

# Vedanta

---

367 SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2012

---

**The Nature of Time in Vedanta and Christianity**

*Umesh Gulati*

---

**St. Kyranna of Thessaloniki**

*John Phillips*

---



---

## Divine Wisdom

---

MASTER: "Chaitanyadeva used to experience three moods. In the inmost mood he would be absorbed in samadhi, unconscious of the outer world. In the semi-conscious mood he would dance in ecstasy but could not talk. In the conscious mood he would sing the glories of God.

"You are listening to my words. Try to assimilate them. When worldly people sit before a sadhu, for the time being they completely hide all worldly thoughts and ideas. But once away from the holy man they let them out again. You have seen a pigeon eating dried peas. You think he has digested them, but he keeps them in his crop. You can feel them there.

"At dusk put aside all duties and pray to God. One is reminded of Him by darkness. At the approach of darkness one thinks: 'I could see everything a moment ago. Who has brought about this change?' The Mussalmans put aside all activities and say their prayers at the appointed times."

MUKHERJI: "Revered sir, is it good to practise japa?"

MASTER: "Yes. One attains God through japa. By repeating the name of God secretly and in solitude one receives divine grace. Then comes His vision. Suppose there is a big piece of timber lying under water and fastened to the land with a chain; by proceeding along the chain, link by link, you will at last touch the timber.

"Higher than worship is japa, higher than japa is meditation, higher than meditation is bhava, and higher than bhava are mahabhava and prema. Chaitanyadeva

# Vedanta

367 SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2012

---

## Contents

---

- 194      **Editorial: Shankaracharya: Life & Teachings  
(continued)**
- 
- 198                      **God is also Mother (continued)**  
*Hans Torwesten*
- 
- 208                                      **Milarepa**  
*Sister Savitri*
- 
- 217      **A Comparative Study of the Commentaries on  
the Brahma-Sutras (continued)**  
*Swami Vireswarananda*
- 
- 220                                      **The Two Banks of the River**  
*St. Gregory Lebedev*
- 
- 227                      **The Nature of Time in Vedanta and  
Christianity**  
*Umesh Gulati*
- 
- 238                                      **St. Kyranna of Thessaloniki**  
*John Phillips*
- 
- 240                                      **Programme**
- 

ISSN 1355 - 6436

---

## Shankaracharya: Life & Teachings (continued)

---

### At Badrikashrama

From Varanasi Shankaracharya travelled along with his disciples to Badrikashrama in the Himalayas, where the sages Nara and Narayana were said to have practised severe austerities. It is a beautiful and serene place. Here Shankaracharya took up his residence in a cave. His fame had already preceded him and many people came to see and learn from him. The local king accorded him a hearty welcome and saw that Shankaracharya was well looked after.

### Recovery of the idol of Lord Narayana

There is a beautiful temple here where God is worshipped as Badrivishal. When Shankaracharya visited the temple he found the four-armed image missing. On enquiry he came to know from the local priests that for fear of bandits the image had been secreted in a nearby spring but later they were unable to trace it. On hearing this, Shankaracharya prayed to the Lord earnestly and in his mind's eye saw the image lying in a spring nearby called Naradkund by the local people. He retrieved it from the spring. However the image was found to have damaged fingers. Hinduism explicitly forbids installation of broken images.

Shankaracharya was reluctant to install such an image in the temple, but then he heard an oracle from the heavens, "O Great One, do not hesitate. In this age of *Kali*, it is this broken image that will receive worship here." (We may also recall how Sri Ramakrishna advised Rani Rasmani to reinstall

a repaired Govinda image!). The Acharya then installed the image ceremonially and appointed a Nambudiri Brahmin as the priest. Even today only Nambudiri Brahmins conduct worship at this temple.

This and similar incidents - and there are many such incidents in the life of Shankaracharya - may appear to be miraculous. Some may assert that these miraculous events are foisted upon the gullible public by the followers of Shankaracharya for enhancing his greatness. Such views would not be right, for we see such events in the life of almost all saints. The devotees of Sri Ramakrishna may recall how he went on a visit to Navadvip, the birth place of Sri Chaitanya, to find out if he was an incarnation of God. Sri Ramakrishna recalls: "Formerly I thought, 'How could Chaitanya be an incarnation, as there is not the slightest mention of it in the *Bhagavata* and other Puranas? The shaven-headed Vaishnavas have set him up to be an incarnation.' I went to Navadvip with Mathur. I thought that if he were an incarnation, something of the power of that divine manifestation must be lingering there. I shall understand it when I see this place.

"In order to detect whether there was any Divine presence, I took walks hither and thither.... Everywhere I found only a wooden figure standing with its arms raised upward. I felt dejected to see it. I regretted my going there. Afterwards, I was about to step into the boat on my return trip when I saw a wonderful vision: two beautiful boys of tender age appeared. I had never seen such beauty as witnessed in them. They had the complexion of molten gold, and round the head of both was a halo of light. Raising their hands and looking at me, they were running towards me through the sky. I cried out

immediately. 'There they come, there they come!' Scarcely had I uttered these words, than they came and entered here (his own body); I lost normal consciousness and fell down. I was shown many such things, convincing me of their really being incarnations, the manifestations of the divine Power."

So why did not Sri Ramakrishna perceive the power of Sri Chaitanya at Navadvip? Here is what Swami Saradananda writes: "It was perhaps in 1870 that Sri Ramakrishna went to visit those holy places. He did not feel so deeply inspired while in Navadvip as when passing by the silted-up shoals in the bed of the Ganga near that place. Asked by Mathur and others for the reason of it, the Master said that the old Navadvip containing the places of Chaitanya's divine sport had been submerged in the river. They were situated where the shoals now stood. That was why he had deep ecstasy when he passed by them."

Let us also recollect how Sri Chaitanya, during his wanderings, discovered many of the places associated with the divine sports of Sri Krishna in Vrindavan.

### **Is Monism opposed to dualism?**

Some may doubt or question the harmony of Shankara's rigid monistic outlook with his dualistic practices, such as the installation of temples, or composition of beautiful devotional hymns in praise of Gods and Goddesses.

Shankaracharya was pre-eminently a teacher of *Advaita* philosophy. It does not follow that all Hindus must follow the path of knowledge. Temperaments will differ and necessitate different religious ideals. Hence dualistic and quasi-monistic

ideals are equally valid in Hinduism. Those were days when in the name of religion, many horrid things were practised. Shankara knew that Hinduism had to be purified from the grips of those unpleasant practices.

Shankara, though an uncompromising monist, yet admitted the equality of the religious values of both monistic and dualistic worship. This synthetic outlook made him not only the great reviver of Hindu ideals, but also a great constructive power with which he elevated the lower rites of worship to the level of the highest spirituality. True to the genius of Hinduism, Shankara exalted ritualism to the level of the highest worship. He believed that through sincere practice of rituals and worship the mind would be purified and becomes fit for the practice of *Jnana Yoga*; he believed that *Jnana* is the only path for the realization of the Self and all other paths help the aspirant only indirectly. In contrast Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda preached that every path is independent and can lead one to God-realization.

*(to be continued)*

Swami Dayatmananda

## God is also Mother (continued)

---

*This series of articles appeared last time in the July-August, 2011 issue. We are now continuing with it.*

### **The Play of Wisdom**

**T**he Indian conception of the Divine Mother admittedly mixes many things together, but I believe that it is precisely here that the roots for a new religious understanding may lie. A dive into the waters of Chaos can never do any harm - indeed, it is even necessary, if one wants to regenerate oneself.

In the Western tradition we have become accustomed to the concept of an extra-cosmic creator God, who directs everything from outside and shows Himself only in history. As the natural man never seemed to be so tied down as the woman, one almost always conceived of this God as male - although one also tried in higher theology to avoid a too glaring anthropomorphism and to understand God as a pure spirit, beyond everything sexual, and therefore beyond male and female. As however the men - and only they determined the theology and philosophy - imagined that pure spirits are represented above all by man, while the female is per se sexual, the male colouring of this extra-cosmic creator God always remained in place. Just as the Great Mother was not formerly dependant on male assistance and gave birth to the world entirely by herself, so now in the opposite way the Father God became the All-God, the One, who did not need any helper - partly because he simply took over certain motherly features. How often in mysticism do we find talk of the lap of the Father, who not only produces, but also

“bears” the Son, the divine Word. Yes, there are representations, in which the Father God takes over the part of Mary and holds the Son on his lap.

There have of course been exceptions, accompanying melodies, as it were, to the main male theme - long before the rise of Mary. In the Jewish culture we find the Shechina, the “power of God,” which plays an important part in the Kabbala and has a lot in common with the Indian *Shakti*. And above all there is Sophia, “Wisdom,” whom we have already mentioned. She is designated in the Old Testament as the companion of Yahwe, who was with Him from the beginning and whose existence Yahwe must have forgotten or suppressed for a long time. “So in herself, wisdom is a spirit,” it says in the Wisdom of Solomon, “that is rational. Holy, only-begotten, manifold, subtle, easily moved, clear...” She is described as “unhindered, manifest, man-loving, steadfast, unyielding, free from worry, all-powerful, all-surveilling, and penetrating all spirits... So she is the exhalation of the power of God and the emanation of the pure glory of the Almighty. Though she is one, she can do all things; so while remaining in herself, she renews all things. And in every generation, she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God and prophets... Wisdom stretches from one end of the earth to the other and she governs all things well.”

The man who wrote this must have been aware that the male God Yahwe needed a supplement, namely a female dimension, which is expressly described as “man-loving” - as though one wanted to point out that this was not exactly a typical feature of Yahwe’s character. It must also be stressed that the female is here not assigned only the dark side of being: the nightly, damp, natural and earthly, heavy - in contrast to the “sunny” quality of male creator intelligence - but that the divine spirit-energy, in fact “Wisdom,” is conceived of as light. “For

wisdom is more beautiful than the sun and more than every constellation of stars. Compared with light she is found to be superior."

This hymn to Wisdom has something enchanting and exhilarating about it, as indeed it is also a declaration of love. Without this love, without this enthusiasm, one cannot approach the female dimension of God. We do not bother with superlatives, because in this case it is not a finite person of whom it is being sung, who is for instance being played off against other persons, but the divine exhilaration itself. We are at the level of poetic and spiritual intuition, and not at the level of the complicated and ponderous formation of dogma. No one has yet been able to capture the exhilarating wisdom, the female whirlwind, that makes one think of a dancing and a playful girl. One may say that she remains an abstract idea, a Greek spark that has become lost in the Old Testament, but I think she has indeed her own life and, in spite of all her vagueness, something very characteristic. She also embodies the "living" God and not at all a mere idea - she is after all God's life, his power, his *Shakti* - something lively, in contrast to whom Yahwe in his appearances often, in spite of all his thunder, has something of the ponderousness of a steamroller.

One only has to read a work such as "The Mother" by Sri Aurobindo to feel how closely the "Wisdom" of the Old Testament comes near to the Indian *Shakti*. "She whom we worship as Mother," writes Aurobindo, "is the divine power of consciousness, which governs all existence, is one, but at the same time so multiple, that even for the quickest mind and the most free and comprehensive insight it is not possible to follow its movements. The Mother is the consciousness and the power of the Most High and stands far above all her creations."

Aurobindo divides the Mother's "multiplicity," which it also pointed to in the Old Testament wisdom literature, in

particular into five aspects - Maheshwari (Wisdom), Mahakali (Energy), Mahalakshmi (Harmony) and Mahasaraswati (Perfection) - and writes as an introduction: "The one is the figure of the silent expanse, comprehensive wisdom, quiet goodness, inexhaustible sympathy, the highest, superior majesty, all-governing greatness. Another incorporates her power of illuminating energy and irresistible passion, warlike stance, crushing will, impetuous speed and world-shaking power. The third is lively, soft and wonderful in the deep secret of her beauty, her harmony, her fine rhythm, her manifold, tender richness, her irresistible charm and her bewitching grace. The fourth is endowed with her secret ability to penetrate to the innermost knowledge, to careful, faultless work and to quiet and clear perfection in all things."

Let us however remain for a short while on Jewish and Christian territory, in order further to trace the path to "Wisdom" there. In particular it differs from the general picture of the "Bride" of God in that it is not only seen as an object, with which God falls in love, but that it has something quite independent and subjective about it. It is not only admired by God as the "Other," "the non-divine," but itself embodies the divine. Can God not also be courted and loved as the female, who is for man also always the "Completely Other," but in fact not just as an object, but as the other side which can lead him to a transcendental experience? We shall come back again to this important point.

In Christianity the "Wisdom" of the Old Testament took on three different forms: as the Logos, as the Holy Spirit and as Mary - in which connection one must add that this theological separation could not affect and remove the specific character and aura of "Wisdom," as we encounter it in the Old Testament. Much has gone over from it into these three figures - and also into the

“Church” - and yet a bit remains, which cannot be theologically captured.

The Logos, the creator Word of God, through which everything has come about, is indeed mostly taken to be masculine, but if one does not wish to simplify him to cheap “logic,” which is rightly or wrongly assigned to the male, this creative word doubtless has the features of the female Wisdom.

It is true that we have become used to seeing in the Logos something like Hegel’s Absolute, a somewhat Prussian World Spirit; but with at least just so much right we can in this “Word” also discover something flowing, “light and moveable” like wisdom, related to the *Tao*, which also stands almost closer to the motherly wisdom than the fatherly wisdom. Like the *Tao* the divine Word is also the root, the “Mother of ten thousand things,” and which Jesus of Nazareth embodies in Israel, who not by chance showed many a characteristic of a Taoist sage. When he says he would have liked to gather together the people of Jerusalem just as the mother hen gathers her chicks beneath her wings, he is expressing something motherly, which otherwise almost only finds expression in the broad mantle of Mary. The English mystic Julian of Norwich does not hesitate to call the second person of the Trinity our “Mother.”

The Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Christian Trinity, can indeed also not be understood as distinctly feminine. When the “Spirit of God,” which wanders over the waters of Chaos, and in particular as the Spirit that overshadows Mary and at the same time “begets” the Son, it has indeed for many people more masculine qualities. And yet, this creative spirit, this life-giving power is far removed from a creator God, who with an all-powerful gesture “makes” something out of nothing. There is a hidden correspondence between Him and the “feminine” Waters of Chaos. The Ruach Elohim, the “Breath of God,” is feminine in

Hebrew, just like "Wisdom," and its hovering over the waters is also often referred to as "brooding." There is something of fruitful moisture in this breath, which spreads like a cloud over the Chaos and takes it up into itself as into its lap. The border between begetting and giving birth, between creation and life-bearing is wiped away here. "I came from the mouth of the Most High and covered the earth like a mist" (Sirach 24,3), Wisdom says and bears witness that in the creation it was not exclusively a male will that was at work, which makes something out of nothing or forms and inspires a completely passive original material, but it is a question of co-operation between male and female powers, which unite to form a creative power.

The Holy Spirit has taken up into itself much from Wisdom, as well as from the "Shechina," the "power" of God, and its similarity to the Indian *Shakti* hardly needs to be pointed out. It is not by chance that the dove, his "form," is a feminine symbol - indeed, a symbol of the goddess of love. While the Father represents above all the original Being and the Son - as the Word - knowledge, the Holy Spirit embodies the breath of burning love and the exuberant life and blissfulness of the Godhead. It is the Pleroma, in which the inner life of God is fulfilled - and breaks out of itself in order to let the inner fullness flow over outside - just as in Indian metaphysics Being (*Sat*) and Consciousness (*Chit*) find their fulfilment in overflowing love and joy (*Ananda*) and at the same time burst forth and return to the innermost source.

For us the Holy Spirit is similar to Wisdom in the Old Testament, especially important as the power that binds together all apparent opposites, which takes us out of the world of duality into the life of unity. The highest spirituality and love of nature, asceticism and Eros are no longer enemies under its power of love. With what great passion the great medieval mystic Hildegard von Bingen could sing of the power of this love - in

which connection it is no longer after all a question of whether the "I" in this text is the Holy Spirit, "Wisdom" or Christ - or, in Indian terminology, *Shakti* or Krishna. "I, the fiery life of God's presence, shine forth over the beauty of the fields. I shine in the waters. I burn in the sun, in the moon and in the stars. And with the wind - as with unseen life, which bears everything - I powerfully awaken all life, for the air lives in blossoming forth. The waters flow as though they were alive. The sun also lives in its light and the moon ... In all this I am hidden, the fiery power; they burn from me, as the breath powerfully brings movement to men, and as the flame is in the fire. They all live in their being and are not found in death, for I am life... the unscathed life, which is not from flints, does not blossom from boughs, does not arise from human power, but everything that lives has its roots in me."

Here the light of the Old Testament "Wisdom" is again lit in the heart of Christian mysticism - in a woman's heart. And the spark flies on to us, who are standing on the threshold of an age, in which spirit and nature, the "spirit" and life of *Prakriti* can be connected again with *Chit-Shakti*, the Spirit-Energy, whose real essence is love.

When Ramakrishna for the first time felt the rush of the spirit, when the waves of this endless sea burst over him and he sank into ecstasy, he whispered, when hours later he came to himself, again and again only the words "Mother, Mother." In the apocryphal Hebrew text Jesus calls the Spirit his "Mother." Of all the three persons of the Christian Trinity, the Holy Spirit is perhaps the least comprehensible, so that the theologians have always had problems with it. Just like "Wisdom" it is "light and volatile," "penetrating everything and unrestrainable." "The wind bloweth where it listeth," says Jesus, "and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth."

(John 3,8). Anyone who is caught up by this wind of the Spirit easily comes like Jesus and Ramakrishna to suspect that he is "beside himself." (Mark 3,21), or at least "full of sweet wine," like the young men at the Easter Festival.

Here we encounter the wild, crazy, unrestrained Dionysian element at a higher level, so to say in a clarified transparent form, where the coarse aspect is rejected, without the spirit however being completely "tamed" as a result. It has not in any way lost contact with nature, it is and remains a giver of life, just as Shiva also loses nothing of his creative power. "The spirit that goes into the heart of man, or is awakened in it as the great *Kundalini* power, is the same spirit, whose fiery life flames over the beauty of the fields" (Hildegard von Bingen).

The Holy Spirit, like "Wisdom," breaks through all artificial rules, breaks open all encrustations and enables us to go beyond ordinary slow discursive thinking, in which we normally spend our sad days like moles in their dark passages. It destroys the small-town politics of the ego and is the actual opener of God's kingdom, in which all separating fences and walls are torn down. Sri Aurobindo rightly expresses the elation of the spirit, whose nature is above all Ananda (spiritual joy), when he writes to a *Sadhaka*: "Be less logically narrow. Expand more. Swim out of the pool and into the open sea. Dance away to the horizon!"

But how often have we lost the ability to dance! We have become as stiff as a poker in a religious tradition, which has continually attempted to prescribe for the spirit when and at what time it has to blow. One may try to get out of this by saying that enthusiasm is always dangerous, that it easily gets out of control and in many cases it is only a spiritually disguised ego-trip. This may be true in individual cases - especially where purely mental-emotional phenomena are confused with true spirituality; but one must not pour the baby out with the bath water. Isolated cases of

misdirected enthusiasm are not such a great pity as a general drying up of spirituality. In spite of its powerful spray, the spirit has the sensitivity of a woman; the lively breath of *Shakti* quickly draws back when it sees that it is unwanted. Of course the bustle of a religious community can apparently impressively progress externally without this breath - but what use is all that, when one has driven away the real giver of life? Spirituality is not possible without it, without the experience of the spirit. Baptism and confirmation can only give a weak signal, just like all ceremony: a pointer towards experience, which is still lacking. "Tomorrow's pious man will be a 'mystic,' someone who has 'experienced' something, or he will not exist any more," wrote the Catholic theologian Karl Rahner, who cannot be suspected of too great uncontrolled enthusiasm.

The spirit is *Chit-Shakti*, the dynamic aspect of divine consciousness. For us this is again an indicator that the female motherly aspect, which is expressed in *Shakti*, is in no way so muffled and unconscious as many male philosophers believed. The well known Chinese distinction between Yin and Yang - in which Yin represents the female, earthly, dark, passive, heavy, negative and damp, while Yang represents the male, heavenly, bright, active and positive has indeed a certain justification in the world of archetypes, but it would be quite contrary to the *Tao* and in no way according to the spirit, if one wanted to make these characteristics permanently static. The female also has something bright, flashing and masterful about it. It can become sunny and embodies above all the intuitive creative power which often comes to notice through its agility, while "masculine" logical thinking often appears ponderous.

Above all, it is more than questionable, when male psychologists and philosophers also want to substantiate metaphysically their prejudice against the female. These allegedly

“eternal” truths are not conserved like gold bars in some platonic heaven, they have grown up, they have matured in a rather feminine way in a patriarchal society and are in no way more valid than the “biological” truths of earlier scholars, from those from which philosophers and doctors of the Church such as Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas derived their theories of the inferiority of woman, whom they regarded as a failed man.

In the *Maya* play of up and down, high and low, etc. the rolls are never fixed for ever. The human being is not a being established forever, but is always involved in becoming, he is capable of transcendence. He has entered the field of history, in which everything is still “open.” The present-day women’s emancipation movement and the man’s consciousness of his feminine depths are perhaps just the harbingers of a coming revolution, in which all the traditional hierarchies will break up. Such a revolution could involve purely destructive characteristics, but when it takes place under the banner of the life-giving spirit and *Shakti*, under the banner of renewal and transformation, it will open a really new age. Because this spirit of wisdom, which combines within itself motherliness and boldness, teaches us not to regard a human being as a cold reality, neither man nor woman; it teaches us to look at the potential that is still within the human being. Anyone who in this case sets up established hierarchies of the sexes and even derives some “rights” for himself from it, only shows that he is not yet caught up by this spirit. The latter can then also appear to him in the form of the black Kali, whose often fearful laughter not only forces itself on us from the depths, but often enough and unexpectedly, suddenly, from on high.

(to be continued)

## Milarepa

---

For every sincere sadhaka the life of Milarepa, the great *yogi* and poet of Tibet, is highly instructive and inspiring on account of his indefatigable service to his Guru, his fervent renunciation, his indomitable will and unswerving perseverance to attain the One True Goal of life. From the abundance of most amazing experiences interwoven with beautiful songs which have been translated even in different Western languages, I can give here only a few glimpses. So very fantastic his life-story may appear in our technical age, one must however assume it to be authentic, for it was written down by his chief disciple Rechung, as told by Milarepa himself.

Born in 1052 A.D. in a nobleman's family as the son of a very learned tradesman in Kyanga-Tsa near the frontier of Nepal, Milarepa and his younger sister Peta were tended with great care and love during their early childhood. But, when he was only seven years old, his father died, leaving his family and his estate in the care of some relatives, until Milarepa would be of age and able to look himself after everything. The two relatives immediately divided the whole property among themselves, without leaving anything whatsoever to the widow and her two children. From now onwards this poor family had to endure an uninterrupted series of sufferings so much so, that they became more starved and miserable from day to day.

Finally, when Milarepa was fifteen years old and there was no hope left of recovering his property, his mother, with the help of her own relations, sent him away for education to a popular Lama of the Redcap Sect. During this period it happened

that once he unknowingly offended his mother deeply. Afterwards he felt so much remorse that he promised her to do everything for her that she wished. Embittered and in utter despair about their unending misery, she told him to go and learn Black Magic and destroy their treacherous relations with all their possessions. True to his promise, he did so and shattered their house and crops whereby many people lost their lives.

After the first wild triumph of revenge had blown over, the thought of all the people he had killed, aroused increasing horror and remorse in Milarepa, and along with it awoke an irresistible longing for a religious life. His teacher of Black Magic to whom he had returned, had himself come to realize the illusoriness of worldly life and heard therefore full of sympathy Milarepa's desire. He advised him to go to the famous Marpa the Translator, as there was a karmic connection between them. Milarepa said later on to his disciples: "On hearing this name Marpa the Translator my mind was filled with an inexpressible feeling of delight and a thrill went through my whole body, setting in motion every hair, while tears started from my eyes, so strong was the feeling of faith aroused within me. All along the way I was possessed by but one idea; When shall I set eyes upon my Guru? When shall I behold his face?"

Marpa, a disciple of the Indian Saint Naropa, had travelled several times to India to acquire precious Tantric Texts and translate them into Tibetan language. Besides he had been installed by his Guru Naropa as head of the Khapgyutpa Sect, founded by Naropa's Guru Tilopa, the teachings of which are a combination of Mahayana Buddhism, Tantrism and the old Tibetan Bon cult. Reading them, one scarcely can notice any difference from Hinduistic Tantrism based on *Vedanta*, were it not that their Tutelary Deity is the Buddha Dorje-Chang, i.e. Vajra Dhara.

When Milarepa finally reached Marpa's residence at Lhobrak, he immediately fell at Marpa's feet saying: "Oh Precious Guru, I am a great sinner and have come here to offer body, speech, and mind to Thee. I pray Thee to provide me with food, clothing and spiritual instructions and enable me to obtain liberation in this very lifetime." Pleased with his offering of body, speech and mind, Marpa replied that he would either give him food and clothing or spiritual instructions, but not all three together. Without any hesitation Milarepa replied: "I have come to Thee, my Lama, for the Truth. I will find my food and clothing elsewhere." He then set out in search of alms, up and down the valley. When he had collected a sufficient big amount of barley, he exchanged some of it for a copper vessel and chrang (a bier made of barley) and offered all this at the feet of his Guru. But from now onward Damena, Marpa's wife, provided him very affectionately with all that he needed.

Being very keen on spiritual instructions, Milarepa had already several times asked his Guru for them, however in vain. One day Marpa told him to launch a hailstorm upon some robbers and destroy them, as they were molesting some disciples of his, when coming from far-away provinces, and afterwards he would give him the instructions. Milarepa, though horrified to have again to kill people, obeyed the command. The sight of the bloodshed filled him with unspeakable remorse and anguish. When he came back to Marpa and asked for his instructions, Marpa replied full of scorn and anger: "Must I give you the most Sacred Truth in return for thy evil deeds?" Then he ordered him to go and make good all the mischief and damage he had caused! Milarepa wept bitterly with disappointment and despair. And these were yet only the preliminaries.

Next morning Marpa came and told him kindly: "I fear, I was a little too hard on thee. Have patience and wait, and thou

shalt have the Teachings." He then took him to a mountain ridge and told him to build a circular house for his son at a certain place, and added that when it was finished, he would give him the Instructions. Milarepa started immediately with the work in high spirits. One day, when it was about half finished, Marpa came and suddenly said, that he had not well considered the matter. He ordered Milarepa not only to stop working, but to carry back all the stones from where he had taken them. This work done, Marpa took him to another ridge where he had now to build a crescent-shaped house. Once more he promised to give him the desired Instructions as soon as it was finished. Again, when it was half-finished, Marpa turned up and ordered Milarepa under some pretext to pull it down and to return the stones to their places. Next a triangular house was to be built and after this was taken to pieces, as before, a ten-storied quadrangular one and finally, when seven stories were completed, Marpa made him once more stop the work and start an annex with twelve pillars and a chapel.

But to carry sharp-edged stones for four houses to and fro, is more than any human body can stand. By the time Milarepa had carried back the stones of the third house, a big sore on his back had burst open. As he did not dare to mention it to his Guru, Damena went to her husband and asked him to have pity on the poor boy. Finally Marpa became softened, called Milarepa and gave him at least some temporal instructions with prayers, injunctions and vows. Furthermore, he narrated to him a story from the life of his own Guru Naropa. This filled Milarepa's heart with so much faith that he resolved to do whatsoever his Guru demanded. In spite of the sore on his back, he started immediately with the building of the quadrangular house. Meanwhile he had got a second and then a third sore and also the first one was not yet healed, so that finally his whole back was one big open wound

and he was simply unable to continue his work any more. On his request Marpa gave him permission to take some rest until his back was healed, however, not without telling him: "This is nothing to the trials and tribulations which were endured by my Lord Sri Naropa. He had to undergo in his body twelve greater and twelve lesser trials; twenty-four altogether."

But what were all these physical sufferings compared to the mental agony in which Milarepa was thrown again and again by not yet having received the so often promised instructions. How many other disciples had come from all over the country and had received initiation and instructions without any difficulties. But whenever on these occasions Milarepa had asked to be granted Initiation, he had only to endure Marpa's contempt and wrath and was thrown out with kicks and beating. In his despair he had already twice started to run away, several times he was on the point to kill himself, but always the revered Mother Damema came in the last moment to his rescue, comforting and encouraging him. There came, however, a day when even she saw no hope for him any more and therefore helped him, as soon as his back was healed, to escape with gifts out of her own possessions and a forged letter of recommendation sealed with Marpa's seal. Provided thus, she sent him to the foremost of Marpa's disciples, Ngogpa, to get initiation from him.

Due to the feigned letter with Marpa's seal, he was received heartily and after some time given initiation. Thereupon he retired in a cave and practised meditation according to the received teachings. But in spite of all assiduity on his Guru's part and Milarepa's own indefatigable perseverance, none of the usual signs of spiritual development could be noticed. The cause of it was, that the Initiation had been given without his real Guru's assent and blessings.

One day Ngogpa received a letter from Marpa, summoning him to the dedication of the ten-storied house, and requesting him to bring Milarepa back. One can imagine in what state of mind Milarepa was on hearing this. On his arrival Milarepa fortunately met first the revered Mother who was delighted to see him. Then he immediately went to Marpa to pay his respects. But as soon as he prostrated himself at his feet, Marpa turned his face to the opposite direction. When Milarepa then prostrated in that direction, Marpa again turned his face away. Finally Milarepa left the room greatly depressed. During the celebration and the following time Marpa apparently took no notice of him.

One day during a feast given to some of his disciples, Marpa was suddenly staring with fierce eyes at Ngogpa; then after a while he inquired: "What explanation hast thou to give for having conferred Initiation and the Truth upon this wicked person?" pointing to Milarepa. When Marpa learned about the forged letter and the other tokens that his wife had given to Milarepa, he seized a stick and jumped up in such a rage that his wife and Milarepa ran frightened from the room.

Outside, Milarepa broke completely down, possessed only by one thought - to kill himself. Ngogpa who had followed him, was just in time to hold him back, and then tried his best to calm and comfort him. Meanwhile also other disciples were running to and fro between Marpa's room and Milarepa. After a little while they told him, that Marpa had become quite mild again and was talking with his wife. And then Damema herself came to call Ngogpa and Milarepa to him. When all had taken their seats, Marpa began to point out the significance of all that had happened until now, revealing thus the inscrutable ways of a Guru. He said: "When we come to think well over matters, no one seems to deserve blame. Wishing that Great Sorcerer might be

absolved from his sins, I caused him to build the houses single-handed. The houses themselves symbolize the nature of the four types of action - the peaceful, the powerful, the fascinating, and the stern respectively.

As for Damema, she being a woman of more than usual maternal sympathy and pity, could not bear to see me ill-treat poor Great Sorcerer who seemed so willing, obedient and patient. So who could blame her for furnishing him with the forged letter, although it was a rather serious thing to do?

As for thee, Ngogpa, thou art not to blame, as thou didst not know that the letter was forged. As for thee, "Great Sorcerer thou art quite right in trying to obtain Religious Truth by every possible means. Had I had the chance of plunging this spiritual son of mine nine times into utter despair, he would have been cleansed of all his sins and would not have to be born again; he would have attained *Nirvana*. Ngogpa, having conferred Initiation upon him, I was deprived of filling him with despair for the ninth time, and therefore I was angered. But it was not like worldly anger. Religious anger is a thing apart; and in whatever form it may appear, it has the same object - to excite repentance and thereby to contribute to the spiritual development of the person. Now I am going to care for "Great Sorcerer" and give those Teachings and Initiation to him which I hold as dear as mine own heart."

Milarepa felt as in a dream which he wished would never come to an end. Bathed in tears of inexpressible joy, he prostrated himself at the feet of his Guru. And so did all the others present, beaming with smiles. In this happy mood they all took *Prasad*.

That very night all the elaborate Tantric rituals, preparatory to Initiation, were performed. Having erected the Demchog Mandate of sixty-two Deities and invoked them by the special Mantra of each to take their assigned seats within the

Mandala, Marpa pointed with his finger to the firmament above and said to Milarepa: "Look, those are called the Mandala of Actual Realities." Looking up, Milarepa beheld indeed Demchog, one of the Tutelary Deities of the Khargyutpa Sect, with all the other Deities inhabiting the different Holy Places seated round about him. Uniting their voices with that of the Guru, in one grand chorus, they conferred upon him the initiatory name, Sri Vikasita Vajra

Hereafter Marpa gave him further Instructions and explanations of different esoteric Teachings of *Yoga* and Tantric Texts. Thus encouraged and gladdened, there began a very happy period of Milarepa's life under the personal guidance of his Guru.

Soon after his Initiation Milarepa retired for meditation into a nearby mountain-cave, and his Guru supplied him personally in a most generous way with food and all other necessities. There Milarepa was sitting motionless, with a lighted lamp on his head, day and night, until the light went out. Thus he spent eleven months.

One day he was called to his Guru to report the results of his meditation. What Milarepa told in reply is the gist of most Religious Teachings in the East, as; Discrimination between the Real and the Unreal; having found out what the chief end of our life on earth really is, the necessity of a "perfectly well-accomplished Guru to realize by his Grace the Supreme Goal." Having found such a Guru, wholehearted obedience, surrender and faith in him are indispensable. There is further the necessity of renunciation, i.e., "to sacrifice all bodily ease and luxuries and to be willing to sacrifice even life itself." Milarepa furthermore stressed that "the first effort in concentration or meditation must be made in a compassionate mood, with the aim of dedicating the merit of these efforts to the Universal Good.

During the following period of seclusion and meditation in the same cave Milarepa had two dreams. The first one was a prophetic dream regarding the future development of the Khargyutpa Sect and Milarepa's own life, as Marpa interpreted its deep symbolic meaning, and which later on proved to be true in every single detail. In the second dream Milarepa saw his native place, deserted and in ruins, his mother dead and his sister roaming begging around. When he awoke his pillow was drenched with tears and he felt an irresistible longing for his old mother and his sister whom he had not seen for many years. He was unable to meditate any more and therefore went to his Guru to ask his permission to go there. As he found him asleep, he sang in a gentle voice an appeal to him. When Marpa awoke, he gave reluctantly his consent and added: "Know that finding me in sleep when thou didst come, is an omen that we shall not meet again in this life." Then Marpa prepared a mandala and imparted to Milarepa the last and highest Initiations. In course of this celebration Marpa showed himself in the forms of different deities as a parting gift for Milarepa.

On the morning of his departure the whole party of thirteen persons accompanied him up to a hilltop and there Milarepa took leave from Marpa and his wife, all three of them pouring alternately out their overflowing love and pangs of separation in songs. Then, having prostrated before both of them, Milarepa departed. Due to his mastery of Pranayama, he covered the distance to his native place in only three days, which normally required a journey of several months. On the way he learned from some shepherds that his mother was indeed dead, her bones lying unburied in the ruins of the house.

*(to be continued)*

Reprinted From *Vedanta Kesari*, May-June 1959

---

## A Comparative Study on the Commentary on the Brahma Sutras (continued)

---

### Conclusion

*Brahman* is eternal, immutable, without a beginning or end. It is beyond the senses, mind, and speech, and so it cannot be described in words: "There the eyes cannot reach, nor speech nor mind" (*Kena Up.* I. 3); "Whence speech returns with the mind without reaching It" (*Taitt. Up.*, II. 9). Therefore nothing positive can be predicated of *Brahman*. Even the Scriptures give but an indirect hint at It. The utmost that can be said of It is that It is Existence, Knowledge, Bliss Infinite. Even this is only by way of a concession. The best description, however, of It is, "Not this, not this," that is, rejecting from It everything which is limited by the senses and the mind, and then what is left is *Brahman*.

As long as the mind functions and reasons, one is within the sphere of relativity, but when it stops functioning and is annihilated, then one attains *Samadhi* and realizes *Brahman*. When one tries to describe this Absolute, to express It in terms of thought and speech, It ceases to be the Absolute and becomes phenomenal. As such the descriptions given by different persons are likely to differ according to the standpoint or plane of consciousness from which they describe the Reality. All these descriptions are real so far as they go, for they are descriptions of the one Reality though they may differ among themselves even as the photographs of the sun taken from different distances by one who approaches it are real, being photographs of the same sun and yet they would vary from one another. When a person describes the Absolute from the material plane, - when he is conscious of the body - God, soul, and Nature appear as three

different entities, God being the ruler of the other two. When he sees It from the mental plane - when one is conscious of himself as a *Jiva* - he sees the three entities as one organic unity, and realizes himself as a part of God. But when one rises to the spiritual plane and is conscious of himself as pure spirit, then he realizes that he and the Absolute are one. To start with, God appears as an extra-cosmic Being; then he is seen as the God immanent in the universe as its inner ruler; and finally one ends by identifying the soul with God. From dualism we go to qualified monism and finally end in monism. The views expressed by the various commentators are beautifully harmonized by Sri Ramakrishna, the great prophet of the modern age on the basis of his realization as follows:

"That which is *Brahman* is *Sakti* and That again is the Mother.... After attaining Perfect Knowledge one realizes that they are not different. They are the same, like the gem and its brilliance.... But you cannot realize this non-duality before the attainment of Perfect Knowledge. Attaining Perfect Knowledge, one goes into *Samadhi*, beyond the twenty-four cosmic principles.

A man cannot describe in words what he feels in *Samadhi*. Coming down, he can give just a hint about it. I come down a hundred cubits as it were, when I speak after *Samadhi*. *Brahman* is beyond the injunctions of the *Vedas* and. cannot be described. There neither "I" nor "you" exists."

"Again, when God changes the state of my mind, when He brings my mind down to the plane of the Relative, I perceive that it is He who has become all these - the Creator, *Maya*, the living beings, and the universe.

"Again, sometimes He shows me that He has created the universe and all living beings. He is the Master and the universe His garden."

"As long as a man is conscious of 'I' and 'you' and as long as he feels that it is he, who prays or meditates, so long will he feel that God is listening to his prayers and that God is a Person. Then he must say, 'O God, Thou art the Master and I am Thy servant. Thou art the Whole and I am a part of Thee. Thou art the Mother and I am Thy child.' At that time there exists a feeling of difference: 'I am one and Thou art another.' It is God Himself who makes us feel this difference... As long as one is aware of this difference, one must accept *Sakti*, the Personal God.

"As long as a man must see the sun in the water of his 'I-consciousness' and has no other means of seeing It, as long as he has no means of seeing the real Sun except through Its reflection, so long the reflected sun alone is one hundred per cent real to him. As long as the 'I' is real, so long is the reflected sun one hundred per cent real. That reflected sun is nothing but the Primal Energy.... That which is *Brahman* with attributes is verily *Brahman* without attributes; that which is *Brahman* is verily *Sakti*. One realizes this non-duality after the attainment of Perfect Knowledge."

The *Upanishads*, as already stated at the very beginning, do not teach any particular doctrine. They teach various doctrines suited to different people at different stages of spiritual evolution. They are not contradictory, but based on the principle of individual fitness for receiving the truth. The aspirants are taken step by step to the ultimate truth, from dualism to qualified monism and finally to monism. "That Thou Art" is the last word of the *Upanishads* in religion. The *Brahma-Sutras* also are as comprehensive as the *Upanishads* and contain reference to these various stages. Hence commentators, when they claim that their commentary alone is correct, do not reflect Badariayana's view truly. □

Reprinted from *Prabuddha Bharata*, July 1953

## The Two Banks of the River

---

St. Gregory (Lebedev) was a new martyr of Russia who died at the hands of the atheist Communist regime. Here he was speaking with regard to the story about the Gergesenes in Matthew 28-34 and Mark 1-17, which had just been read out.

### Sermon on the 5th week of Pentecost

**B**eloved Brothers! Cast your mind over and take into your heart the Gospel reading you have just heard. “And when He (the Lord) came to the other side...” – this is how today’s reading begins (Matthew 8, 28).

A man’s life is like a river, it has two banks. We were on one bank with the Lord. The Lord showed us this right bank of life, the bank of right living. This green emerging faith is power. Faith is power, like a life-giving spring, emerging Providence and feeding on elements of God’s eternity.

You must understand what being on the green bank of life is. The Lord spoke of it during the last two weeks in His sublime words concerning Providence and the power of faith. Now He crosses over to the other bank. “There met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs” (Matthew 8,28). Or, as the evangelist Mark says, “there met him out of the tombs a man” (Mark 5,2).

The Lord shows us the other bank of the river. The one we left was the bank of life, but this one, obviously, is the bank of death. Its inhabitants live among the tombs. Here all the time, not part of it, there is one cemetery. So the evangelist says: “And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of

the tombs a man." "Immediately" - as though some inhabitants of the tombs lived here and you would not meet anyone else.

Obviously this is just the land of the dead. Its inhabitants, as it appears, were slaves of death, slaves of evil: they were possessed with devils; the lord and master of their lives was a devil and was evil. This means that the other bank of life is a realm of evil and its inhabitants are people, who have sold themselves into the slavery of evil and sin. Sin and evil are one and the same thing. Today the Lord shows us this kingdom.

Obviously Christ, by the direct confrontation of the two banks of life, wished by the confrontation of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil to impress on our souls images of the two kingdoms, so as to awaken us sleepers to remain for ever on the green bank of life.

In order to win us over for ever remaining on the green bank of life, the Lord shows us a terrifying and repulsive picture of evil. He expresses the kingdom of evil in the vivid picture of its inhabitant - a man possessed by a devil. This is a kingdom devoid of life. The man possessed is the creature of evil, he lives among the dead: he came out of a cavern with the tombs of the dead. He lives in the midst of rocky mountains, "he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying," as the evangelist Mark writes about him (Mark 5,5).

The world of death... What kind of life does he have on the rocky heights? No trees, no grass, no flowers! Wild animals do not venture there, and the fluttering of birds does not soften the picture of lifelessness. An uninhabited wilderness... The silence of tombs... The gloom of decay... The kingdom of death!

This kingdom of death on the slopes of the mountains represents the towering nature of the human self, which, like a mountain, obscures the heavens. Man himself is the sole master of his life, and himself carves his way. He himself builds his life;

he wants to lean on the Babylonian tower of his self on the earth, lift it up under himself and subject the very heaven to himself. The steep slopes of the mountains are the towering human self. And around bare cliffs of self-love, destroying all around it, are walls of egotistical exclusiveness, narrow gullies of sin, ravines of mere lies and untruths, precipices of deadly falls.

Such is the bank of evil – the land of lifelessness and annihilation, where man loses human qualities and in egotistic, animal clinging to life, becomes an animal, fighting for himself and annihilating his rival. The Lord also thus shows people of another bank, people of evil. They came out “exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.” (Matthew 8,28).

Is it not true that life without God is merciless egoism? On the lifeless path of evil there is just destruction; man himself dies, everything human perishes. The evangelist Mark points out this destruction of life: “And no man (the Gadarene possessed by the devil) could bind him, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces” (Mark 5, 3-4).

The self-loving man does not tolerate anything that stands in his way. He throws back and destroys anything that does not lead to the world of evil. Anything that is alien to that world provokes hatred in him, and the man, like one possessed, breaks all connections with the life of goodness. He breaks the laws of honour, conscience and duty. He breaks family ties, destroys social connections and finally turning to God, breaks His holy commandments, the binding commandments of God’s law. Such is the destructive path of evil. But can it be that it is all right for the man who is devoted to evil? Not at all. The same evangelist Mark bears witness to this: “And always, night and day, he was

in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones." (Mark 5,5).

Continual concern for the past history of one's egotistical construction, continual dissatisfaction with what one has acquired and possesses, the continual pursuit of the elusive, are "necessary" for life. The endless circle of dissatisfaction, insufficiency of life and some incalculable surrounding emptiness in spite of every effort burdens life with continual problems. And, finally, the cry of emptiness, a continual cry day and night, like an impression of rejection and evidence of joylessness and absence of repose.

Brothers! Think it over, how striking are these short evangelical utterances, depicting the life of evil, the life on the other bank. According to the Gospel, it is a life of destruction, extirpation of the man himself, an endless struggle of egoisms, the destruction of the lawful bonds of human society and a life of oppressive emptiness in spite of all the restless and painfulness of creating something and somehow becoming independent in life.

If this striking characteristic does not sufficiently disturb you, or if you, led by God to the other bank of the river of life, do not understand this work of God and do not comprehend the meaning of what is revealed on that bank, and if its sombre picture does not sufficiently disturb you, I shall take you closer. What do you think - is the kingdom of evil far away from you? What do you think - on what mysterious continent does the terrifying path of decay and death wind? Is your sight dead? Can it not see the rock face of death? Is your ear not disturbed by animal cries of battle, and does it not hear the groans of people striking themselves against the sharp stones? Oh, you would be happy, if all that were far away from you!

Brothers! And yet it is near, quite close. Do we not at every moment, like blind men, inexplicably approach the bank of evil? Each sin, however insignificant it appears to us, throws us over into the world of evil, because sin is evil and with each sin we become subjects of the kingdom of evil. Even with a small sin we expose ourselves to downfall and death.

If you remember that in us the element of decomposition is strong and that sin, like a malignant tumour, has the tendency to quickly expand and spread, and on the other hand, do not forget that in the kingdom of evil, even in the case of the smallest resistance against him, the ruler of that kingdom will send forth scores of his angels against you, so that you may be poisoned by his poisonous mists and will lose your way, wrapped in their shroud, so you will understand that not in vain does the apostle warn: "Look how you walk in danger." You will understand that the kingdom of evil is right near you, that at every moment you are threatened with the danger of becoming a tributary of that kingdom, and then its prisoner. You will understand that the kingdom of evil with all its lifeless paths of death and decay, with all its precipitous falls, with its icy breath of death - is side by side with you, and that you are walking on a sharp knife, you can with your spiritual instability at any moment fall into its embrace.

You then feel that you yourself are spinning round the tomb of life, that the dead rock faces and huge stones after all also constrain and determine your life. Then you feel such an "obsession," when the ground slips away under a man's feet and people are drawn by some strange and evil desire like its instruments or wretched slaves. Then you will feel that "obsession" (demonical possession) is not at all such a rare occurrence in life. And then the groans of the prisoners of evil will open your insensitive ears, and the nightmarish sighs of evil will not give you rest either by day or by night. Over them hangs

the oppressive joy of the prince of evil at the fact that on his bank of death there has appeared one more human soul. So the bank of death is not at all far away and one cannot pass it by with indifference.

So please understand that the Lord led you over to the other side of the river of life so that you might see the true face of that path, about which you continually wander, as though you did not notice its deadly danger. The Lord wants you, when you see the true face of the path of death and feel the nearness of its deathly breath, to abandon with a shudder the deadly rocks, rush to seize the hand of God, so that it will again support you and strengthen you on the green bank of life.

And in today's Gospel reading the Lord suggests that He will strengthen a man on the right path of life, because, however terrifying evil may be, the Lord remains the sole Ruler and Master of life. This thought concerning the Lord as the Master of life is revealed from one of the details in the story about the man possessed by a devil, who, "when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him" (Mark 5,6). Here is an obvious acknowledgement that the power of evil is subordinate to God. It sees Him, recognises Him as the highest Ruler of life and trembling bows down before Him.

The evangelist Matthew expresses the same thought concerning the subordination of evil to Christ, when he records the words of the men possessed, who turn to the Lord: "And behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (Matthew 8,29). And here is the confession of Christ as being the Son of God and the acknowledgement that He has power to demand account from the angels of evil and subject them to suffering, as a retribution for evil. God's power is obvious:

Christ commands the evil spirit to leave its captives and heals the men possessed (Matthew 8, 31-33).

Brothers, you saw those rocky crags of the deadly path of evil. May they not have been shown to you in vain! Shudder at the captivating and destroying evil. Shudder at the "possession," when a man is a slave and is drawn to the will of another. Shudder! The world of evil is right near you!

Beware! Do not go about blindly. Do not go about with indifference, do not go about naively. The land of evil is covered with mantraps, and in it there is no mercy for anyone. Have pity on yourself, defend yourself! Not only do not go over from the bank of life to the bank of death, but do not even stumble on it. Brothers, do not even stumble on it! The land of evil is covered in traps. And if due to weakness, by the seductive influence of evil, you stumble on it, take care not to stay on the bank of death. Seek God's support! Take God's hand, take the loving providential hand of God! Devote all your strength of faith to it, and it will pull you away from the icy path of death and will put you back again on the flowering bank of life.

Do not let go of this strong all-powerful hand! And, if the Lord by His foreknowledge and by your weakness does not command you to stay with Him, just as he did not permit the possessed man, when he was healed, to stay with him (Mark 5, 18-19), then you, staying in the world, in your worldly situation, will however never forget the commandment given by the Lord to that man He had healed. Keep it in your heart, so that you may not again stumble on to the bank of evil, a boundless devotion to Christ because of "what He did for you and how He forgave you." Abhor the very pretext for a further fall! And always love Christ, who is ever loving and ever saving you! Amen. □

## The Nature of Time in Vedanta and Christianity

---

The difference in the nature of time between the Indian and Western traditions can best be described by an anecdote regarding a conversation between Swami Vivekananda and Robert Ingersoll. The Swami said: "Ingersoll once said to me, 'I believe in making the most out of this world, in squeezing the orange dry, because this world is all we are sure of.' I replied, 'I know a better way to squeeze the orange of this world than you do; and I get more out of it. I know I cannot die, so I am not in a hurry. I know that there is no fear, so I enjoy the squeezing. I have no duty, no bondage of wife and children and property; and so I can love all men and women. Everyone is God to me. Think of the joy of loving man as God! Squeeze your orange this way and get ten thousand fold more out of it. Get every single drop!'"

It seems to us that what Swami Vivekananda (Swamiji) said about the difference between the way Ingersoll thought of squeezing an orange dry and his own way of doing so, reflects how the two cultures, Western and Indian, look upon the nature of time. Time to a Westerner is a resource, which like any other resource, labour or capital, is scarce. A moment ago that which was ten o'clock is dead and so are we; and everything else in nature is dying. Therefore, since each one of us has a limited span of life in which we have to accomplish so many things, we must make the most of our time; one has to use one's time as a businessman would use any resource for producing things. Swamiji said that he knew that he could not die, and therefore he was not in a hurry; he did not believe that time was just a resource that he had to economise. Of course, he did not mean to waste

this phenomenal time; but he had another, and much broader, perspective about time. He looked at time as endless and infinite. Therefore, he wanted to enjoy the act of squeezing the orange without caring to measure the use of the phenomenal time against the result he would get in squeezing.

Before we go into the depth of what Swamiji meant, let us try to understand his assertion, "he knew that he could not die." The clue to understanding these two statements relies on the assumptions that the two people made with regard to the question that every one of us should always ask ourselves: "Who am I" and "What is my destiny?" Ingersoll and the people from the non-Indian tradition assume that we are this body-mind complex only; I am a physician or a teacher, a man or a woman, Indian or American, and so forth; and death means the end of everything. That is why any person belonging to any of the monotheistic religions would be in a hurry to do what he thinks has to be done. Swamiji, a true Vedantist and a monk at that, however, did not identify himself with his body-mind complex. *Vedanta*, the underlying philosophy of Hinduism, asserts that our real essence is *Brahman*, which is the same as *Atman* (or the Self).

The *Upanishads* say that *Brahman* is of the nature of Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss Absolute. *Atman*, the *Bhagavad-Gita* (2.23) says, is that which no weapon can cut or fire burn, no water can wet or wind can dry. In other words, the Self is deathless - beyond time - It is eternal, pure and perfect. Says Swamiji: "It (*Atman*) always existed; there was never a time when it did not exist, because if the soul (Self) did not exist, where was time? Time is in the soul; it is when the soul reflects its power on the mind and the mind thinks, that time comes. Once someone asked Sri Ramakrishna: "Sir, what is Knowledge?" His reply was: "It is to know that God is the only Reality and that all else is

unreal. That which is Real is also called *Brahman*. It has another name: *Kala*, Time....There is a saying, 'O brother, how many things come into being in Time and disappear in Time!' That which sports with *Kala* is called *Kali*. She is the Primal Energy. *Kala* and *Kali*, *Brahman* and *Shakti*, are indivisible."

*Kali*, of course, is the presiding deity of this phenomenal world, which Sri Ramakrishna called the Divine Mother, popularly called the Personal God in every religion. In the *Bhagavad-Gita* (11:32) Sri Krishna says: "I am time, the destroyer of all; I have come to consume the world. Even without your participation, all the warriors gathered here will die."

One may ask isn't there some contradiction between what Sri Ramakrishna calls Time with regard to *Brahman* as "Existence Absolute" and what Sri Krishna says about the world-destroying time in this verse of the *Gita*? We don't think so, for, in this latter case it is the relative existence of the phenomenal world. *Brahman* is Absolute, and is beyond time, space and causation. "All attempts of language, calling Him father, or brother, or our dearest friend, are attempts to objectify God, which cannot be done. He is the Eternal Subject of everything." So, *Brahman* is Impersonal God, while Sri Krishna is Personal God. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that *Kali* and Krishna are one and the same. Time, too, is both absolute and also relative. In other words, *Brahman* alone is Real or permanent, while this world of names and forms is unreal, apparent or transient. So, on the one hand every being is subject to change and death, but on the other hand, every one is beyond death, immortal! "The existence of the eternal now," says Aldous Huxley, "is sometimes denied on the ground that a temporal (transient) order cannot coexist with another order which is non-temporal... This objection, it is obvious, would be valid if the non-temporal order were of a mechanical substance,

or if the changeless substance were possessed of spatial and material qualities."

*Brahman* (*Kala*, Time) or *Atman*, is not like any other material substance, which could be cut or modified. The verse 2:24 of the *Bhagavad-Gita* further reinforces the assertion made in the previous verse quoted earlier, and categorically asserts that the Self (*Atman*) is eternal. Says Huxley: "But the God who comes so terribly as Time also exists timelessly as the Godhead, as *Brahman*, whose essence is *Sat*, *Chit*, *Ananda*, Being, Awareness, Bliss..."

Swamiji also told Ingersoll that he had no bondage of wife, children and property, and loved everyone equally. Being established in the Self, he saw the same Self in one and all. Can we, the householders, rise to the same exalted state? The answer is yes; for, he himself once said: "Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy - by one, or more, or all of these - and be free." So, we too can realize the Self, provided we mentally renounce our selfish desires for the fruit of action, says the *Bhagavad-Gita* (18.11), and also Sri Ramakrishna in the Gospel. Therefore, we householders, must do all our duties in the spirit of detachment, forgetting "I," "me" and "mine," reminding ourselves that every thing belongs to God and we are His or Divine Mother's trustees.

From what we have said above, it follows that behind this time-bound body-mind complex there is something permanent, *Atman* or the Self, which is unborn and also deathless. Can we say the same thing about this universe of names and forms as a whole? Yes, certainly. Said Sri Ramakrishna, "It is He alone who has become the universe, living beings, and the twenty-four cosmic principles. When He is actionless, I call Him *Brahman*;

when He creates, preserves, and destroys, I call Him *Sakti*. *Brahman* and *Sakti* are not different from each other. Water is water, whether it is still or moving." While the universe, like the ocean of consciousness is eternal, its contents - waves of different forms - are subject to change. Once again, while Christianity and other monotheistic religions believe that almighty God created this universe some five or six thousand years ago, and He will certainly end the universe as it is; for anything that has a beginning, also has an end.

Unlike this theology, Hindus believe in what the modern-day scientists have come to accept, that this world of names and forms emerged through the process of evolution. Evolutionists don't accept the story of Adam and Eve being our ancestors. They don't accept that God first created man out of nothing, as it were, and then created woman out of a man's rib. Logically speaking, every effect, like the creation of man, has to be preceded by a cause. Therefore, nothing could come out of nothing!

Out of what has this universe been produced then? Swamiji answered that question on the evolution of our universe in a lecture on Cosmos - "The Macrocosm," delivered in New York on January 19, 1896. He said: "This universe came into existence from the preceding fine form.... Out of what has the tree been produced? Out of the seed, and the whole of the tree was there in the seed. Just as the tree came out of the seed and became manifest as a tree, so also the whole of this universe has been created out of this very universe existing in a very minute form. It has been made manifest now. It will go back to that minute form, and again will be manifest.... This coming out of the fine (seed) and becoming gross (tree), simply changing the arrangement of its parts, as it were, is what in modern times is called evolution.... We have to go one step further, and what is that?... Every evolution is preceded by an involution. The seed is

the father of the tree, but another tree was itself the father of the seed.... The whole of this universe was present in the cosmic fine universe. We see then, that nothing can be created out of nothing. Everything exists through eternity, and will exist through eternity.... This involution and evolution is going on throughout the whole nature. The whole series of evolution beginning with the lowest manifestation of life (like amoeba or mollusks) and reaching up to the highest, the most perfect man, must have been the involution of something else. (And what is that? It is *Brahman*, or God, Impersonal and Absolute)...from the protoplasm at one end to the perfect man at the other, and this whole series is one life. In the end we find the perfect man (The Buddha, Jesus Christ, Ramakrishna, a Yogi), so in the beginning it must have been the same. Therefore, the protoplasm was the involution of the highest intelligence, the perfect humankind."

From the perspective of *Vedanta*, this whole universe comes out of *Brahman*, (which is of the nature of Consciousness,) lives in *Brahman* and goes back to *Brahman*. Just as each soul is deathless, death being the death of the body, in the same way the universe as a whole is eternal. The difference between this view and the evolutionist's view is that the latter doesn't accept God as the original source from which this universe was evolved. So, both of these views accept the same logic that the effect is the cause manifested, but while science says that the successively higher life has come from lower life, "*Vedanta* regards the whole evolutionary process as progressive evolution of structure and form, and a constantly increasing manifestation of the infinite Self within. It is the evolution of matter and manifestation of spirit."

Unlike science, *Vedanta* asserts that our essence is spiritual, not matter. The *Srimad Bhagavatam*, reiterates this view of the evolutionary process and humankind's uniqueness in the following statement: "The divine One, having projected (evolved)

from out of itself, with His own inherent power, various forms such as trees, reptiles, cattle, birds, insects and fish, was not satisfied at heart with forms such as these. He then projected the human form endowed with the capacity to realize *Brahman* (the universal Self of all), and became extremely happy."

Notice, the divine One did not create, but projected from out of itself through its *Shakti* or primordial energy, the world of many forms. The divine One to have created all this would imply that it created out of nothing. Since effect is the cause manifested, only nothing will come out of nothing. Interestingly, *Vedanta* doesn't say that the whole evolutionary process is now a thing of the past. Rather, it asserts that further evolution would be in quality and not in the appearance of a new species. By this we mean that apart from man becoming more and more socially responsible, he will also become progressively more spiritual, a goal, which might take more than one life. However, according to the Christian belief, human destiny has to find its fulfilment in this very life. That is why we said that a Christian, and even an agnostic Ingersoll, having been nurtured in the Western culture, has no time to lose, what has to be done has to be done in this very life on earth. For, the God of monotheistic religions is extra cosmic who like an absolute monarch, keeps a keen watch over His people; anyone going against His will gets punished after this life.

A Hindu, however, has faith in the notion of many lives or reincarnation. So he (or she) takes time, or life for that matter, without much seriousness, giving the impression of a lack of interest; he is not in a hurry as he has infinite time to work out his destiny. Having said that, it would be a mistake, however, both morally and spiritually, to ignore this life or discount it as of no consequence. How one lives one's life from day today

determines one's character and will determine what he or she will become.

For a Hindu, there is no extra cosmic God; he or she believes in making his or her own destiny. That leads us to the doctrine or law of *Karma*, which is the process through which one works out one's destiny. Literally *karma* means action, but it has a much broader connotation because it also includes thought, word and deed. According to the *Gita* every person must act according to his nature, and every act must have its appointed effect. The effect lies inherent in the cause, as a tree lies potentially hidden in the seed. This doctrine of *karma* asserts that whatever we do - thoughts we think, words we speak, or actions we perform - will have its consequences either in this life or in the lives to come, because our present life may not be long enough for all our karmas to work themselves out. So at death these unripe karmas, or actions that have not yet yielded their fruit, called *prarabdha* karmas, give the soul its initial start in the next birth. There is a second kind of past actions, *sanchita* or stored-up karmas, which will bear fruit in a future life. A third kind of actions, those performed after the attainment of self-knowledge, realization of God or *Brahman*, bear no result or fruit, because the doer is entirely free from motive. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say that a perfect dancer cannot take a wrong step; or an expert musician cannot play a wrong note. So also a perfect man or woman will do everything to perfection, and the question of getting another chance does not arise. In short, according to this law, we alone are responsible for the pleasures and pains we experience: as we sow, so shall we reap.

A corollary of the law of *karma* is the doctrine of reincarnation. The death of a body does not settle all one's accounts, for all the credit and debit balances are forwarded to the next page of the ledger. This means that we are born again

and again to work out all our stored up karmas that could not fructify in the present life; nor were all the karmas that we incurred in the present life able to bear their fruit.

The doctrine of *Karma* itself is an indispensable corollary of the immortality of the soul, for without it a beginning of the soul would have to be assumed. The doctrine of rebirth is more probable than any alternative hypothesis because it explains many phenomena of life that otherwise would not be understood. When a person dies with a strong unfulfilled desire that cannot be satisfied on earth, his mind strongly yearns to fulfill the unsatisfied desire. It is this unfulfilled desire that eventually brings the person back to take a new birth or reincarnate. Reincarnation gives such a person another chance to gradually evolve spiritually by gaining various valuable experiences he or she acquires in his different incarnations.

Eventually, when one reaches the acme of spiritual progress through God realization, one goes beyond all desires and becomes eternally free; for him there is no more birth or death, he becomes a *jivan-mukta* (free while living in the body).

Culture is the way people live and act, their values, secular and spiritual, and how they relate to other people and the world as a whole. An upward movement of culture occurs when people feel interconnected with every member of society in the spirit of brotherly love and fellow feeling. Then follows a downward movement, when everyone is for himself. There is a feeling of separateness from their fellow men. There is no concern among people in following any moral code.

So when the pendulum swings low and truth and righteousness are forgotten, the necessity arises for the coming of an *avatara* or incarnation of God. An *avatara*, which literally means a descent of God, is not just a reformer; but provides a new system of values and teaches humanity by living those values by

his own example. The *Gita* doctrine of the avatar is parallel and almost identical with the conception of the Word made flesh, "full of grace and truth," as we find it in the Gospel according to St. John, which says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." However, there is an important difference: whereas St. John identifies Jesus of Nazareth as the "only begotten Son of God" (John, iii. 16), in the *Gita* it is clearly stated that God is made flesh many times, in different ages and in different forms.

Yet again, just as according to orthodox Christianity we have just one life to live on this earth, while for the Hindus we are born again and again until we attain liberation, in the same way with Christianity there can be one and only one incarnation, and Jesus is that one. Krishna, the teacher of the *Gita* openly declares himself to be an Incarnation of the Godhead, asserting that he appears whenever he is needed upon earth. His birth, however, was not like that of Arjuna and other embodied souls like us, who were born in ignorance, and remain under the bondage of *Maya*. The birth of a Krishna or a Christ, is the result of free choice; for the Incarnation is not under *Maya*'s control, but *Maya* is under his control, and he does not live in ignorance but lives in full consciousness of his divinity. Sri Krishna says: "I am the birthless, the deathless, Lord of all that breathes. I seem to be born, It only seems so, Which is my *Maya*. I am still master of my *Prakriti*, I am born of my own *Maya*." (BG: 4. 6.)

To know a Krishna, or for that matter a Christ, is to know God; for verily these are the children of Light - indeed, they are Light themselves. Though God dwells everywhere, to see Him one must look through these divine incarnations. Sri Ramakrishna said that the divine incarnations are like so many doors through which we peep into or touch the Infinite.

In the *Bhagavad-Gita* (4: 7-8), Sri Krishna says that in order to establish dharma or ethical values in society, he comes again and again to the world as a human being. In the earlier incarnations, like Sri Krishna and Sri Rama, we see them actually destroying evil people, like Krishna destroying a Kamsa, or Shishupala, and Sri Rama destroying Ravana. However in Buddha, we don't find any killing of evil people physically, we find only love and compassion and the lifting of people morally and spiritually. In Jesus also one finds the same. Today, in Sri Ramakrishna, one finds the same power working, influencing people gently, silently, even without their knowing it.

Finally, we would conclude this essay in the words of Huxley: ".. we find that the religions, whose theology has been least preoccupied with events in time and most concerned with eternity (or attaining *moksha* or *nirvana*), have been consistently the least violent (or more tolerant) and the most humane in political practice. Unlike early Judaism, Christianity and Mohammedanism (all of them obsessed with time), Hinduism and Buddhism have never been persecuting faiths, have preached almost no holy wars and have refrained from proselytising religious imperialism...."

Pre-empting, as it were, Huxley's claim, Swamiji instructed, in a lecture in the West on "The Ideal of a Universal Religion," never to disturb any man's convictions so far as they are sincere, For, iconoclastic reformers do no good to the world. He said: "If it is true that God is the centre of all religions, and that each of us is moving towards Him along one of these radii, then it is certain that all of us must reach that centre....?" Ergo, all religions lead to the same God. (v. 2, 384-385.) □

## St. Kyranna of Thessaloniki

---

Greece was under Turkish rule for four hundred years. It was the darkest chapter in Greek history. Nevertheless this period had its brighter side in that it provided a proving ground for Christianity, out of which came heroes and heroines, some of which have been recognized as saints. One of these saints was a girl named Kyranna of Thessaloniki, a city which was under full Turkish domination when Kyranna was born in 1731.

One of the practices adopted by the Turks was to seize a boy from a Christian family and take him to a spiritual and military training area, where he would be brainwashed and brought up as a Muslim. The boys grew up to be known as Janissaries, who were as pitiless and cruel as their teachers, and who had all sworn to die for Allah in what they considered to be a holy cause. An encounter with one of these Janissaries was to prove the undoing of Kyranna and lead to her ultimate sacrifice for Jesus Christ.

Having been brought up in a devout Christian family, Kyranna attained womanhood with a reputation for piety which was belied by her extreme beauty. It did not seem to the casual onlooker that a woman of such breathtaking beauty could be such a devout Christian, more concerned about how she looked to God than how she looked to other people. Her hand was sought by a good number of young Greek males, but she was also the choice of a young Janissary, who made his intentions known after meeting her while carrying out his duties as a tax collector.

The youthful tax collector had the appealing good looks and bearing of his Greek ancestry, but Kyranna rejected the suitor

with the flat statement that she would never love a Muslim, let alone marry one! Thus denied, the spurned lover vowed she would be his or no one else's and in a jealous rage he brought false charges against Kyranna, who was promptly hauled before the magistrate in a mockery of what passed for justice in those days.

St Kyranna was accused of having accepted a proposal of marriage, together with a promise to become a Muslim convert, and then having withdrawn her solemn vow. The denial of these false charges was of no avail, and the presiding magistrate condemned her to prison, there to reflect on her affront and perhaps change her mind. A week of horror in a squalid jail could not force Kyranna to change her mind, and she was then subjected to tortures too inhuman to describe. The young man visited her in jail to find her hanging on the torture rack and observed a heavenly light shining on her bruised and battered body. She passed away on 28 February 1751 at the age of twenty, and the site of her burial place has since been the scene of many miracles. □

Errata: On page 161 of the previous issue, in the first paragraph, the first three lines until "...precious song." are a quotation from the book *Daily Thoughts and Prayers*, pg. 214, by Swami Paramananda.

## **Programme for September - October 2012**

Sunday discourses begin after a brief period of meditation.

At the

**Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Bourne End at 4:30 pm**

Tel: 01628 526464 - [www.vedantauk.com](http://www.vedantauk.com)

Sep	2	Raja Yoga 17	Swami Shivarupananda
Sep	9	Raja Yoga 18	Swami Shivarupananda
Sep	16	Raja Yoga 19	Swami Shivarupananda
Sep	23	Raja Yoga 20	Swami Shivarupananda
Sep	30	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 8	Swami Dayatmananda
Oct	7	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 9	Swami Dayatmananda
Oct	14	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 10	Swami Dayatmananda
Oct	21	Durga Puja	
Oct	28	Day Retreat	

### **Durga Puja**

Saturday 21th October  
at Bourne End at 4:00 pm

### **Vedanta Study Circle in Cheshire Area**

October 21 at 11:00 am

Facing Adversities *Swami Shivarupananda*

For information contact Mr Aswani (tel: 01625 527075)  
between 9.30 pm - 10.30 pm

### **Day Retreat**

With Swami Dayatmananda and Swami Shivarupananda  
at the Vedanta Centre, Bourne End, on 28 October  
from 10:00 am until 7:00 pm

Note: Children are not allowed at the Retreat.  
Please bring (vegetarian) lunch to share.

*continued from the front cover*

had prema, When one attains prema one has the rope to tie God."

MASTER: "Love of God, when it is intense and spontaneous, is called *raga-bhakti*. *Vaidhi-bhakti*, formal devotion, depends on scriptural injunctions. It comes and it goes. But *raga-bhakti* is like a stone emblem of Siva that has sprung up out of the bowels of the earth. One cannot find its root; they say the root goes as far as Benares. Only an Incarnation of God and His companions attain *raga-bhakti*."

*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, October 2, 1884*

---

## Vedanta

is a bi-monthly magazine published, since 1951, by the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Bourne End, Buckinghamshire SL8 5LF, U.K.

Phone: (01628) 526464 - [www.vedantauk.com](http://www.vedantauk.com)

Subscription rate for 6 issues: £9 or \$17.50 post free.

*Editor:* Swami Dayatmananda

*Assistant Editors:* Swami Shivarupananda,  
Swami Chidakarananda

*Editorial Advisers:* Swami Swahananda, Hollywood;  
John Phillips

£1.50

---

Be you holy and, above all, sincere; and do not for a moment give up your trust in the Lord, and you will see the light. Whatever is truth will remain forever; whatever is not, none can preserve...

*Swami Vivekananda*



---

A registered Charity