western women disciples who helped him with his work. This article is the third in the series.

SISTER CHRISTINE, best beloved of Swami Vivekananda's western disciples, almost the very first to understand and live the message he preached in America, gave up her body at the age of sixty-five in the early morning of 27 March, 1930, at the home of her friend Mrs. Alice Fuller LeRoy, in New York City. Mrs. LeRoy's loving concern provided the best that New York could offer in the way of medical help and care. Her final illness lasted only seven days. For the last twenty-four hours she did not speak, but was conscious; she would open her eyes and look steadily beyond whenever her favourite Sanskrit *shlokas* were chanted. Though years of previous illness had written their marks on her thin, chiselled face, when the final release came, her expression changed instantly. Her face was aglow, she looked years younger, and ineffable peace radiated from her; the anguish and sorrow of those surrounding her, she tried to appease with her blissful parting smile. It must have been the final realization of what she had experienced earlier, at a time when she wrote:

Mrs. Gertrude Emerson Sen, wife of Dr. Boshi Sen, handed over some papers of Sister Christine and Dr. Boshi Sen to the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, New Delhi in 1979. Dr. Boshi Sen, a Botanist, was a student of Sir J.C. Bose, the illustrious scientist. The former founded the Vivekananda Laboratory in Almora. This article was published in the *Prabuddha Bharata* in 1930, soon after Sister Christine's death.

'There are no words in any language to describe its quality. For it has no human correspondence. It has no relation to anything in *Maya*. There was stillness, utter stillness. Is this peace? The whirl and turmoil of life was stilled for the first time. There was no emotion, no hope, no fear, no joy, no sorrow, no, no, *neti, neti*. Never have I felt so soothed. I fell asleep peacefully.'

Sister Christine was born of German parentage in Nuremberg, on 17 August, 1866. Her father, Frederick Greenstidel, moved to the United States when she was only three years old, and the family settled in Detroit. She had a very happy childhood. Her father, a noble, free-thinking German scholar, was the hero of her worship and the object of her adoration. But he lacked business acumen and as a result lost all his savings and inheritance. After his death Sister Christine, at the age of seventeen, faced with the responsibility of being the sole provider for her mother and five younger sisters, became a teacher in Detroit. From this time to the very end, life demanded of her heroic struggles and noble self-effacement.

In early youth she outgrew her passionate devotion to church doctrines and became one of the first Christian Scientists of Detroit. But nothing satisfied the yearning of her soul till one day, as she writes in her memoirs:

'It happened. The stupendous thing for which we have been waiting—that which dispels the deadly monotony, which turns the whole of life into a new channel, which eventually takes one to a faraway country, which sets one among strange people, to whom, from the very first, we feel a strange kinship; wonderful people who know what they are waiting for, who know the purpose of life.'

On 24 February, 1894, Christine with her friend, Mrs. Mary C. Funke, went rather unwillingly to a lecture given by one 'Vivekananda, a monk from India.' She recalled:

'Surely never in our countless incarnations had we taken a step so momentous! For before we had listened five minutes we knew that we had found the touchstone for which we had

been searching. In one breath, we exclaimed, "If we had missed this—" It was the mind that made the first great appeal, that amazing mind! What can one say that will give even a faint idea of its majesty, its glory, its splendour. Yet marvellous as the ideas were, and wonderful as that intangible something that emanated from the mind, it was all strangely familiar. I found myself saying, "I have known that mind before." For six weeks he remained in Detroit. We missed no occasion of hearing him. We knew we had found our Teacher. The word *guru* we did not know then. Nor did we meet him personally, but what matter? It would take years to assimilate what we had already learned. And then the Master would somehow, somewhere, teach us again.'

But it happened earlier than they expected. It was on 6 July, 1895, hearing that Swami Vivekananda was spending the summer at Thousand Island Park, that Sister Christine and Mrs. Funke started out, uninvited, to seek him and to learn more of his wonderful teachings. About these two, Swamiji used to say: 'The disciples who travelled hundreds of miles to find me—they came in the night and in the rain.' When they met, Sister Christine greeted him with the simple declaration: 'We have come, just as we would go to Jesus if he were still on earth and ask him to teach us.' Swamiji's gentle reply was: 'If only I possessed the power of the Christ to set you free now!'

The day after Sister Christine's arrival, Swamiji, with her permission, read her mind. When he asked: 'May I read all?', she replied: 'Yes, of course.' 'Brave girl!', he exclaimed. He told her then that she had only three veils left and that her third eye would open in this life. The next day Swamiji initiated her. Referring to those days she once said: 'I was a fool not to have asked him any questions. Everyone did that and tried to get something from him. I used to feel so sorry for him. Now I would like to ask him a few questions.' To my protest, 'No, mother, you wouldn't,' she at once replied: 'Perhaps you are right. Near that radiance all doubts disappeared. After the first few sentences of his lectures it always used to be more of realizing than listening.' It was at Thousand Island Park, and many a time later on, that Swamiji discussed with her in detail his ideas of women's work in India. He used to think aloud his hopes, his doubts, and the possible solutions.

It was not until Sister Christine's mother had died and her sisters were ready to care for themselves that she could lay down her duties to her family and take up her work in India. Early in April, 1902, she reached Calcutta. She saw Swamiji only a few times. He would not let her remain in Calcutta during the hot season but sent her to Mayavati in the Himalayas.

On 4 July Swamiji entered *mahasamadhi*. This was a tremendous blow to Sister Christine. She decided to remain in India, however, and started the work entrusted to her by her guru. She had no funds beyond a very small personal allowance from Mrs. Ole Bull. With the active cooperation of Swami Saradananda, she started her first one-roomed Vivekananda School. 'In the autumn of 1903,' writes her colleague and fellow-disciple, Sister Nivedita, 'the whole work for Indian women was taken up and organized by Sister Christine, and to her and her faithfulness and initiative alone, it owes all its success up to the present (1910).' The institution grew and blossomed and fulfilled its purpose to educate a group of Hindu women to face a difficult transitional period, to make them economically independent, and inspire them to devote themselves to the cause of women's education.

At 17, Bosepara Lane, Calcutta, the Sisters lived the life of the people. They were regarded as one of themselves by even the most orthodox section of the Hindu community. Besides the whole Ramakrishna Order, they had many devoted friends. The 'House of the Sisters' in Bosepara Lane was a place of pilgrimage to many of India's distinguished sons and daughters: Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Sir Jagdish Chandra and Lady Bose, Sarojini Naidu and others. It was Lady Bose's generous hospitality which mitigated some of the austerities of these Sisters.

Twelve years of extreme hardship ruined Sister Christine's health. After recovering from a serious illness, she went to America in 1914 to visit her family, and there was caught in the upheaval of the World War, which prevented her return to India for nearly ten years. This proved a great blessing to the devoted group of students who gathered round her in Detroit. She lectured on India and the Vedanta philosophy. Her lectures were always free, and she showed that it was possible to live the life of a *sannyasini* even in a city like Detroit, when one had the will and the needed faith. She gave of her best, never

diluting the glorious message of Vedanta. Of these lectures someone wrote:

'Her faultless diction, her exquisitely modulated voice, her appearance as of a priestess from some ancient temple, made listening an endless joy. Except in her stereopticon lectures in which she taught us to know and to love India, she had only one theme—best expressed by Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*: "By Me all this world is pervaded in My manifested aspect. Having manifested this entire universe with one fragment of My glory, I remain." This was given with such wealth of illustrations and variety of aspects that you found yourself rooted and immovably fixed in that knowledge.'

Sister Christine returned to India in January, 1924, but her old home at 17, Bosepara Lane had literally collapsed, and her school—the present Nivedita Girls' School—had passed under other management. She decided to retire from educational activities for the time being. Later on, ill health prevented her from taking up any active work. It was at this time that I had the supreme privilege of taking care of her, and my little house at 8, Bosepara Lane became her home.

Achsah Barlow Brewster, an artist and a mutual friend, has given an exquisite pen-picture of Sister Christine during these last years of her life in India:

'The voice that greeted us—so clear and low, so sweet and vibrant, yet so pure and full and true—opened out the reality of the purity and sweetness and fullness of her spiritual being, from the first word she uttered. The upright poise of her slender figure announced this as well as the proud lifting of her exquisite head, verily the Lord's anointed. Each feature manifested it—the arched nose with its aristocratic aquilinity and quivering sensitive nostrils—the mouth that kept its bright colour and curved incision, sweet and sad and strong, and oh, so sensitive to the grief of others, the mouth firmly cut into curves, those very ones prescribed for the beloved Sita in Rajput paintings—the high cheek-bones—the clean sharp line of chin and jaw—the mass of hair that framed the ivory pallor of her face, in which burnt her great oriental eyes—eyes of the eastern saint, heavy-lidded, often veiled from the world without,



Sister Christine in Detroit



Sister Christine in Darjeeling in 1924

blue-black with translucent whites through which an inner light was transfused, "lotus-eyed" indeed !'

It was in Almora, in the Himalayas she loved, that she spent her last two summers in India. In 1927, she commenced writing her memoirs, which, alas, were to remain unfinished. We sailed from Calcutta in March, 1928. Two years slipped by. During that time she paid a few brief visits to her family and friends in Detroit, and spent a few months in the beautiful home of Mr. and Mrs. Glen Overton on Miner Lake at Allegan, Michigan. In New York, she stayed with Mrs. LeRoy, who assumed particular care of her and provided every possible comfort and medical attention. But she was counting the days till her feet could once more press the soil of her beloved India. Our return passage had been booked from Italy for the coming November, but the release from the restraining cord which held her back from India came unexpectedly.

Sister Christine loved India and her people. It was my privilege to know her and be blessed by her for nineteen years, and never in all this period, even in her innermost thought, did she condemn India. To her India was always the blessed country, the land of her guru, the land which for unnumbered centuries produced the great ones of the ages in unbroken sequence, the holy land, the *punjabhumi*. It was not that she failed to see India's existing needs and problems. For their remedy, indeed, she offered her life's best with a devotion and faithfulness hardly matched and rarely surpassed. To know her was to feel that to be in India, to serve India, was a great privilege.

The one who knew her best was her guru. In 1896, Swamiji dedicated a poem to her. It became one of her *mantras*:

'What though thy bed be frozen earth,
Thy cloak the chilling blast;
What though no mate to cheer thy path,
Thy sky with gloom o'er cast;

What though if love itself doth fail,
Thy fragrance strewed in vain;
What though if bad o'er good prevail,
And vice o'er virtue reign:

Change not thy nature, gentle bloom,
Thou violet, sweet and pure,
But ever pour thy sweet perfume
Unasked, unstinted, sure.'

To her last breath she embodied this ideal. Life made its hardest demands upon her. She had always to meet the most difficult task, the most desperate conditions. Her life before she went to India was hard, and equally hard were those first years in India! None of Swamiji's western disciples who went to India had to face what she did. Yet when anyone felt sorry for her, she would say: 'Would I have had it different? No, a thousand times no. It is seldom that Vivekananda comes to this earth. If I am to be born again, gladly will I endure a thousand times the hardships of this life for the privilege that has been mine.' One felt that the strength, the force, of all hardships had entered into her, for her's was the strength radiant, and not explosive. The stress and storm of life made her indomitable. Her outpouring tenderness and sympathy for the deprived and the defeated generally masked that will of hers, of which she wrote to me:

'I meditate upon my experiences and a beautiful thing happens. It seems as if a bud which has been tightly closed and hard, opens petal by petal, graciously turning them to the sun. Oh, the slow, the beautiful, gracious movement! A great serenity and peace comes over me. As the petals unfold, I see layer after layer of the mind unfolding. I see, I see! Life after life! The long endless series. So long, so sorrow-laden. Never having forgotten the innate omnipotence, how I tried to mould my life—life after life—to my will! The mistakes, the suffering, the heart-break through long years! Age after age. Then in this life my will had become an occult will. It had mighty power. Sometimes I felt I could move the stars out of their courses. I almost felt that I dared to say to Yama: "Thus far shalt thou go and no further!" I overcame insurmountable obstacles. It was this will that brought me to India. It was this will that kept me in the body when it seemed humanly impossible. And now I surrender it. The Divine Will now. Not my will but Thine be done!'

Indian Women in the Modern Age

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

THE SUBJECT of women in the modern age is of universal interest today. Our impression is that women in India are not free but women in the West are. But when I visit the western countries I see a tremendous agitation going on in all those countries, especially in the United States, for what they call women's liberation. The immense problems of our women in India have to be solved in the light of our own cultural values. One hopeful sign of our modern period is that the ideal of equality of men and women has been an article of faith with every national, political and spiritual leader of modern India.

Indian Culture from the Feudal to the Modern Age

Indian culture has behind it a profound philosophy, the Vedanta, which is the product of a penetrating scientific study of nature and man. Among the values that philosophy has placed before all humanity, the most significant is the truth of the innate divinity of man. Men and women and all beings are divine in their essential nature, and men and women have been endowed by nature with the organic capacity to inquire into and realize this great truth. Indian culture views all social evolution as the process of the incorporation of this truth into the texture of human relationships. From it are derived the values of freedom, equality, and the dignity and sacredness of the human personality. Modern India is struggling to give our women the status of freedom, through education and wider economic opportunities, not in competition or conflict with men but in cooperation, and as a joint endeavour.

When we study our history of the last five thousand years, we find many changing phases of women's status in our society. In the beginning, in the Vedic period, it was perfect equality. Then the feudal period came, foreign invasions came, women's

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freedom became abridged. But now all that is over, that is all yesterday. When we entered the modern period, a new situation had arisen; and it is to that new situation that our great modern leaders pointed our attention, the attention of both men and women, asking us to take advantage of this great modern situation so that men and women, working together, can rise to the highest level of self-development and self-expression.

Among the modern leaders who stood for the complete equality of men and women, the most outstanding was Swami Vivekananda. He has spoken in the clearest terms saying that no society can progress with men alone getting education and opportunities, and women being neglected. Indian society bears that mark of arrested development because its women were neglected for centuries, they were denied economic and social opportunities for education and for development. Swamiji said, therefore, giving an example, that a bird cannot fly on one wing, it needs both wings. So to make Indian society dynamic, we need to educate women as much as men. This is a profound idea in modern India. When the political movement to win freedom came, women entered it freely as equal partners with men. Gandhiji's work in the political field is particularly significant in this connection. It was thus that we initiated the modern period of our history. And so we considered the political freedom that we achieved as only the prelude and the means to the extension of these educational and economic opportunities for human development to millions and millions of our men and women who have been neglected for centuries. We are engaged in a revolutionary movement from the feudal to the modern age. It is only by widespread education of our men and women and provision of adequate opportunities for their economic uplift that we can speak of India as having fully entered the modern period of her long history.

Modern versus Modernistic

When we speak of the modern woman or the modern man, we should know what exactly the word 'modern' means. Many people do not have the correct understanding of this great word. They confuse 'modern' with 'modernistic'. The first bears the most precise scientific concept of being modern.

What does being modern mean?

Two great values are associated with this word and concept of being modern: one is the possession of a scientific mind and attitude. The modern age is the product of modern science, the product of a scientific attitude and temper. This is a wonderful idea that forms one of the important constituents of being modern. It does not merely mean going to school or college and studying a bit of science, like physics or chemistry or some such subject, and getting a degree. Many people with degrees in science are still not scientific in attitude. What we need is that scientific attitude, the mind in search for truth, the passion for truth; that means subjecting all experience to questioning, seeking, inquiry, and discrimination. This concept of man in search of truth and goodness and beauty—*satyam, shivam, sundaram* is a beautiful idea which we have to introduce into our education.

Love of knowledge and search for knowledge has no relevance to any non-human species, but only to the human species—men in search of knowledge, women in search of knowledge, children in search of knowledge. Today, this search for knowledge has taken a big stride in modern science; by persistent questioning of Nature, questioning of experience, many secrets of Nature have been revealed to many by this knocking at her door. In modern science there are two dimensions—one is pure science, search for truth, asking questions about nature. It is called science as light, as *lucifera*. An abundant crop of scientific discoveries in quick succession has created what we call 'the modern age'. The second aspect of science is science as fruit, as *fructifera*. That is what you find expressed as technology, industry, the various gadgets that you get out of science. To most people, in every part of the world, and particularly in our country, science only means these fruits of science: transistor radios, TV, air-conditioning, and all other gadgets, and the pleasure and comforts they give. That is a great mistake.

Our whole nation must understand today that the best part of science is the scientific mind, the scientific attitude, the scientific temper—the passionate search for truth. This is a great fruit of the hunger for knowledge. And knowledge is power, knowledge alone leads to progress. This truth we had forgotten during the last several centuries; we had stifled this

hunger for and love of knowledge in our women; our men had also lost it. Our country had become lost in the darkness of ignorance and superstition. We are being rescued from that dismal stagnation in the modern period.

The second component of the word and concept 'modern' is a humanistic attitude. Science and humanism—two beautiful ideas associated with the word 'modern'. The second idea is a passion for human happiness and welfare, a concern for man as man, not as cut up into sect and creed and race and sex. That is the humanistic impulse, the release of which will result in the greatest development of human society. The combination of the scientific temper and the humanistic impulse alone makes for full human development everywhere. If they go apart from each other, progress will be halting. If you have humanism without science, it will be mostly a sentimental type of humanism. If you have science without humanism, it will lead to exploitation of the weaker sections. We need the energy of science to help our humanism to lift the burden of suffering from all our people. So we need scientific knowledge and scientific efficiency to be yoked to a tremendous spirit of human concern. This is what Swami Vivekananda called the combination of Vedanta and modern science. Our education must help us to develop that type of modern mind. That alone is 'modern' in true sense of the term.

The other sense is the cheap idea of 'modernity'; and I am sorry to say that, in various parts of India, many among our younger generation understand that to be modern, is to be cheap in that modernistic sense; it merely means modern gadgets—wear modern dress, sport a transistor radio, or even smoke a cigarette or drink Campacola! That is a cheap worthless modernity; it has no strength in it; it leads to stagnation of mind and heart. The first thing a university student must realize is that that is not the way to become modern. Let him or her become modern in the true sense, by the power of thinking, of discrimination, of love and compassion and dedication to human welfare. If using modern gadgets makes one modern, then, some of the animals in the Delhi Zoo are more modern than you and I. They have got air-conditioned accommodation and some other modern facilities. No, that does not make one modern. It is the mind that is to be modern, not external trappings. A man or woman may look extremely old-fashioned externally, but his or her mind

and heart may be very modern. The reverse also may happen. We forget this truth very often.

Look at some of our great modern personalities: Mahatma Gandhi did not look modern at all. But how modern, how thoroughly humanistic, was his mind! Look at Sri Ramakrishna; he looked like any of our rural individuals. But inside him was the most modern mind, one who could train a brilliant university student like Narendra to become a Vivekananda endowed with the tremendous capacity to harmonize science and religion, East and West. That is being modern. Many of you may not know that there is a third personality associated with Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, namely Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother. She was entirely rustic in simplicity and had no education. So she was not modern externally. But peep into her mind and heart; you will find a most modern mind and heart in her. This great woman recognized no distinction between Muslim and Christian. To all, she was a mother, loving and serving everyone with the same motherly concern. If that is not being modern, what else is?

Sarada Devi, lived from 1853 to 1920, so we are dealing with a personality of our time, and not one of myth and legend. A woman brought her young daughter, eight or nine years old, to her because the girl had refused to get married and her mother wanted her to marry at that young age. She, however, desired to get education by joining a school; so the mother brought this girl to Sarada Devi to help to make the girl agree to marry and to scold her into accepting her mother's plan for her. But the Holy Mother, on the other hand scolded that mother saying: 'You want to ruin the life of this girl? Let her get education; then she will know what is good for her; who are you to destroy her life by marrying her off so young?' This happened at the beginning of this century, a few decades ago. What a modern mind is revealed in that remark! And yet, Sarada Devi had no modern education. So there is such a thing as being externally ordinary and internally extraordinary, as also externally extraordinary and internally ordinary! We forget this truth today very often. In Ramakrishna and Sarada Devi we can see this truth manifested vividly.

Sri Ramakrishna's life and mission are inextricably associated with a few great women. The Kali temple in which he performed his spiritual experiments and achieved realizations was founded

by a great woman, Rani Rasmani. Sri Ramakrishna's first guru was another great woman, Bhairavi Brahmani. His companion in his life and mission was another great woman, Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother. And Swami Vivekananda's chief disciple was an Irish woman of intellect and courage, Miss Margaret Noble, known as Sister Nivedita after she settled down in India to serve our women and our culture. All these events will have a great and wholesome impact on man-woman relationship in India in the coming decades.

Our educated women's responsibility is tremendous in this context. Our rich cultural heritage has given to our women certain virtues and graces which women elsewhere lack. Along with it, we have to learn and acquire today science and scientific efficiency and the capacity for hard work. I am glad to find that one of the developments taking place in India over the last few years is that our women are forging ahead of our men in these fields. I see all over India that if an office or institution is to run well, it must have more women employees. That is a tremendous tribute to our women. Apart from lower level jobs, they are also doing well in positions of responsibility. Nobody stands openly against this coming up of our women.

A Non-violent Social Order

Our zealous endeavour should be to develop a non-violent social order in India. Freedom and democracy thrive only in a non-violent social order. Our women must be in the forefront of all struggles to establish such a non-violent social order. Women must be able to move freely in our roads and lanes. In a violent social order, women's freedom becomes abridged. We have seen it throughout history. And so this kind of peace and harmony in society must come from increasing numbers of peaceful men and women. Women's contribution in this field can be immense. But today there is not peace within in men and women all over the world; what we obtain is tension and peacelessness. There is no concord, there is no symphony, within or without. Everything is discord. When there is peace within, we project that peace outside; where there is peacelessness within, we project that peacelessness outside. So we have to establish peace first within ourselves. That peace will help us to establish peaceful happy relations with other human

beings in society. We should not ask any questions as to the religion, or caste, or sex of the other person, but respond humanly to every human situation. That kind of a widespread humanistic impulse alone can create peaceful social conditions. In such a situation alone can women find their own fulfilment. The freedom to move freely in society is the one condition of a healthy society.

We have a beautiful picture of such a non-violent social order in one of the verses of our great epic, *The Mahabharata*. In its famous section, the *Shanti Parva*, where Bhishma discourses to a group consisting of Emperor Yudhishthira and other Pandavas, Sri Krishna, Vyasa, and other sages, on the sciences of the political state and of spirituality, there occurs this verse:

'That is a well-governed state where women, adorned with all dress and ornaments, and unaccompanied by men, can move freely and fearlessly in its roads and lanes.'

I like that verse very much. How we all hope that we can bring about such a wholesome social condition in our country! But how far is our society from such an ideal today! Every day we read of violence, hatred, conflict, and crime. How 'short, nasty and brutish' is our life in such a condition, to quote the famous words of the British political philosopher Hobbs! It must be the endeavour of the educated men and women today to strive for such a crime-free society. It is not utopia, but a possibility. When the Vedantic truth of the innate divinity in all is understood and lived by our people more and more, we shall achieve it. That is the philosophy that was taught to the people of the modern age by Swami Vivekananda, to people in the East and also in the West.*

*This article is abridged from 'Women in the Modern Age', a lecture delivered by the Swami at the Govt. College for Women, Srinagar, Kashmir in September 1986.

The Churning of the Ocean

PRAVRAJIKA VIVEKAPRANA

THE MYTHS and legends of the Hindus seem very simple on the surface; they even seem unbelievable. But the principle behind these stories is difficult to understand for they try to explain abstruse reflections on psychology and philosophy. One such legend is about *Samudra Manthan*, the 'Churning of the Ocean' which is the main theme of the eighth book of the *Bhagavata Purana*. To narrate the story in short:

Once, when the gods were overpowered by the demons they appealed to Brahma to save them. He referred them to Vishnu, the Protector. The Supreme Being commanded that the *kshira-sagara*, the ocean of condensed milk, be churned for *amrita*, ambrosia, which would give strength and immortality to the gods. In this act the gods allied themselves with the demons. The 'churning stick' was the Mandara mountain and the 'churning rope', the serpent Vasuki. The serpent was twisted around the mountain, and with the gods holding the tail and the demons holding the head, the churning began. The friction caused by the churning drew up many precious *ratnas*, jewels. The last to come out was Dhanwantari, the physician of the gods, with a golden pot brimming with *amrita*. Vishnu lured away the demons by assuming the form of a beautiful damsel and the gods partook of the *amrita*, and thus gained immortality.

The Three Levels of Consciousness

This legend symbolizes a person's effort to churn his own mind at all levels—the conscious, the subconscious and the unconscious—in order to gain the knowledge of his real nature. According to ancient Hindu psychology, man stands at the centre of the universe. It is man who is fighting a battle with himself; it is not man fighting against man, it is not man fighting against animals, it is not man fighting against matter. It is man fighting against himself to raise his level of existence.

Western psychology has made the word 'consciousness' very popular. The famous psychologist, Freud, said that there is a vast unconscious in every person. All have now become familiar with these terms: unconscious, subconscious and conscious. But these terms are very, very ancient according to the Hindu Shastras. It was taken for granted that everyone understood these terms. Our belief in reincarnation clarifies the deep insight of these books. We can assume that they are understood by modern Hindus because we know that the word *samskara* is popular today; it is used in our day-to-day language. *Samskaras* are nothing but the impressions, the contents of the unconscious and the subconscious mind.

Hindu psychology tells us that the universe which is visible is like the tip of an iceberg. Huge mountains of ice float in the ocean with the tip above water. These tips seem to be tremendous but it is said that three-fourths of an iceberg are below the ocean and only one-fourth is visible. The tip of the iceberg is compared with the conscious mind. The conscious level of the mind contains the data supplied by the five senses: eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin. These are the senses which tell us about the world we inhabit. They do not reveal anything about the unconscious level and they reveal very little about the subconscious level.

The conscious level is that which we are aware of at the present moment which is always slipping into the past. A person therefore basically lives in his memory and habits. These habits are all in the subconscious and are very near the memory. In the unconscious they slip into the past and then they are forgotten; but they are never completely lost.

Ancient Hindu psychology, moreover, adds that it is not the actions of this life only that leave impressions. Millions of past incarnations have left innumerable impressions on the mind, and these are carried forward. It cannot be said that a person does not feel the burden of these impressions. Almost everyone is aware of this tremendous burden of life. He does not know what that burden is. He is only aware of what comes to his conscious mind: small worries, little anxieties, frail memories and other trivial things which are called the problems of life. Any experience which goes deep in a person, gives him a hint about the depth of his own being; but because he cannot see or understand it, the worry becomes all the more

intense. That is what makes one old before one's time. That is what takes the joy away from life. Suppose one could live in the present moment only, without any memory of the past; how lively, how clear, how simple and how straightforward life would be !

The Burden of the 'Unconscious'

Hindu psychology says that the burden of this unconscious is tremendous. This life is spoken of as a *bhava-sagara*, an ocean of life. Life is compared to an ocean and not a river. It is the ocean which is very confusing, not the river which flows in one direction, towards a goal. The ocean has waves of all kinds, coming from many directions. Those who have seen an ocean will understand the tremendous chaos, the undercurrents and the ignorance of what goes on down below. The word ocean has been selected as a standard of comparison to understand one's own unconscious. A person's unconscious mind is like the ocean. No one knows what denizens live in it. One can have no idea because one never dives down deep enough. A person lives on the surface because it is easier to live on the surface and one can live more or less with comfort, a little carefree. If we could see all the denizens and all the dangers that are in the unconscious we might go mad. We can go this way; we can go the other way, but we manage to save ourselves by living on the surface without diving too deep.

A Child's Mind

A child is not aware of this burden of the unconscious because his memory has not grown, the brain has not become a sufficiently matured instrument and it does not give the child those hints of its great burden. Not that the burden is not there; it is very much there and the child functions through the instrument that is the body and the mind. The body and the mind have to mature to a certain level so that we can work out our past karma. A very small child cannot work it out. Talk to a three or four-year-old child these days. He is somewhat aware of the burden but he does not have the language to express it, and his attention is not focused properly; it wavers, and is incapable of holding on to one focal point. People think,

therefore, that the child is carefree; but he is not carefree, as the adult is not carefree.

Most societies do not want their children to go too deep. Educational activities are also only surface-deep. Every mother and father knows what a problem life is, but no parent tells the child that this is what he is going to find. They do not tell him because they themselves have not found the remedy. Very few parents make the child aware of this depth because one, most of them do not know about this depth themselves; two, they have not learned this lesson from their parents; and three, they want to spare the young. Sparing the child means making him almost blind to all these problems he may have to face. At most, the parents may go to a temple and say, 'Oh, I hope this does not happen to my child.' But suppose some misery befalls the child, then they say, 'All right, you go to the temple too and pray to God; may be He will listen to you and help you.' That is all. Teachers and parents should make children aware of the dangers of life's complexities.

The Legend of the Churning of the Ocean

The huge ocean of the unconscious and the subconscious contains many things. Though Freud said these things are mostly evil, the Hindu psychologist says that it is not so. Just as there are many dangers in the adventure of life, there are also many gems to be discovered. Jewels are hidden there, and dangerous beasts are hidden there too. But if one does not want to risk facing the beasts, one will not find the jewels either. So, the idea conveyed is that one cannot avoid the dilemma. The *bhava-sagara* has to be crossed by everyone; some may cross it earlier and some may cross it later, but everyone has to cross it. So it is better to be aware that there are dangers and that there are jewels, and that both will be found. There are jewels which will tempt one, there are beasts which will frighten one, but also there is the greatest of all rewards: through this experience one will know oneself, and thus attain immortality.

It is said in the Vedic literature that to become immortal, or to understand how to cross the ocean of life, is the basic aim of human life. How does one cross the ocean of life unless one knows the method, unless one gets hold of

something which will give tremendous vitality and strength, so that one is not afraid of anything and does not stop at any amount of hard labour. We need some kind of nectar which will give us the kind of energy to enable us to lead our lives without depending on another.

A child is born with a very frail body. His mother gives him food and he gathers some kind of physical energy. Mental energy is acquired either through the forces of nature or through education or whatever his parents can give him. When the child grows up into a man and when he faces life, he finds that this energy is not sufficient. His life is based on physical energy, intellectual strength gathered from the study of books, and social stability derived from experience and observation. But he loses his vitality and energy by the time he has one or two children. He is asked to cross this ocean of life, this *bhava-sagara*. But his limited energy does not seem sufficient to get him across even the 'surface-life'; how shall he cross a big ocean?

In ancient times it was believed that the main issue was how to revitalize oneself; how to acquire that energy to fight battles; how to find out that power, Shakti, which can give us enough hold, will, to cross over life itself, to find out what is in the depths, so that we can understand the meaning of life.

The idea that there is a depth and a power in that depth, is conveyed to us through the story of the 'Churning of the Ocean', *Samudra Manthan*. In this story, the demons are always defeating the gods and the gods are forever running to Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva to find out a means to face the demons. Vishnu, who is all-powerful in Indian mythology, could have killed the demons once and for all at the beginning. He did not do so because Vishnu is the name of the final 'something' which is within oneself. Who is to do the fighting? Surely not Vishnu, nor Shiva nor Brahma; one is supposed to do the fighting oneself. Where is immortality to come from? Vishnu himself could have given it to the gods. He could have said, 'Here is the *amrita*; I give it to you.' Finally, of course, he did give it to them, but why did he not give it to them in the beginning, and why did he ask them to go and fight the demons? Why this rigmarole of carrying a great mountain, putting it in the ocean and churning it and doing all sorts of things? During the churning of the ocean, first poison

comes out, then other things come out too. The whole idea is to make one understand, according to a psychological interpretation, that each human being has to fight his own physical, instinctive forces: and he has to find the energy with which to fight. That energy is to be found only by going deep within oneself. It is not to be found in books or in symbols or by singing *bhajans* or by praying.

In the *Bhagavata*, whenever the gods go to Brahma, Vishnu or Shiva, they first sing a long hymn to the deity. When the deity comes before them they praise him to their heart's content. After sometime, the deity says, 'Now go and do this.' The deity does not say, 'I am extremely satisfied with you, so without your making any effort, I am going to give you the reward.' If he is so pleased with the hymns, why does he not at once hand over the reward to them? Instead, he says, 'This is the method; you had better go and make some kind of an effort and you will get the reward.'

We might consider also why the gods go on repeating in their prayers: You are this, you are that; your nose is so beautiful, your eyes are so beautiful, you are so lovely, and so on. Now, let us suppose there is a child and it has no physical beauty; and the child's mother is aware that it is not beautiful physically. But the mother loves her child. How does she make him understand that there is beauty within? By praising him; by pointing out that he has many good qualities. The child slowly becomes aware of the beauty within. Vishnu, the living God, is within us. The ocean of condensed milk is within our own unconscious. When praise is offered to Vishnu, it is basically praise of oneself. There is an inner beauty; that inner beauty has to be described in words. Vishnu is described as shining and beautiful. He wears beautiful ornaments. Why? If there is anything that shines, it gives us the idea of power, of inner strength and goodness. This is the only explanation. Unless one understands these things in their depth, that prayers and hymns are the way to rouse powers within oneself, one does not understand that one is capable of acquiring all these jewels. In the beginning a human being cares only for jewels, gold, colourful silks, the symbols of power. These are what we admire in the world. The idea behind the beautiful god is to remind us that within ourselves is a being who is all-powerful, beautiful and good. We are made aware that we have to fight

our own battle; we have to churn the ocean ourselves—nobody is going to churn it for us. But the demon is also within ourselves. Our animal-self is the demon, as our higher self is the god. We are supposed to take the help of both. One cannot deny one's animal-self and say, 'I have crossed the ocean of life', because without the body one cannot cross the ocean of life. The body is very much prone to instinct and habit. Modern psychologists believe that the body and the mind function at the animal-level, the lower level. It is there that the demons fight a battle against passions. The question is whether one has to kill all those passions. The scriptures say they should not be killed. One should make friends with them. That is why, in this story, the *devatas* and the *asuras*, the gods and the demons, were allies. In every other myth they are opposed to each other and fight with each other. Here, the gods needed an alliance with the demons because the demons had tremendous power and they could help to churn the ocean. The churning of the ocean is not easy because it means going deep down into one's own unconscious and that means having all available passions and energy at one's disposal so that one can have concentration and the vitality to go deep down within oneself.

In the story, when the churning begins, the terrible poison, *kalakuta*, comes out first, because the worst mistakes are always visible first. A guru tries to remove the obstacles in the path of his disciple and encourages him to go forward and progress. In the same way, Shiva, the eternal contemplator, the guru of all *sadhakas*, appeared at the beginning to drink the poison. The churning continued. Many things such as an elephant, a horse and so on, emerged. Finally, Dhanwantari emerged with the *amrita kalasha*, the pot full of ambrosia. The demons took it and disappeared. The gods were denied it; so they went to plead with Vishnu, who took the form of a beautiful woman, Mohini, and went to the demons. They were at once infatuated with her. They forgot the *amrita*, and it was then retrieved by Vishnu and given to the gods. The lower self cannot remain at a higher level; it is always dragged down to the mundane level. The demons were overcome by temptation and passion and finally lost the battle. In the final struggle in life, it is the god in us that gets the upper hand.

Brahman and Shakti in the Shastras and in Science

BRAHMACHARINI SUDIPTA

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS are eternal; but they require to be restated in the current mode of language and in a new light to suit the need of every age. Sri Ramakrishna has a unique style of putting forth the highest truths in the most simplified manner. This method has a greatly inspiring impact on the thought-world of today. It can appeal to a rational and critical scientific mind. His narrations enriched with similes and anecdotes are simple, yet in them is seen his deep, practical observation, humour, and scientific attitude. Once Swami Vivekananda said in the course of conversation, 'Basketsful of philosophical books can be written on each single sentence spoken by the Master.' He was competent to understand the precious words of Sri Ramakrishna as only a jeweller can estimate the value of a gem.

In the Shastras

In his conversations, Sri Ramakrishna often mentioned that Brahman and Shakti are inseparable. They are like the snake and its wriggling motion. When one thinks of the snake one must think of its wriggling motion, and when one thinks of the wriggling motion, one must think of the snake. Also, Brahman and Shakti are like milk and its whiteness. Milk and whiteness are inseparably associated. Or again, Brahman and Shakti are like fire and its power to burn.

The *Brahma-Vaivarta Purana* says: 'I am the Self, the unattached Witness of all beings. The individual self is the reflection of My higher Self. *Prakriti* is My modification and, alternatively, I Myself am verily *Prakriti*. Just as there is whiteness in milk but there can be no separation of the two, and as there is no difference between fire and its burning-power (there is no difference between Shakti and Me).'

The ultimate Reality is considered as Brahman in the Vedas and as Shiva with Shakti in the Tantras. These are two streams flowing eternally in the Indian spiritual thought-world. Both the Vedas and the Tantras are revealed scriptures and exist eternally. Vedanta says that the non-dual, resplendent Lord is all-pervading, the in-most Self of all creatures, abiding in everything. He is the Witness, the Animator and the Absolute, free from the *gunas*, whereas the Tantras proclaim that the world of name and form is but a manifestation of Shakti in various forms. In the *Devi Mahatmyam* it is said: या देवी सर्वभूतेषु शक्तिरूपेण संस्थिता 'O Goddess, You exist in all beings in the form of Shakti.' The basic reality is one and abides in all that there is in the world. Vedanta calls it Saguna Brahman and the Tantra, Shakti. Brahman is inactive but the Shakti of the Tantras is active. According to the Tantras Brahman and Shakti are one but Brahman is in the unmanifested state whereas Shakti is constantly manifesting Herself in different forms. One of the Tantras says that this Shakti is not unconscious but the very essence of consciousness, (चैतन्य-स्वरूपा). In the Tantras, Shakti stands for the compassionate and loving universal Mother.

The most striking evidence of the unity of Brahman and Shakti is found in the 'Devi-Sukta' which harmonizes Vedic and Tantric thought. This is found both in the tenth *mandala* of the *Rig Veda* and in the *Devi-Mahatmyam*. The seer of this Vedic hymn is Vak, the daughter of Ambhrina Rishi. Vagdevi realizes Herself to be the Shakti which sustains the activities of all beings and regulates the internal and external world; She is also the power which accompanies the gods Indra, Rudra, Varuna and so on. She is the one who wanders everywhere to regulate all the affairs of the universe. She says that the static and dynamic energies of the macrocosm and microcosm are only the display of Her power. Finally, She declares that She created the entire universe but She is above creation, that She assumes the forms of the universe by Her *Lila*. She also says that She is both transcendent and immanent, i.e. co-existing in the two contradictory natures. As the *Isha Upanishad* says:

'It moves; It moves not. It is far; It is verily near.

It is inside all this; It is verily outside all this.'

Thus we find the most important significance of the 'Devi-Sukta' is the identity of the *Paramatma*, the highest Self of the Vedas and Para-Shakti, the supreme power of the Tantras. Sri Ramakrishna explains this with beautiful illustrations. Another famous Shakti-worshipper, Ramprasad, also sang in the same tune: 'Knowing the secret that Kali is one with the highest Brahman, I have discarded, once for all, both righteousness and sin.'

Swami Vivekananda once told Sister Nivedita:

'You see, I cannot but believe that there is somewhere a great Power that thinks of Herself as feminine, and called Kali, and Mother. . . . And I believe in Brahman too. . . . But is it not always like that? Is it not the multitude of cells in the body that make up the personality, the many brain-centres, not the one, that produce consciousness? . . . Unity in complexity! Just so! And why should it be different with Brahman? It is Brahman. It is the One. And yet—and yet—it is the gods too!'

In Science

Vedanta and modern science are already very close to each other. The concept of Shakti as the creative power in the Tantras is strikingly close to the energy concept of science. It is now acknowledged in science that energy is the cause of the manifestation of the universe. The law of conservation of energy says that energy cannot be created or destroyed, it can only be converted. In this universe we find manifold manifestations of energy but each is convertible into the other. For example, light can be converted into heat or electricity and vice-versa. In modern physics, the concept of space-time and the consequences of the new 'relativistic' framework, i.e. the equivalence of mass and energy, have come very near to concepts in Vedanta and Tantra. Matter and energy, apparently so different, are shown to be two states of the same entity. The tiny constituent of matter known as the electron has been found to be merely an 'energy-knot'. Even the human body is nothing but energy bundled up in different shapes and forms. Matter is also known as the source of life. According to the renowned nuclear physicist Dr. Raja Ramanna, the spontaneous evolution of life out of non-living matter is quite possible. We

find that matter and life are only stages in the evolutionary march, as according to Vedanta philosophy there is one substratum that underlies living and non-living matter. Sri Ramakrishna, after coming down from *samadhi*, the superconscious state, found the trees, gardens, houses, human bodies, birds, animals, and so on were made of pure consciousness, as a wax garden is composed of wax. Swami Vivekananda said, 'The materialist is right! There is but one. Only, he calls that one matter, and I call it God!' Energy, however, is associated with activity. This implies that the nature of subatomic particles is intrinsically dynamic. The theory of relativity shows that the existence of matter and its activity cannot be separated. They are but different aspects of the four-dimensional space-time reality. Thus we find that Shakti in the Tantras and energy in science approximate each other. By this it is clear that the subatomic units of matter have a dual nature. They appear sometimes as particles, sometimes as waves, (pockets of energy). The quantum theory reveals that we cannot decompose the world into discrete basic building-blocks. In the words of Dr. Fritjof Capra, it is 'a dynamic web of inseparable energy'. To simplify, the fundamental particles exist in both gross (matter) and subtle (energy) forms. We find that this truth is in accordance with the theory of the ultimate reality of the shastras as it expresses itself in the form of pairs of opposites: gross and subtle, movable and immovable, and so on.

The closest that science has yet come to the Vedantic concept of reality is the idea of a space-time continuum. Generally we define events and objects in terms of space and time separately. But in modern science they are bound together, producing the fourth-dimensional frame of reference as a space-time configuration. All objects and entities in this four-dimensional frame of reference are merged into events. The two worlds of physics and metaphysics are approaching one reality. 'Searching through the mind we at last experience that oneness, that universal One, the internal Soul of everything, the essence and reality of everything. . . . Through material science also we come to the same oneness.' Thus there is no conflict between spiritual thought and modern science. They are not antipodes, rather they are two complementary expressions of the same unity, the unity which the human mind eternally seeks.

The Lord is My Bridge

SHIV DHAWAN

In a ferry filled with people desirous of reaching the other side,
sat a pundit who displayed his erudition with pompous pride.
'I belong to the most exalted caste, the twice-born', proclaimed he,
reciting verses from the Vedas, Vedanta and other systems of
philosophy.

Perched in the stern, he eyed his fellow passengers with utter
disdain;
that this unlettered lot did not know the Shruti was plain.
Turning to a rustic, 'Dost thou know the Vedanta?' he did
inquire
Bowing low, with joined hands the latter replied, 'No, revered
Sire'.

Passing many disparaging remarks, the arrogant pundit
dismissed the man,
saying he would be doomed as per the divine cosmic plan.
The rustic was overawed and wished a stony silence to maintain,
but the proud pundit posed a taunting question again.

'Forget Vedanta, surely you are familiar with Samkhya and
Patanjali Yoga,' he said,
Once again the humble rustic ruefully shook his head.
One by one the pundit questioned everyone, only to note,
that there was no other 'learned' person on the boat.

Presently in mid-river a storm broke out, with waves rising
threateningly high,
'Can you swim?' queried the rustic; 'No, mumbled the pundit
with a sigh.
The rustic, being a powerful swimmer, plunged in and swam
ashore,
while of the pundit, who couldn't swim, nothing was heard any
more.

Salvation lies in seeking the Lord, Who alone is real, all else
is illusory,
utterly useless are rules of grammar and logic for crossing
turbulent, *samsaric* seas.

Adapted from Tales and Parables of Sri Ramakrishna

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Predestiny and Evil in Hindu Myth—III

JEANINE MILLER

In the previous issue of *Samvit*, Jeanine Miller discussed whether suffering brought about by evil behaviour is predestined. The story of Vena, who was introduced as the embodiment of evil in this three-part article, was taken as a case in point. Here, the author tells how by contrast Prithu is predestined to be illustrious because of his ability to attain psychic wholeness or pure manhood.

PRITHU, THE 'first anointed king' or *adiraja* as he is called in the Puranas, immediately on being born, chooses to act righteously and is eager to take advice from the Munis. In this we may think he has little merit since he is an emanation or part emanation of Vishnu and therefore cannot act otherwise than in accordance with *dharma*, with what is appropriate to his condition. In marked opposition to Vena's ancestry that predestined him to an evil fate, and yet as a parallel to it, Prithu is predestined to an illustrious fate and the symbol of it is the sign of Vishnu in his hand, the *chakra*.

Although the evil offspring has already been born and been disposed of, the advent of Prithu's birth does break the chain of evil causality in that he is born of and succeed to the evil king and his evil rule; this episode introduces an act of divine grace whereby the chaos of the world shall be redressed and law and order restored through a righteous king.

According to the *Mahabharata* Prithu is consecrated king by the gods, the *rishis* and the brahmins; and the Earth, Ocean, and Mountains bring him their homage and their wealth. According to the *Vishnu Purana* all the gods and 'all things animate or inanimate assembled and performed the ceremony of consecrating the son of Vena' (*Vishnu Purana* I.xiii 44). Indra grants him inexhaustible riches which he distributes between *dharma*, *kama*, *artha*, the goal of the three castes, which may be an indirect way of stating that he reinstated the classes which

Jeanine Miller was a research assistant in the British Museum. She has done an indepth study of Vedic and Puranic thought and wisdom. Her earlier contributions to *Samvit* appeared in some previous issues.

his predecessor had mixed and thereby earned the approval and respect of the priesthood.

The Hindu's broad outlook on life made him envisage four principal goals for human life, each fitting the four main stages of life. These are summed up as *dharma* or appropriate action, virtue, the maintaining of the moral law or righteous conduct, the regulating factor in life which overrides all other pursuits and has to be followed throughout life; *artha*, the pursuit of material gain or acquiring of wealth including knowledge; and *kama*, pleasure or fulfilment of desire, both of which involve social obligations and discipline and are suitable to youth and the prime of life, provided they do not exceed the bounds of propriety, etc.; without these existence would be colourless and void of interest to the average human being; finally, when all has been experienced, enjoyed and assimilated, comes *moksha*, the supreme aspiration to liberation from the trammels of existence and rebirth, which involves renunciation of all and abstinence from all. This obviously can only come as the culmination of a well-spent life. The whole of the human personality is well taken care of in this Hindu scheme of life.

Prithu, the king, whom Dumézil describes as 'designated by the gods, recognized by the sages and accepted by the masses'¹ is highly praised at his consecration by the two panegyrists who are born simultaneously at the sacrifice performed for Prithu's birth. These praises spur him on to conform to the ideals thus celebrated in advance. Prithu's liberal gratification of his panegyrists attracts the attention of his starving subjects who forthwith approach him with the request that he restore to them the means of subsistence which had been taken away from them, for he is appointed by God to provide for his subjects' needs, this being the Hindu idea of kingship. As the 'bestower of subsistence' to his subjects he is the support of their lives and it is his *dharma* to provide for them. So they come in their troops and remind him of all this as 'they are perishing with hunger'. The king's first duty to his people, in ancient India, was to keep them prosperous and above all provide them with bare necessities of existence, which Vena had completely failed in performing.

Blaming Earth for the dearth of nourishment from which his subjects were suffering, Prithu seizes his bow and arrow and marches in great wrath to assail the Earth who, under the

guise of a cow, flees from his wrath through all the spheres, including the region of Brahma. 'But wherever went the supporter of living things, there she beheld Vainya (Prithu) with uplifted weapons'. A dialogue ensues between the pursued and the pursuer. If you destroy me, asks the Earth Cow, trembling with terror, how will you support yourself and all created beings? Prithu thereupon assumes the role of the Supreme and declares that he will support his people by the efficacy of his own 'yoga' (*Vishnu Purana* I.xiii.76); whereupon the Earth makes obeisance to him as the Supreme Lord and respectfully suggests the means of drawing from her the milk that would feed the many creatures. Let him give her the calf that will permit her to secrete milk and let him level the ground so that the vegetation may spread about. Prithu grants life to the Earth and is henceforth known as her father, and she is known as Prithvi.

So Prithu with his arrows uproots and levels the mountains, defines the boundaries of villages and towns, causes highways to be made for commerce, and teaches his people the rudiments of agriculture and civilization. Therefore, says the *Vishnu Purana*, (I.xiii.93), the 'heroic son of Vena . . . from conciliating the affections of the people was the first ruler to whom the title of Raja was ascribed'.

The Sacred Cow

Ronald Huntington, taking his stand from the psychological viewpoint, makes the following valuable comments which throw further light on the whole Prithu legend.

'The task assigned to Prithu is cast in the traditional heroic mould. He must take upon himself the work of a re-creation of the universe, an ordering of chaos parallel to that primal creation which took place in the eternal beginning. He is to be the agent of birth . . . i.e. again and from above. To be worthy of the crown of success, he must meet and effect a working relationship with the Mother and the Father, represented respectively by the Earth-cow and Indra'.²

Prithu brings for the milking of the Earth, Manu Svayambhuva, and for a milk pail, his own hands, and receives herbs

and plants as milk. This is the signal for all the creatures of the world to come for the milking, including demons, snakes, trees and mountains. However different and incompatible may be the classes and species of creatures, yet life is one and the need of nourishment is equally one and the same for all; all come to the milking, each species after another, all bringing their specific representative in the guise of a calf, and all receive according to their nature:

To the Wonder Cow came:

	with as <i>milker</i>	as <i>calf</i>	as <i>milk pail</i>	as <i>milk</i>
the <i>devas</i>	Savitr (or Mitra)	Indra	a golden cup	<i>svaha</i>
the <i>asuras</i>	Dvimurdha (or Artvya)	Virochana	an iron cup	Maya
men	Prithu	Manu	his hands	crops, herbs
<i>rishis</i>	Brihaspati	Soma	metres (Vedas)	piety
<i>pitris</i>	Antaka (Time, son of Mrityu)	Yama	silver cup	<i>svadha</i>
<i>gandharvas</i>	Vishvaruchi	Chitraratha	lotus leaf	perfume
snakes	Dhritarashtra	Takshaka	gourd	poison
<i>rakshasas</i>	Rajatanabha	Sumali	human skull	blood

The symbolic significance of the milker, the calf and the milk pail brought by each class of creatures is of pertinent interest to the whole army of this magnificent panorama of the Earth Cow nourishing her creatures. It first of all shows the nourishing aspect of the universe, or Mother Nature feeding all her creatures, irrespective of what worth they may have in human eyes; all are entitled to sustenance, all receive it and all transmute it in accordance with their own nature. The milker is representative of the category of beings for whom he is chosen, the milk pail or the means whereby the milk is received, is the working tool whereby each class performs its particular work and achieves the purpose of its being, as it were, its very handiwork and is strikingly of less and less precious substance as one goes down the scale of being. The milk received as the essence of food is symbolic of the essential characteristic of the class of beings which receives it. Thus the snakes receive poison, the demons, blood, the *rishis*, piety, the *asuras*,

illusion, the *gandharvas*, perfume, and men, crops and medicinal herbs. These various 'goods' obviously symbolize the nature of the various recipients. It is of the nature of the *rishis* to be pious, of snakes to poison, and so on. Only, what the milkman receives seems strange, as it has nothing to do with his inherent nature; or is it a hint that the plant kingdom was considered to have a specific link with man, that in addition it was meant as his food par excellence? Prithu receives the milk in the palm of his hands—a symbol of humility, of the acceptance of menial work and of the dignity of any labour, the willingness to toil. The *devas* hold a gold cup, perhaps symbolizing the chalice of perfect consciousness through which they view the universe; the *gandharvas'* lotus leaf is an expression of Nature's delicate achievements in beauty, but human beings have their hands, their work, their toil, which is their greatness. They are tillers of the soil. Work is their lot, without work, they cannot survive. But they are co-partners with Nature in their toil.

Prithu, in the Puranic accounts, is the leader of the hosts and indirectly, the benefactor of all creatures, since in rendering the earth fertile, he enables all to be thus nourished according to each one's need. He is both the distributor of valuable sustenance and the redressor of his predecessor's misdeeds. He has found the right means of appropriating and putting to right use the various riches locked up in Nature, according to the peculiar needs of the different classes and species of Nature, thereby paying due respect to Nature's own categories. All are necessary and all have their distinct part to play in the divine equilibrium. Hence, he wins the reverence of all creatures.

References

1. *Servius et la Fortuen*, (1943), 63.
2. 'The Legend of Prithu, a Study in the Process of Individuation' in *Purana* 2, 1-2, July 1960, 200.

Brahma-Sutra-Bhashya of Sri Shankaracharya

M. R. YARDI

—12—

Saguna Brahman

ON THE basis of such Vedic passages as 'Not this, not this' (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* II. iii. 6), 'It is neither gross nor minute, neither short nor long' (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* III. viii. 8), Brahman is known to be without form (*nirguna*). But we come across other passages which refer to Brahman with form also. For instance, it is said that Brahman consists of mind, having *prana* as Its body, light as Its form, truth as Its conception and space as Its self (*Chhandogya Upanishad* III. xiv. 2). From this one may argue that Brahman must possess both these aspects. The *sutakara* rejects this view in *sutra* III. ii. 11, saying, 'Not even on account of Its (different) states can the twofold character belong to the Highest, for everywhere (it is taught otherwise) (न स्थानतोऽपि परस्योभयलिङ्गं सर्वत्र हि). Such contradictory natures cannot be predicated of one and the same thing at the same time, as this is opposed to experience. *Sthana* here means a state due to its limiting adjunct. It is also not logical to say that a substance can become different by its association with the limiting adjuncts. For a crystal retains its transparent nature, even though it appears opaque when in contact with red lac. We have, therefore, to accept the real nature of Brahman as that which is described as 'without sound, without touch and without form' (*Katha Upanishad* I. iii. 15 and similar texts).

This view is, however, open to the objection that it is not consistent with the scriptures which speak of different forms or characteristics of Brahman. Brahman is described as 'having four feet' (*Chhandogya Upanishad* III. xvii. 2), 'having sixteen parts' (*Prashna Upanishad* VI. 1), 'bestower of desirable things' (*Chhandogya Upanishad* IV. xv. 3), 'having the three worlds as Its body' (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* I. iii. 22) and also as

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abdominal fire (*Chhandogya Upanishad* V. xiv. 2). The *sutrakara* replies to this objection in *sutra* III. ii. 12. He says, 'If it is argued (that Brahman cannot have one characteristic) on account of differences (Its different states mentioned in the scriptures), we say it is not so because of the denial in every case' (न भेदादिति चेन्न प्रत्येकमतद्वचनात्). We get in the Upanishads such passages as the following: 'This shining, immortal person who is in this earth, indeed, is just this Self' (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* II. v. 1). The *sutrakara* states in the next *sutra*, 'Some also (teach) thus' (अपि चैवमेके). The followers of some *shakhas* (schools) also affirm non-dualism after condemning the dualistic outlook (*Katha Upanishad* II. i. 11, and *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* I. 12). He further adds, 'Brahman is verily devoid of form, as that is the dominant note of the scripture' (अरूपवदेव हि तत्प्रधानत्वात्). That this is the main teaching of the scriptures has already been established by Sri Shankara in his commentary on *sutra* I. i. 4. The scriptural passages which speak of the formless Brahman should be taken as authoritative, even if they are contrary to other passages which deal with Brahman as having form. That the latter, however, are not without purpose, will become evident later.

What then is the essential nature of this Brahman without form? The *sutrakara* says in *sutra* III. ii. 16 that '(the scripture) declares Brahman to be consciousness only' (आह च तन्मात्रम्). Sri Shankara quotes the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* IV. v. 13: 'As a mass of salt is without inside and without outside and altogether a mass of taste, so also is the Self without inside and without outside, altogether a mass of consciousness only'. He concludes that Brahman is essentially of the nature of consciousness only, (चैतन्यमेव तु निरन्तरमस्य स्वरूपम्). The *sutrakara* further adds that 'scriptures also reveal this and so it is also stated in the Smritis' (दर्शयति चाथो अपि स्मर्यते). Thus the scriptures also reveal by the denial of other aspects that Brahman has no distinguishing features other than this (cf. the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* II. iii. 6, *Kena Upanishad* I. 4, and *Taittiriya Upanishad* II. ix. 1). In the *Bhagavad-Gita* too (XIII. 12) 'the highest Brahman is said to be neither gross nor fine'.

If Brahman is without form and is essentially of the nature of consciousness, we have to explain the passages which speak of Brahman as having form, for all parts of the Upanishads should be held to be valid and meaningful. In this connection

sutra III. ii. 15 says, 'As light assumes different forms by its contact with objects, so does Brahman' and so (such passages are) not without meaning (प्रकाशवच्चावैयर्थ्यम्). When the light comes into contact with straight or crooked things, it seems to assume their forms; so also Brahman assumes the forms of the limiting adjuncts with which it comes into contact. For this reason also, *sutra* III. ii. 18 tells us, '(we get in the scriptures) illustrations of the sun's reflections etc.' (अत एव चोपमा सूर्यकादिवत्). Sri Shankara points out that the different forms of Brahman in association with the limiting adjuncts are comparable to the reflections of the sun in water contained in pots of different sizes. In support of this he quotes the *Amritabindu Upanishad* 12, which says, 'Being but one, the universal Self is present in all beings. Though one It is seen to be many like the moon in the water.' The *sutrakara* himself anticipates an objection to this comparison in *sutra* III. ii. 19, 'But there can be no such comparison, as (in the case of Brahman) there is no apprehension of a substance comparable to water' (अम्बुवदग्रहणात् न तथात्वम्). It is possible for the sun which is a material body to be reflected in a remote material substance which is separate from it, such as water. The Self, on the other hand, is not a material body, and there is no substance separate from It. Sri Shankara explains that the comparison rests on some particular point which they have in common. The point which they have in common is explained in *sutra* III. ii. 20, which says, '(Brahman) seems to participate in the increase and decrease (of the limiting adjuncts) owing to Its entry (therein). Thus the comparison between the two is apposite' (वृद्धिह्रासभाक्त्वमन्तर्भावादुभयसामञ्जस्यादेवम्). Just as the image of the sun increases when the water increases and decreases when the water shrinks, so Brahman too seems to conform to the characteristic of the limiting adjuncts which it enters.

The *sutrakara* concludes this section with the *sutra* III. ii. 21, which says, '(that Brahman enters into the limiting adjuncts) is also seen from the Vedic texts' (दर्शनाच्च). The scripture moreover declares that the highest Brahman enters into the body and the other limiting adjuncts. 'He made bodies with two feet and bodies with four feet. Having first become a bird, He entered the bodies as *Purusha*' (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* II.v.18). 'That divinity thought, "Well let me enter into three

divinities by means of this living Self and let me then develop name and form''' (*Chhandogya Upanishad* VI. iii. 2). Sri Shankara further explains that the Vedic texts speaking of Brahman's form are not meant for leading to the knowledge of the formless Brahman through the sublation of the manifested universe, but have also an independent purpose. There are also Vedic texts which refer to manifestations of Brahman in chapters treating of devout meditation. For instance, the passage in the *Chhandogya Upanishad* III. xiv. 2 is connected with an injunction contained in the preceding passage, 'He should make a resolve'. The scripture further tells us that devout meditations on Brahman as characterized by form lead to the attenuation of sins, gaining of divine powers or release by stages. That this is also the *sutrakara's* view is borne out by *sutra* I. i. 31. Here Sri Shankara adds *na* before *upasatrainviddhyat* and says that this *sutra* refers to a single type of meditation and so cannot be taken as suggesting different types of meditation. But he also accepts the interpretation of the *vrittikara* and says that the one meditation on Brahman is here said to be three-fold, according as Brahman is viewed either in itself or with reference to its two limiting conditions.

Sri Ramanuja's View

The above explanation on the *sutra* has been given on the basis of Sri Shankara's Bhashya. Sri Ramanuja, however, construes these *sutras* in a totally different manner. He says that Brahman has a twofold nature, freedom from imperfections and possession of all auspicious qualities. The imperfections which affect the embodied Selves do not affect the highest Self, which is without form and so is not subject to the law of karma. Even as the sun reflected in water is not affected by the impurities of the latter, Brahman does not share the imperfections with the bodies with which it is connected. Sri Ramanuja admits that light i.e. consciousness constitutes the essential nature of Brahman, but says that this does not negate the other attributes of Brahman such as omniscience. He takes *sutra* III. ii. 22 as the continuation of the discussion of the twofold character of Brahman. This says, '(The Vedic text, "Not this, not this") denies what has been mentioned up to this point and says something more.'

(प्रकृतैताक्त्वं हि प्रतिषेधति ततो ब्रवीति च भूयः). Sri Shankara explains that the Upanishad, while negating the form, does not deny the possessor of form, as it says something more, and describes Brahman as *satyasya Satyam*, the Truth of truth. Sri Ramanuja, however, takes it to mean that the *sutra* does not reject all the *prakaras* or modes of Brahman mentioned earlier, but says that Brahman possesses many more attributes than stated. He quotes passages from Shrutis, Smritis and the *Vishnu Purana* in support of his view. Thus both the interpretations of Sri Shankara and Sri Ramanuja find support in Vedic passages. We have now to examine to what extent their views reflect the views of the *sutrakara* in regard to the essential nature of Brahman.

The *sutrakara* states very clearly in *sutra* III. ii. 16 that Brahman consists of consciousness only. While Sri Ramanuja interprets *tanmatram* as 'so much only', still he insists that this description does not deny the auspicious attributes of Brahman. Nimbarka rightly says that when a text says *tanmatra*, it means only that much. What is denied here cannot be reintroduced by taking recourse to the phrase *braviti cha bhuyah* in *sutra* III ii. 22. In *sutra* IV. iii. 7 the view of Badari that the worshipper of effected (*karya*) or conditioned Brahman goes to him only, shows that Badari also recognizes *karana-brahman*. Here the reference is to the *Chhandogya Upanishad* IV. xv. 5, which says the guardians of the divine path lead him to Brahman. Jaimini takes it to mean *Para-brahman*, as this is the principal sense of the word (*mukhyatvat*), which indicates that he recognized an *apara-brahman*. The *sutrakara* thus clearly endorses the concept of a higher and lower Brahman, which is also clearly stated in the Upanishads. The essential nature of Brahman is that it is without form and is of the nature of consciousness. This Brahman conceived that it should become manifold, and as a result of its truthful resolve (*satya-samkalpatva*), it assumed a perfect form endowed with the auspicious qualities such as omniscience, omnipotence, lordship over all (*sarva-vashitva*) and so on. Sri Ramanuja also distinguishes between two conditions (*avastha*) of Brahman, according as it is in its causal condition, or in the condition of the effect. Thus Sri Shankara's explanation of these *sutras* seems to reflect the views of the *sutrakara* faithfully so far as they distinguish between Brahman without attributes

as the cause and Brahman with attributes as its first effect.

Is the World a Transformation or Illusion?

Sri Shankara's explanation of Saguna Brahman however, does not mean that his doctrine of Maya conforms fully with the view of the *sutrakara*. In his explanation of *sutra* II. i. 14 he says that the phenomenal world is the result of name and form, which are conjured up by ignorance (*avidya*) but are non-different from Brahman. It is caused by the indescribable power of Brahman, known as Maya, the principle of illusion or *prakriti*, the primordial Nature. The rulership, omniscience, omnipotence and so on of God (Ishvara) all depend on the limitation due to the adjuncts which are essentially of the nature of ignorance. In reality none of these attributes belong to Brahman, Whose essential nature is known when It is free from those adjuncts. Thus according to Sri Shankara the phenomenal world is an illusory appearance but it is considered real from the practical point of view. In reality all creation is illusory. We get a hint of Maya once in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (II.v.19) and thrice in the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* (I.10, IV. 9, 10), which form the basis of Sri Shankara's philosophy of Vedanta. The *sutrakara* does not use the word *avidya* anywhere and he uses the word Maya only once in *sutra* III. ii. 3, where he points out that the dream world is not real, but mere Maya, as it does not fully manifest the character of real objects. After saying that the object of his study is Brahman, he states in *sutra* I. i. 2 that Brahman alone is the cause of the world. There is no indication here or in any other *sutra* that the world originated from Brahman in association with Maya or *Prakriti*. As pointed out before, Sri Shankara takes only two *sutras* II. i. 14 and II. iii. 50 as supporting his doctrine of *vivarta-vada* that all the world-phenomena are illusory effects. These conclusions are not supported by any direct statements in the *sutras*.

It seems that the *sutrakara* held the doctrine of transformation (*parinama-vada*) in which the effect is regarded as the real development of cause in its essential state. This is clear from *sutra* I. iv. 26, which states that '(Brahman is the material cause) on account of Its making itself. (This is possible) owing to transformation' (आत्मकृतेः परिणामात्). This refers to

the scriptural passage in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* II. 7 that 'The Self transformed Itself into Its own Self'. Even as clay is changed into its products, Brahman transformed Itself into such effects as Ishvara, *jiva*, *prana* and so on. Thus according to the *sutrakara*, Brahman is with form and devoid of form. If Brahman had form and attributes, the texts which teach It as being without form would become superfluous. Those Vedic passages which speak of the formless Brahman represent the true nature of Brahman as unconnected with anything in the universe. The other passages which refer to Brahman as qualified by form are meant for the meditation and worship of Brahman.

Vedanta: Voice of Freedom

(A Review Article)

[*Swami Vivekananda Vedanta: Voice of Freedom*. Edited and with an introduction by Swami Chetanananda, Foreword by Christopher Isherwood, Preface by Huston Smith; Philosophical Library, New York; pp. 328; \$ 19.95]

'I HAVE a message to the West', said Swami Vivekananda, 'as Buddha had a message to the East.' Vivekananda gave that message, the message of Vedanta, mainly through his lectures in America and in England. Here in this book Swami Chetanananda sets out the message of Vedanta very clearly and in Vivekananda's own words, with all references given.

As Christopher Isherwood says in his Foreword, 'By compiling this selection from the eight volumes of Swami Vivekananda's lectures, writings, and letters, Swami Chetanananda has performed a most valuable task. This task must have been extraordinarily difficult because it required a firm intellectual grasp of Vivekananda's message to his hearers or readers—a message which had to be delivered in Vivekananda's own words. Paraphrase would have been out of the question—however convenient that might have sometimes been—lest Vivekananda's voice—his way of expressing himself, his vivid phraseology, his humor, the passion of his faith and the shock of his frankness—should be lost for the sake of mere clarity.'

In answer to the question, What is Vedanta? Swami Chetanananda replies, 'Vedanta is the culmination of knowledge, the sacred wisdom of the Hindu sages, the transcendental experience of the seers of Truth. It is the essence, or conclusion, of the Vedas. As the Upanishads come at the end of the Vedas, so it is called *Vedanta*. Literally, *Veda* means knowledge and *anta* means end.' In clear and simple language, he then describes the five main tenets of Vedanta:

- (1) *Brahman* is the ultimate Reality, the One without a second. It is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute. It is beyond name and form, devoid of qualities, without beginning or end. It is the unchanging Truth, beyond space, time, and causation. But this vast, infinite Brahman manifests Itself as the universe and the individual beings through Its inscrutable power of Maya. Thus the one becomes the many. When Brahman is associated with its Maya it is called God, or Ishvara.
- (2) The universe is apparent, like water in a mirage, and is continuously changing. We perceive the universe through space, time, and causation. Space begins when one gets a body, time begins when one starts thinking, and causation begins when one becomes limited. This beautiful, tangible universe disappears from one's awareness when one enters into the sleep state or merges into *samadhi*, and again it reappears in the waking state. So this world is in the mind.
- (3) Human beings are divine. Their real nature is the Atman, which is infinite, eternal, pure, luminous, ever free, blissful, and identical with Brahman. They are not sinners. They make mistakes and suffer because of ignorance. As darkness disappears when light dawns, so ignorance goes away with the advent of knowledge. Bondage and freedom are in the mind. Thinking of weakness and bondage, one becomes weak and bound. Thinking of strength and freedom, one becomes strong and free. No human being wants slavery, because it is painful. Joy is only in freedom, which is, as Vedanta declares, the inherent nature of all beings. The goal of human life is to realize God, and the purpose of religion is to teach one how to manifest the divinity within.

- (4) How does one manifest the divinity within? Vedanta suggests four *yogas*: (a) *karma yoga*, the path of unselfish action, (b) *jnana yoga*, the path of knowledge, (c) *raja yoga*, the path of meditation, and (d) *bhakti yoga*, the path of devotion. The word *yoga* signifies the union of the individual soul with the Cosmic Soul.
- (5) Truth is one and universal. It cannot be limited to any country or race or individual. All religions of the world express the same Truth in different languages and in various ways. Just as the sun is no one's property, so also Truth is not confined to one particular religion or philosophy. No one can say that the sun is a Christian sun or a Hindu sun or a Buddhist sun or a Jewish sun or an Islamic sun. Vedanta, rather, promulgates the harmony of religions. As different rivers originate from different sources but mingle in the ocean, losing their names and forms, so all the various religious paths that human beings take, through different tendencies, lead to God, or the Truth.

The Teaching of Swami Vivekananda

The teaching of Swami Vivekananda is presented in twelve chapters:

I. WHAT IS VEDANTA?

Vedanta: The Culmination of the Vedas; the Vedas without Beginning or End; Thoughts on the Vedas and Upanishads; 'Children of Immortal Bliss'; Freedom is the Song of the Soul; Dehypnotize Yourself; The Gospel of Strength; The Bold Message of the East

II. THE PHILOSOPHY OF VEDANTA

The Spirit and Influence of Vedanta; Principles of Vedanta; The Three Main Schools of Vedanta; Monistic Vedanta; The Absolute and Its Manifestation; An Analysis of Perception; Good and Evil; Change is Always Subjective; Soul, God and Religion

III. THE RELIGION OF VEDANTA

Many Facets of the Truth; Religion is Realization; Religion of Today; On Doing Good to the World; The Goal of Religion; Fundamentals of Religion; Vedanta: An Un-

organized Religion; Reason and Religion: The Basis of Ethics; Morality in Vedanta; Practical Religion; The Vedantic View of Family Life; Unity in Variety

IV. GOD AND MAN IN VEDANTA

God: Personal and Impersonal; God in Everything; Worship of the Impersonal God; Worship of the Living God; The Real Nature of Man; The Living Free; What Makes Us Miserable?; Misery: Its Cause and Cure; Man, the Maker of His Destiny

V. THE CONCEPT OF MAYA

What is Maya? This is Maya; The Snare of Maya; Tearing the Veil of Maya; God's Play

VI. KARMA YOGA (The Path of Action)

Karma and Its Effect on Character; The Mystery of Karma; The Philosophy of Karma; Work and Its Secret; The Teachings of Karma Yoga; Karma Yoga According to the Gita; Work for Work's Sake; Be Unattached; Each is Great in His Own Place; The Qualifications of a Karma Yogi; A Story of Self-Sacrifice; We Help Ourselves, Not the World; The World: A Dog's Curly Tail; An Ideal Karma Yogi

VII. JNANA YOGA (The Path of Knowledge)

The Eternal Question; What is the Atman?; The Journey Toward Freedom; Regain Your Own Empire; Steps to Realization; In Quest of the Self; Thou Art That

VIII. BHAKTI YOGA (The Path of Devotion)

What is Bhakti?; The Mystery of Love; The Religion of Love; The Triangle of Love; The Need for a Teacher; On Prayer; The Supreme Worship; Love, Lover, and Beloved

IX. RAJA YOGA (The Path of Meditation)

The Science of Raja Yoga; The Powers of Mind; How to Be a Yogi; The Practice of Yoga; Self-Control; How to Control Emotion; Concentration; Meditation; Equanimity of the Mind Is Yoga

X. VEDANTA IN PRACTICE

Preparations for Higher Life; Hints on Practical Spirituality; Spiritual Practice According to Vedanta; Realization and Its Method; Practical Vedanta-I; Practical Vedanta-II; Enjoy Through Renunciation; God Speaks Through the Heart; How to Overcome Weakness; The Open Secret

XI. THE GOAL OF VEDANTA

Is Heaven the Goal?; The Experience of Cosmic Consciousness; The Mystery of Birth and Death; Reincarnation; The Journey Toward the Goal; Inspired Talks; Six Stanzas on Nirvana

XII. THE UNIVERSALITY OF VEDANTA

How Vedanta Views Other Faiths; Vedanta and the Great Teachers of the World; Why We Disagree; The Ideal of a Universal Religion; Vedanta and Privilege; Vedanta and Science; East and West Must Meet; Eastern and Western Views; the Future of Vedanta

The One Universal Religion

Vivekananda taught that religion did not consist of doctrines or dogmas:

'It is not what you read nor what dogmas you believe that is of importance, but what you realize. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God", yea, in this life. And that is salvation. There are those who teach that this can be gained by the mumbling of words. But no great master ever taught that external forms were necessary for salvation. The power of attaining it is within ourselves. We live and move in God. Creeds and sects have their parts to play, but they are for children; they last but temporarily. Books never make religions, but religions make books. We must not forget that. No book ever created God, but God inspired all the great books. And no book ever created a soul. We must never forget that. The end of all religions is the realization of God in the soul. That is the one universal religion. If there is one universal truth in all religions, I place it here—in realizing God. Ideals and methods may differ, but that is the central point. There may be a thousand different radii, but

they all converge to the one centre, and that is the realization of God—something behind this world of sense, this world of eternal eating and drinking and talking nonsense, this world of false shadows and selfishness. There is that, beyond all books, beyond all creeds, beyond the vanities of this world, and it is the realization of God within yourself. A man may believe in all the churches in the world, he may carry in his head all the sacred books ever written, he may baptize himself in all the rivers of the earth—still, if he has no perception of God, I would class him with the rankest atheist. And another man may have never entered a church or a mosque, nor performed any ceremony but if he feels God within himself and is thereby lifted above the vanities of the world, that man is a holy man, a saint, call him what you will.

'As soon as a man stands up and says he is right or his church is right and all others are wrong, he is himself all wrong. He does not know that upon the proof of all the others depends the proof of his own. Love and charity for the whole human race—that is the test of true religiousness. I do not mean the sentimental statement that all men are brothers, but that one must feel the oneness of human life. So far as they are not exclusive, I see that the sects and creeds are all mine; they are all grand. They are all helping men toward the real religion.

'I will add, it is good to be born in a church, but it is bad to die there. It is good to be born a child, but bad to remain a child. Churches, ceremonies, and symbols are good for children, but when the child is grown he must burst the church or himself. We must not remain children forever. I do not deprecate the existence of sects in the world. Would to God there were twenty million more, for the more there are, the greater the field for selection there will be. What I do object to is trying to fit one religion to every case. Though all religions are essentially the same, they must have the varieties of form produced by dissimilar circumstances among different nations. We must each have our own individual religion—individual so far as the externals of it go.

'Many years ago I visited a great sage of our country, a very holy man. We talked of our revealed book, the Vedas, of your Bible, of the Koran, and of revealed books in general. At the close of our talk this good man asked me to go to the

table and take up a book. It was book which, among other things, contained a forecast of the rainfall during the year. The sage said, "Read that." and I read out the quantity of rain that was to fall. He said, "Now take the book and squeeze it." I did so and he said, "Why, my boy, not a drop of water comes out. Until the water comes out, it is all book, book." So until your religion makes you realize God, it is useless. He who only studies books for religion reminds one of the fable of the ass that carried a heavy load of sugar on its back, but did not know the sweetness of it.' (I. 323-26)

Preach Unto Mankind Their Divinity

Vedanta: Voice of Freedom has fifteen illustrations, of which eleven are portraits of Swami Vivekananda. The picture of Swami Vivekananda's temple in Belur Monastery carries his own summing up of his mission: '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.'

Of the eleven portraits reproduced, three have some sentences written on them by Vivekananda himself first in Bengali and then in English. Vivekananda's handwriting, as reproduced, is not always easy to read. The editor of the book could perhaps have found a way to give the reader a little help. He might, for example, have included a small section entitled *The Illustrations* in which he commented interestingly upon each picture.

The book has a glossary which is much more than a glossary for it includes historical and biographical information. 'Suggestions for Further Reading' gives a list of titles (with their publication details) to help the reader in search of further material relating to Vedanta.

In his Introduction, under the heading 'Vedanta and Vivekananda', Swami Chetanananda gives the story of Vivekananda's life and particularly the story of his training under Sri Ramakrishna. In all, therefore, this book of only 328 pages presents a complete picture of Swami Vivekananda—the man and his teaching.

Swami Chetanananda is to be congratulated on a great achievement which is, at the same time, a great service to mankind.

IRENE RAY

The Vision of Cosmic Order in the Vedas

(A Review)

[*The Vision of Cosmic Order in the Vedas*, Jeanine Miller, London Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985. xiv, 358 £27.00.]

THE RIG VEDA is a collection of over one thousand Sanskrit hymns, most of which have a religious or metaphysical import. One of the oldest literary expressions of man's perennial quest for religious meaning, the *Rig Veda* is an astounding treasury of archaic spiritual wisdom and as such is the key scripture within the Great Tradition.

The hymns portray all levels of human aspiration, both sacred and secular, but always in relation to the hidden powers or the great invisible One intuited in the heart.

The author is one of the very few scholars today to research into this ancient and difficult sacred work. She is also among the still fewer scholars who approach the study of the *Rig Veda* with more than linguistic skill, historical knowledge, and modern methods of interpretation. She also—and this makes her book so valuable—writes as one who is deeply sympathetic with the spiritual orientation of the many hymns and who, in her own life, contemplates the great matter that so captivated the attention of the ancient seers and hymn-makers of the *Rig Veda*. This explains why, instead of burdening the Vedic message with all kinds of sophisticated models of explanation, Ms. Miller tries to understand the Vedic seers in their own light. The result is a scholarly book that is also in many parts illuminating and inspiring.

The focus of the book is the multilevel concept of 'order' in Nature and on the human plane which holds a central place in the world-view of the inspired seers who created the *Rig Veda*. For them, order implies the principle of sacrifice, and sacrifice, on the level of the human being, involves the heart. Jeanine Miller has brought out these connections beautifully.

G. FEURSTEIN