



YUVA BHARATI

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Happy New Year



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Founder-Editor

Mananeeya Eknathji Ranade

Editor

P.Parameswaran

Editorial Consultants:

Nivedita Raghunath Bhide

Prof. P.T.Santha

Prof. P.Ramani

Editorial Team:

A.Sudarshan

P.Vasanth

S.Shivsankar

S.Aravindh

V.V.Balasubramanian

Marketing:

D.Krishnamoorthy

H.Gnaneswara Rao

Design & Layout

V.Senthil Kumar

Editorial Office:

5, Singarachari Street,

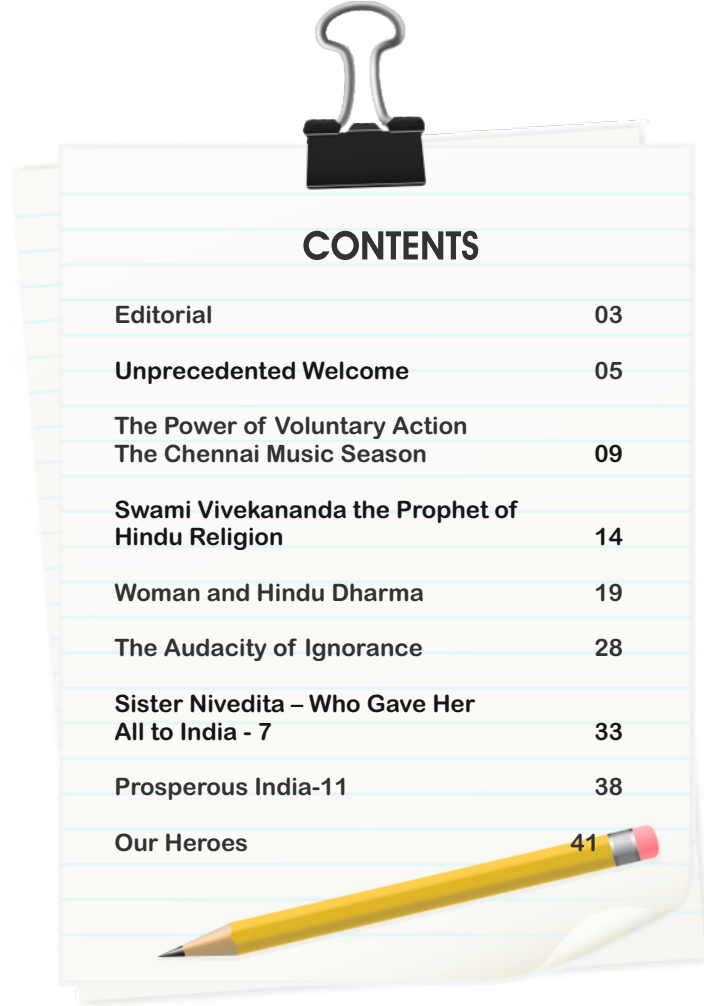
Triplicane,

Chennai 600 005.

Ph: (044) 28440042

Email: vkpt@vkendra.org

Web: www.vkendra.org



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Editor : P.Parameswaran.

Invocation

त्वत्पादाम्बुजमर्चयामि परमं त्वां चिन्तयाम्यन्वहं
त्वामीशं शरणं व्रजामि वचसा त्वामेव याचे विभो ।
वीक्षां मे दिश चाक्षुषीं सकरुणां दिव्यैश्चिरं प्रार्थितां
शम्भो लोकगुरो मदीयमनसः सौख्योपदेशं कुरु ॥

Tvatpādāmbujamarcayāmi paramaṁ tvāṁ cintayāmyanvahaṁ
tvāmīśaṁ śaraṇaṁ vrajāmi vacasā tvāmeva yāce vibho ।
vīkṣāṁ me diśa cākṣuṣīṁ sakaruṇāṁ divyaiściraṁ prārthitāṁ
śambho lokaguro madiyamanaśaḥ saukhyopadeśaṁ kuru । ।

O beneficent preceptor of the universe, I offer worship unto Thy lotus feet and contemplate daily on Thy Supreme Self. I surrender myself unto Thee and with my words supplicate Thee. Pray, vouchsafe unto me a gracious glance long sought after even by the gods, and do Thou instruct me in the methods of attaining tranquility of mind.

- Sivaanananda lahari.

EDITORIAL



Facing the Calamities...

Little fly,
Thy summer's play
My thoughtless hand
Has brushed away.

Am not I
A fly like thee?
Or art not thou
A man like me?

For I dance
And drink and sing,
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing.

...

The fly here symbolizes the human ego filled with the intellectual arrogance, theological dogmas and materialistic pursuits. And the blind hand that the poet, William Blake, talks about was in action for all of us to see in Japan.

Ultimately let it be said, frankly and bluntly that we live in a universe that cares not even an eye-wink for the existence of the humanity. We have to face the fury of nature as collective humanity for we cannot expect to be merciful to us but we can be wise as to live a life in tune with the fine aspects of nature but at the same time remember that nature is not always a benign mother and she also can be a furious mother. And it is in this furious aspect of nature, that Swami Vivekananda saw Kali the black mother, and in ecstasy he wrote:

*The sea has joined the fray,
And swirls up mountain-waves,
To reach the pitchy sky.
The flash of lurid light
Reveals on every side
A thousand, thousand shades
Of Death begrimed and black —
Scattering plagues and sorrows,
Dancing mad with joy,
Come, Mother, come!*

This does not mean we are insensitive to the suffering of the people. Who has been more sensitive to the sufferings of the people than Swami Vivekananda? Who infused dynamic

humanism and universal compassion as inalienable part of Vedanta than Swami Vivekananda? The point here is humanity needs a perspective when disaster strikes it and lesser minds toy with an idea of an angry god punishing an evil humanity which can be the worst kind of insult to the memories of those whom the disaster has taken away from us. Vedanta tells us to share the grief of the tragedy as our own and serve while at the same time at another level it wants us to have a detached look at the disaster. Such a view can make us transcend the tragedy, tide over the disaster and proceed with progress and prepare for future battles.

Even as natural disaster strikes, we also see vultures of the mind descend there distributing their religious literature preaching the love of a vengeful deity that sends such disasters because Japanese are idolaters. But the truth is Japan's culture helped minimize the vast human disaster. But for the traditional heathen-Buddhist-Shinto values of Japan, the disaster would have become a veritable human chaos leading to looting and arson as it happens in United States whenever natural disaster strikes.

It is indeed natural for human mind to think of such natural disasters as divine punishments. However such conception of the Divine as a punishing angry deity diminishes both divine and the humanity. Such natural disasters make us get united as humans, making us forget all our man-made differences.

Humans are in a way a unique phenomenon. As Carl Sagan said we are star dust contemplating the stars. And our human arrogance that we are the center of the universe is shaken to the roots by the cataclysmic events such as the Japanese Tsunami. In fact the veteran journalist Anita Pratap, not exactly known for her admiration towards Hinduism, who now lives in Japan, when she witnessed the disaster wrote, "As I watched the destruction, I could not help but think that humankind could be better off returning to their Shinto (Japan's animist religion), Hindu and Pagan roots. We need to resurrect our reverence for nature, enshrined in these old religions but now forgotten in our mindless quest to plunder the planet for our greed. The worthlessness and transience of our new religion, materialism, were all too evident." (The Week, 27-Mar-2011)

As we share the grief and pain of the Japanese as our own, let us also realize this truth. We are but a speck of a paradox in the vastness of space and immensity of time. This planet has seen many species come and many species go. We are simply one such. A movement in the dance of evolution, we too shall pass out as a species when our time comes. And the paradox is, it is this self-awareness that makes us unique.

Who dares misery love,
And hug the form of Death,
Dance in Destruction's dance,
To him the Mother comes.

S.Aravindh
YB-ET



Unprecedented Welcome

Nivedita Raghunath Bhide

As the ship of Swami Vivekananda was nearing India, in many cities of the South India, people were getting ready to receive Swami Vivekananda with unprecedented honour and to offer him addresses of welcome and gratitude. Swami Niranjanananda, one of his brother-disciples, had come to Ceylon to receive him; others were on the way. There was a great excitement in the country over his long awaited arrival. Representatives of various religious sects and social bodies had joined the reception committees. Swami Vivekananda was unaware of the degree of enthusiasm with which the people of India awaited his return. Though he knew that people rejoiced over his triumph and would be happy for his return but the scale of enthusiasm, welcome that he was to receive was unprecedented and thus no one could imagine it - the one who was welcomed or even those who welcomed him.

victorious return of Swami Vivekananda, the Son of Bharat Mata. Along with the morning sun, Swamiji shone like *Sahasrasurya* in the hearts of all Indians. 'No words can describe the feelings of the vast masses and their expressions of love, when at Colombo they saw the steam launch bearing Swamiji, streaming towards the jetty... The din and clamour of shouts and hand-clapping drowned even the noise of the breaking waves,' wrote the reports. For once in front of the enthusiasm of the people, the waves of the ocean stood humbled. Perhaps the ocean must have forgotten itself and watched this return of the Hero—the descendant of Agastya Rishi with awe. His jubilant welcome in Ceylon was to be the first public ovation, a glimpse of the grand 'Vijay hi Vijay' march ahead from Colombo in the far south to Almora and later Rajasthan in the distant north almost for one year.

On 15 January 1897 sun rose at Colombo on

As per the area and the time there were

variations in the mode of welcome but not in the enthusiasm. In Ceylon and other south Indian towns, the roads for the procession were watered, in front of the houses 'Niraikudam' with mango leaves were kept. The whole road was decorated with the banana plants. If it was night then the lighted torches in the procession, lamps lighted in front of the houses gave the literal meaning to the words the'



Swami

Vivekananda brought light to India! Umbrellas as these are held on the deities for the procession were held for Swami Vivekananda. To quote one of the witnesses, "Flags and banners were everywhere. I should tell you that the procession was headed by the native band, tom-toms, etc., and the sacred umbrellas and banners brought out only when

a god or idol is in procession, were also used." The Jayghosha of Jai Jai Mahadeva rent the air.

Swamiji was carried in carriages, chariots, palanquins, beautifully decorated boat as was organized by the Raja of Ramnad, even on a decorated horse as at Almora. People including the kings were in ecstasy and his carriage was driven by Raja of Ramnad, by young men at Madras and at Calcutta. As

reported: 'The meeting over, the Swami was seated in the state-carriage and driven towards the Raj bungalow, the Raja himself walking with his court officials. Then, at the Raja's command, the horses were unharnessed, and the people, with the Raja himself, drew the state-carriage through the town.' In the honour of Swami Vivekananda, many welcome addresses were read, hymns were composed. In his honour, *Thevaram* was sung at Colombo, various Indian as well as English songs were played in the processions on the band.'

The enthusiasm was so great that even today when we read the descriptions we are thrilled. Just to quote few descriptions:

At Colombo: "Every available carriage was in use and hundreds of pedestrians wended their way to the triumphal pandal which was decorated with palms, evergreens, etc. There the Swami, alighting from the carriage, walked in procession attended with due Hindu honours -- the flag, the sacred umbrella, the spreading of the white cloth, etc. An Indian band played select airs. ...Both sides of the

road leading from the first pandal to the second, a distance of a quarter of a mile, were lined with arches festooned with palm leaves. As soon as the Swami entered the second pandal, a beautiful artificial lotus flower unfolded its petals and out flew a bird”.

Was it indicating that destiny of India is set free? But these charming decorations went unnoticed, for all eyes were on the Swamiji's glowing face and flashing eyes. There the people clearly saw the freedom of great Bharat.

At Jaffna: “Thousands from all parts of the Island came to the city to get a glimpse of the renowned monk, and gathered all along the route to give him welcome. From 6 p.m. to 12 p.m., the Jaffna Kangesantura Road, as far as the Hindu College, was impassable for carts and carriages. The torchlight procession, which started at 8.30 p.m., attended with Indian music, was unprecedentedly imposing. It is estimated that more than fifteen thousand persons, all on foot, took part in it. The whole distance of two miles was so densely crowded that it looked like a sea of heads, yet perfect order prevailed from start to finish. At the gate of almost every house on both sides of the road throughout the entire distance, were placed *Niraikudam* and lamps, the inhabitants expressing in this manner the highest honours that could be offered, according to the Hindu idea, to a great sannyasin.”

At Ramnad: “The firing of cannon announced to the waiting thousands the arrival of the Swami. At the time of landing, and during the procession, rockets shot into the air. There was rejoicing everywhere. The Swami was driven in the state-carriage, accompanied by a bodyguard commanded by the Raja's brother, while the Raja himself, on foot, directed the

procession. Torches flared on either side of the road. Both Indian and European music added life to the already lively proceedings. "See the Conquering Hero Comes" was played on landing, and as the Swami approached the state capital proper. When half the distance had been covered, he alighted at the request of the Raja and took his seat in the state-palanquin. Attended with all pomp, he reached the Shankara Villa”.

At Almora: They made him mount a horse dressed in handsome trappings and so seated, head a procession which went on swelling till as Goodwin has written it seemed every citizen of Almora had joined it. (This was on 10 May. Since January the welcome was going on.) Every house displayed lamps and lights till the town appeared to be in ablaze of light, and the native music with the constant cheers of the crowd made the entire scene most remarkable even to those who had accompanied Swamiji since Colombo. From each house flowers and rice was showered.

Ever since the celebrated address of Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions the Indian newspapers had been often filled with his praises, and as he landed in Colombo numerous telegrams of invitations, entreaties, requests and congratulations awaited him. He had become India's "national hero", it was as if India had discovered her soul in him and his message, it was as if India had awakened to her purpose it was as if she had regained her voice of benediction.

Swamiji had to change his plans frequently as many invitations and appeals had poured in. He readily agreed for some like the invitation of Raja of Ramnad. It seems 'the Raja was in such the ecstasy of delight to receive the news

that Swamiji would reach there on 27 January that he immediately fed a thousand poor'. After Swamiji had reached Ramnad, the Raja had further fed and clothed thousands of poor. When Swami Vivekananda had to go to Khetri at Rewari Junction on 1 December, people from Khetri as well as Alwar were present with horses and palanquins. People from Alwar pressed him so hard that Swamiji ultimately went to Alwar first. Some entreaties he could not acquiesce in like for example, Pune, Trichanapally. But as Swamiji could not get down in Trichanapally, at Trichanapally station thousands gathered at 4.00 a.m, little later at Tanjore, again thousands gathered.

At a small station at Madras, where the train did not halt, it was made to do so by crowds who, after requests to the station-master to make it halt for a while had failed, fell flat on the railway lines at the risk of their lives. A catastrophe was averted by the presence of mind of the guard. Swamiji was moved to see people on the tracks and talked to them. And what did people want? Just a glimpse of the One, who had given back to them their self-respect, who had brought purpose to their national and personal life, who had validated their faith.

Even after a year was over, Swami Vivekananda was still being welcomed, invited to various towns and villages. And when he gave in for some of these entreaties it showed on his health and due to that again he had to change his programs thus in the unprecedented enthusiasm of the people some places got added to his schedule and due to that when health deteriorated some got dropped too.

Each town, each village wanted to have glimpse of him, to listen to his life-giving message, to feel purposeful, to get assured that their Vedanta was the most universal spiritual heritage of mankind. Physically, Swami Vivekananda could not go to each and every village and town. But his impact was so great that since then people of India celebrated his birth centenary and centenary of his wanderings, of his Chicago speech, of his Samadhi, so that they could again and again feel his majestic personality and listen to his elevating message. As all centenaries of his life are over, so now the people, of India are again getting ready to celebrate his 150th birth anniversary. The unprecedented welcome to Swami Vivekananda goes on without full stop.

to be continued...

Education is not filling the mind with a lot of facts.

-Swami Vivekananda

The Power of Voluntary Action The Chennai Music Season

N. Krishnamoorti



P. Unnikrishnan with his team performing during the Last Music season

3000 Artistes, 3000 concerts, 75 Sabhas (Music clubs) 75 days of performances. This gigantic phenomenon is the Chennai Music festival held year after year between First December to 15th January for the last few decades.

Very senior Artistes, critics, music lovers and theory – masters throng to Chennai during the MARGAZHI (Margasirsha) Festival that has become a unique phenomenon of global dimensions in the last 70-80 years. The famous music festivals of the world Edinburgh, Gwalior etc pale into in significance compared to the size of the Chennai festival.

Vocal singers, violinists, mridangam players, ghatam players, Kanjira players, Morsing artistes, Veena, guitar, chitaveena, flute, harmonium, tabla, Nadaswaram and Tavil players have made Chennai the capital of Karnatic Music in the world. Professionals from the West come all the way to Chennai, to be a part of it.

What makes Chennai that unique? The quality of the Rasikas (enjoyers) who are very well-informed, very refined in their taste and will go for the best, brings out the best in the artistes, giving them a sense of fulfilment.

An ordinary day's programme during the festival in a standard Sabha starts at 8.30 AM with a lecture on history, appreciation, biography of Composers, musicology etc. One would imagine that these dry features would be attended by very few people. Exactly the opposite. When one veteran from Andhra spoke for three mornings an "Pallavi Singing", there was not even standing room left in the hall. At 10.00 AM there will be a major concert. Upcoming musicians perform in two slots between 12 noon and 4.00 PM. The 4.00 PM to 6.00 PM segment is again a major performance. The pick of the day is the 6.30 PM performance ending at 10 PM.

The younger generation has taken to



Gundecha brothers performing during the last Chennai Music festival

college professors, I.T. professionals, Chief Engineers of mega projects who come to Chennai to prove their Art and be accepted by the Maestros in the field.

Indian Artistes from Singapore, U.S and Europe come to Chennai to exhibit their skills. Musicians Karnataka, Andhra,

classicism very well. Many expert performers are young, not yet forty. In the audience, may be the grey hairs outnumber the youngsters. Not so among the performers.

Kings and zamidars used to patronize Karnatic music in the past. Temples provided the stage. The scenario has now changed. Organizers tap the corporate - sector for sponsorship. An average Sabha may get the patronage of 30-40 corporations. Excellent acoustics back up, the performance.

Not all performers depend up on their art for their wherewithal. There are many amateurs, whose quality of performance will stand upto any professional, but they are not in pursuit of money. There are Vice - Presidents of banks,

Kerala and of course the districts of Tamil Nadu gravitate to Chennai to be part of the THEEVENT.

Parallel to the stage performances, a huge music industry has come up. Out-station visitors grab the CDS etc as precious mementos of the season.

Coinciding with the Music festival there is a very large Tamil Book exhibition, to cater to the people, especially the NRIS.

All major Sabhas sport canteens, the dishes, of which have become part of the music - conversations. Impromptu tabloids spring up commenting on the performances, giving, time-tables and guiding listeners.

Music is the only language in which you cannot say a mean or sarcastic thing.

-Lord Erskine

T.M.Krishna in an ecstatic mood



In the last couple years music has spilled over from the precincts of Sabhas into informal gatherings. Park Garden concerts, concerts on the steps of temple tanks, musical walks to the legendary places associated with great musicians and composers, informal meetings between musicians and listeners over a cup of coffee in a restaurant, publication of music books etc bring up the side show.

All the songs sung or played are confined to Hindu deities. A few patriotic songs, compositions on the glory and Divinity of the

art of music, songs praising the great music gurus bring up the rear.

Music books guiding listeners in identifying ragas are distributed free often. All news papers bring out daily supplements, souvenirs. Thus the Music Festival is the largest cultural event possibly in the world entirely dedicated to Hindu deities and supported by the NGOS.

The post-music festival space is taken up by Drama and Dance festivals, but it is another story.

Music is moonlight in the gloomy night of life.
-Jean Paul Richter

Swami Vivekananda the Prophet of Hindu Religion

T.N.Arthanari

Most of us know that in the first session of the Parliament of Religions on the platform of the Hall of Art Institute in the city of Chicago our great Hindu Monk Swami Vivekananda in the afternoon of Monday 11th September 1893, began his historical speech as "Sisters and Brothers of America" and captivated the hearts of more than four thousand people, men and women representing the best culture of the United States. More details about the subject matter of the parliament, the hardships endured by Swamiji in going and attending it and the importance of his speech in making the entire world to accept our Hinduism hitherto considered as paganism as a Religion just like other organized religions like Christianity, Mohammedanism, Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Shintoism, Theism (Bramo Samaj) and Zoroastrianism. Swamiji's commanding presence itself attracted the attention of the audience. The Parliament of Religions was an adjunct of the World's Columbian Exposition which was held in Chicago in 1893 to celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. Some of the declared objectives of the Parliament were to present the important truths held and taught in common by different



religions of the world and to bring the nations of the earth into a more friendly relationship. But many thought and hoped that the parliament would prove the superiority of their own religion over the others. However through divine dispensation as it were the validity of all religions ultimately became the key-note of the parliament and Swami Vivekananda became the most impressive and eloquent mouthpiece of that central theme.

The Parliament opened with a prayer after which the Chairman Reverend J.H.Barrows introduced the delegates one by one who then read their prepared speeches. But Swamiji had no such written speech with him and he had never before addressed such a huge assembly. He did not speak in the morning session, but went on postponing the summons from the chair. In the afternoon when he could no longer put off his turn he stepped up to rostrum his face glowing like fire. In the words of Romain Rolland, Vivekananda who represented nothing and everything belonging to no sect, but rather to India as a whole who drew the glance of the assembled thousands...his speech was like a tongue of flame, it fired the souls of the listening throng. Each of the other orators has spoken of the God of his sect. He alone spoke of all their Gods and embraced them all in the universal Being. It was the breath of Ramakrishna breaking down the barriers through the mouth of his great disciple. During the ensuing days he spoke again ten or twelve times. Each time he repeated with new arguments but with the same force of conviction that his thesis of a universal religion without limit of time or space.

The New York Herald wrote "Swami Vivekananda is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. After

hearing him, we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation (India)".

In a symbolic dream he was commanded by his Guru Sri Ramakrishna to go to America. Moreover Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi to whom he had written earlier, sent her consent and blessings. Cleared of all doubts now Swamiji was determined to attend the parliament of world religions at Chicago. With the money collected by his young disciples by begging from door to door as well as that was given by the Maharaja of Mysore, Raja of Ramnad and Raja of Khetri, Swamiji sailed for America from Mumbai (then Bombay) on 31st May 1893.

It is easier to anyone to donate some money for a noble cause and say that he will achieve something great in life. *Tirukkural* (No.664) says, it is very difficult for a person to put in action what he says "Easy to make a plan and speak about it, but a rarer achievement is, To accomplish the plan as stated and then speak".

It needs strong will power, determination and self-denial. Swamiji reached Chicago at the end of July. The time for admittance and registration of delegates was already over. His disciples in Chennai (then Madras) had taken it for granted that he had only to appear and he would be given a chance. Arriving at Chicago, Swamiji was shocked to learn from the Information Bureau that the Parliament of Religions would not commence until September and that no delegate would be admitted without proper credentials from a bonafide organization. As cost of living was costly at Chicago, Swamiji left for Boston where things were cheaper. In the train, Miss Katherine Abbot Sauborn a wealthy lady met him by chance, attracted by Swamiji's noble bearing and charming conversation, invited him to stay at her village home in

Massachusetts near Boston. Through her, Swamiji became acquainted with Mr.J.H.Wright, a professor of Greek at Harvard University. When Swamiji said that he had no credentials of whatsoever, Prof. Wright had exclaimed "to ask you, Swami for credentials is like asking the Sun to state its right to shine." He wrote at once to the Chairman of the Committee for the selection of the Delegates who happened to be his friend. "Here is a man who is more learned than their all our professors put together. Prof. Wright bought him also a ticket to Chicago. Swamiji arrived at Chicago on 9th September. Unfortunately Swamiji mislaid the address of the committee that looked after the oriental delegates. Swamiji had to take shelter in an empty box car in the railroad freight yard in a September night. Next morning extremely tired and hungry, Swamiji sought help from house to house as a Sannyasin in India would do seeing his soiled clothes and wornout appearance, the

servants in the houses treated him rudely, sometimes slamming the door on his face. When Swamiji sat tiredly on roadside a lady from a fashionable house opposite to him, came to him and spoke softly. When she learnt that Swamiji was a delegate to the Parliament of Religions, she invited him into her house and attended to his immediate needs. After taking food and rest, Swamiji was taken by the lady to the office of the Parliament of Religions. He was gladly accepted as a delegate and lodged with other oriental guests. His deliverer was Mrs.George W.Hale. She and her children became Swamiji's warmest friends.

In her introduction to "*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*", "Sister Nivedita (Miss Margaret E.Noble) says that when Swamiji began to speak for the first time before the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, it was of "the religious ideas of the Hindus" but when he entered, "Hinduism had been created".

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Woman and Hindu Dharma

Rajesh Pathak

“At the time when Brahamdev was deeply absorbed in Samadhi [meditation] his body split into two halves- one of a man, Manu; and another of a woman, Shatrupa, the wife of Manu. It is they who were the ancestors of human beings, and thereafter only from them that the entire subject came into existence.”[Bhagwatpuran-3-12]

What above verse signifies is that where the other parts of the world awakened to give equal right to woman like man as late as modern period, she was held to be as sacred as man at the very inception of the civilization in Hindu Dharma. And, more notably, unlike the ways of the world, this sanctity was not confined to the doctrine alone; this was emulated in the practices of real life as a matter of fact. Taitreya and Shathapatha Brahmaa [Upnishads] explicitly reveal that husband and wife together were given yagyadiksha [spiritual initiation] in Vedic period. So also, Manu says-“It is not only home is a home, but the real home is none other than the woman”.

And, just see what Yamasmiriti says regarding this-“In the preceding kalpa [period of time] women used to undergo Upnayan sanskara. They were taught Vedic knowledge and also Gayatri mantra.” It is because of this we get in our scriptures the accounts of Ghosha, Lopmudra, Gargi and Maitreyi, all highly learned ladies. How learned was Maitreyi is seen from the spiritual discussion went between her and her husband, Yagvalkya, in Brihadaryankpnishad. And, among the great exponents of Dharma in the sabha[assembly] of Raja Janak, Gargi enjoyed prominent place. So much so that when it came to testify the divine wisdom of Yagnavalkya Muni, it was none other than she who was assigned to fulfill the task. Yet this is not all- women could fulfill the role of teacher, as well. There comes in Patanjali Mahabhashya the mention of two terms – Upadhayani and Upadhayaya. Where Upadhayani is referred to the wife of Acharya[teacher], Upadhayaya is used for the lady who used to impart teaching.

And, after the marriage, she was regarded to be the hub of all kind of domestic affairs-“From your attitude father in-law should feel that you are the queen of the home, mother-in-law should feel that you are the owner and your sister-in-law should feel that you are the key-functionary of the home.” [Rigveda-10-85-46]

So also, “Gods make abode where women are worshipped; and where not, all the rituals come to grief.” [Manu Smiriti]

More notably, besides above rights and honors that they enjoyed, they could also take part in the battle field to demonstrate their prowess, if they possessed it. Well- versed in using the weapons, courageous and forbearing, Mudgalani and Vishpala are the two such of the women who fought valiantly with their husbands in the wars. [Rigveda 2, 7, 11-102-10 & 1-112-1] [Refer, for more, “Vedic Rashtra-Darshan”-Balshashtri Hardas]

It's because of this outlook of our ancestors nourished in virtues of Dharma that we find a considerable number of girls to earn the education at par with the boys in the schools

still in the recent history, at the time of inception of British rule. Before deciding as to which modal of education be introduced in India so as to fulfill their vested interest, British had a survey conducted in the beginning of 18th century under William Adam. William Adam submitted his first report in 1835 and second and third report in 1838. According to the reports, behind every 63 students there was one school averagely in Bengal and Bihar. These schools had girl students as well, though there numbers were small, with lower-castes girls outnumbering upper-castes girls, notably. Almost the same views were then held by Sir Thomas Munroe and Dr. G.W. Litner regarding educational scenario of Madras Presidency and Punjab respectively. [Refer, “Bharat Ka Swadharm”- Dharmpal]

Thus, when in the other parts of the world woman was discriminated to be mere object of physical enjoyment, in India she was held to be as indispensable as man in the activities of life, worldly and spiritual both.

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BOOK INTRODUCTION

Indian Culture and India's Future

Nivedita Raghunath Bhide

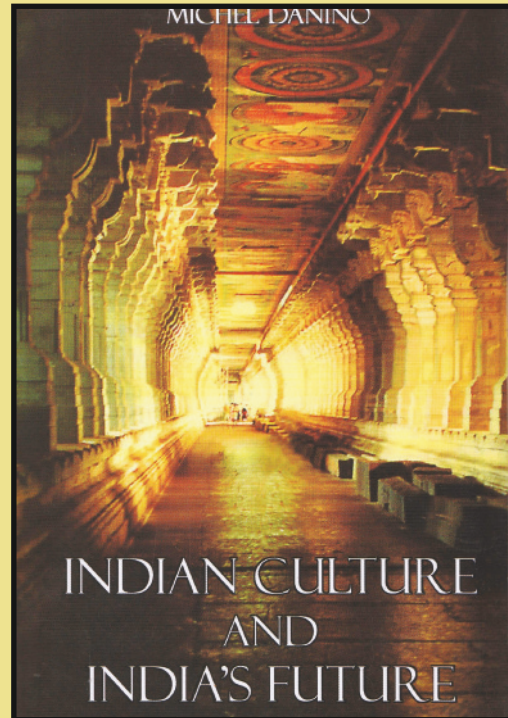
There are uncountable books on Indian Culture as it is undated and undatable. So one more addition to it need not be noted. But the book 'Indian Culture and Future of India' by Michel Danino, needs special mention and introduction as it brings another dimension – not strictly traditional and yet fully nurturing the spirit of Indian Culture.

Lucid style of Michel Danino has made this book of 248 pages easy to be finished at one go. The book does not cover the functioning of the traditional systems like family, village, community, temple or religious systems which worked towards the inculcating in the future generations the search and respect for the infinite, connecting to mother Earth, being harmonious part of the whole, the vision of Oneness. These systems were self-propelled without any organized injunctions from outside. Today these systems though are affected to a large extent are still functioning and have been successful in thwarting the designs of materialism or exclusive ideologies to some extent. Though this part is not covered in the book still with plenty of references is very useful and inspiring for every one who is working towards the preservation and propagation of Indian Culture as the book itself gives guidelines for the future work too.

I had thought of giving a short book review. But then thinking of those who may not get the book or may not read it, I felt I should give the introduction to this important book focusing on the salient points and thus this is more an introduction of the book than review.

Indian Culture: A thousand-branched Tree:

The book is divided into three parts. The first part is titled as '*A thousand-branched Tree*'. The search of infinite occupies Indian mind,



propels Indian culture. Thus whether it is God or science or art it is the search for infinite and expression of infinite. This single urge has manifested in acceptance of many as expressions of One. The author points out this speciality of Indian culture in these words, "But the Indian worldview will not be scientific to the exclusion of the spiritual or the poetic. The Indian scientific mind is a mind in love with infinity and eternity; it is conscious of being a mere 'boat on the sea of true and false knowledge'. After giving the concepts like *Mahayuga* or 100 years of Brahma etc., the author says that 'when we compare the Judeo-Christian Europe's beliefs of creation or time with the Indian concepts, we are dealing not only with the different time scales, but different mind scales.'

This longing for infinite made India accept, embrace and enrich the whole world with Oneness. The author quotes many scholars to point out this fact. To quote just few: "The highest tribute we come across is probably the one paid by Will Durant: "India was the motherland of our race and Sanskrit, the mother of Europe's languages; she was the mother of our philosophy, mother, through the Arabs, of much of our mathematics; mother, through Buddha, of the ideals embodied in Christianity ; mother, through the village community, of self-government and democracy. Mother India is, in many ways, the mother of us all." Or "French Indologist Sylvian Levi's eulogies "From Persia to the Chinese Sea, from the icy regions of Siberia to the islands of Java and Borneo, from Oceania to Socotra, India has propagated her beliefs, her tales and her civilization... She has the right... to hold her place amongst the great nations summarizing and symbolizing the spirit of Humanity."

The author makes very important observation that these contributions were not only in the past but they continue even now. "This outflow was not confined to the remote past; it continued through Arab and European travellers, and entered a new phase in colonial times, impacting Western literature and philosophies, and in our times leading to widespread practices of yoga and meditation."

The book gives details about scientific knowledge of India, that is generally not known. Why is it not known? Example is given – "Another case of neglect was pointed out by the indefatigable scholar K.V. Sarma. Shortly before his death in 2005, he published a list of 3,473 science texts compiled from 12,244 science manuscripts found in 400 repositories in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Of those 3,473 texts, no more than 7 per cent are available in print. Historians of science, wrote Sarma, know nothing of the remaining 93 per cent and thus regard this 7 per cent, 'as the whole and sole of the contribution of India to science. This is a sorry situation from which Indian science has

to be rescued and resurrected. We may legitimately expect to find important scientific and technological advances in the thousands of manuscripts still awaiting study."

It is interesting to read the information like, the installation of statue of Nataraja at prestigious CERN which according to Fritjof Capra represents " the dance of sub-atomic matter" or Schrodinger's understanding of '*Tat Tvam Asi*' which helped him to give shape to his wave theory of matter consistent with the Vedantic concept of 'All in One' etc. But the author makes a subtle and right difference with other authors when he points out, "I am not suggesting that Indic philosophies propelled the great scientific advances of the early twentieth century. What it did was to help a few of the great innovators towards a new intellectual frame of reference amidst the crumbling old order; in a more diffuse manner, it catalyzed the search for new worldviews. That much is a significant contribution."

Instead of just singing the glories of the past, he also points out the future role, "there is still scope, in my opinion, for Indic notions and metaphors to inspire new scientific explorations, especially where the concept of consciousness is brought into play—a concept explored in India in greater depth than anywhere else.... When all is said and done, India's greatest gift to the world will prove to be the experiential and verifiable method of self-exploration and self-fulfilment called 'yoga'. It is her most ancient gift, too—we have evidence of its practice in the Indus-Sarasvati civilization—and it holds as much potential in our troubled times as it did 4,500 years ago."

A separate chapter devoted to "India in France" which gives the complete fascination, acknowledgement by great French thinkers about India which is generally not known. Just to quote one such paragraphs, Michelet, a prolific chronicler of French History says, " India, closer than us to the creation, has better preserved the tradition of universal brotherhood. She inscribed it at the beginning

and at the end of her two great sacred poems, the Ramayan and the Mahabharat, gigantic pyramids before which all our small occidental works must stand humbly and respectfully. When you grow tired of this quarrelsome West, Please indulge in the sweet return to your mother, to that majestic antiquity so noble and tender. Love, humility, grandeur, you will find it all gathered there, and with such simple feelings, so detached of all miserable pride, that humility never even needs a mention."

Michel Danino who is a passionate environmentalist starts the chapter "For the Love of Nature" with these poignant words, "A strongly marked aspect of that culture, and one that offers a rich field of investigation, is India's ancient love story with nature. A story that all the more calls for our attention as we do not yet know whether it will have a happy ending." Why this doubt comes? Somewhere we are losing our communion with the nature. Today there are some voices about the environmental degradation etc. It has to reach masses. But even that is not enough. The author says, "If we want the awareness to reach the masses, it must be not only on the basis of modern ecology, but also through the ancient worldview that sees this earth as sacred. The modern Indian rarely has any intimate relationship with nature; it is not enough to watch birds or have a walk in a forest; only when one perceives nature as a being, a presence, can one recapture something of the ancient spirit... If we are to understand the roots of this phenomenon, we must probe how the Judeo-Christian tradition broke away from nature and began regarding her as so much inanimate matter to be exploited (a polite word for plunder.)"

Indian Culture at crossroads:

The second part of the book dwells on *Indian Culture at crossroads*. The chapter does make a painful reading but it is required. During the colonial period we have ceased to think by ourselves. The intellectual subjection has introduced serious distortions in our thinking

process. It is clear from writing of the Governor-General Lord Canning to a British official in the middle of the 1857 uprising, "As we must rule 150 millions of people by a handful (more or less small) of Englishmen, let us do it in the manner best calculated to leave them divided (as in religion and national feeling they already are) and to inspire them with the greatest possible awe of our power and with the least possible suspicion of our motives." And how truly they have achieved it!

Very good discussion on few themes which have created confusions in our mind like 'All religions are same', Religion vs Dharma, Secularism vs Tolerance have also created a lot of confusion. 'All religions are same' springs from non-understanding of Abrahamic faiths. He quotes the gnostic gospels which give the real name of Abrahamic god Jehovah and also about his nature. It is worth reading and I desist to give the details of it so as to keep it as an incentive for reading the book! British have succeeded as observed by Ananda K Kumaraswamy, "We, who think we are educated and progressive,...we ourselves have despised and hated everything Indian..The creative force in us has died, because we had no faith in our selves – we could only learn to be intellectual parasites."

But we need not despair for this. Because 'everything has a deeper meaning'. How? The author quotes Sri Aurobindo, "The spirit and ideals of India had come to be confined in a mould which, however beautiful, was too narrow and slender to bear the mighty burden of our future. When that happens, the mould has to be broken and even the ideal lost for a while, in order to be recovered free of constraint and limitation... We must not cabin the expanding and aggressive spirit of India in temporary forms which are the creation of the last few hundred years. That would be a vain and disastrous endeavour. The mould is broken; we must remould in larger outlines and with a richer content." Even our traditional systems need to get remoulded to

reflect the divine spirit.

Thus the author points out again a future task, "To recover her true genius in a new body is the seemingly impossible task now facing India. She needs it not only for herself but for the world...India's view of the universe, and of ourselves as an integral part of it, this bridge between destruction and renewal, between matter and spirit, is what humanity needs today. India's special contribution should be to show, as she did in her ancient history, how material and spiritual developments can be harmonized and indeed need each other if human society is to survive."

How it is to be done is explained in a separate chapter titled "The Gita and the problem of Action". This chapter is very beautifully concluded with these words, "...The older Indian perspective reflected in the Gita asks us to work not for ourselves but for the world and the divine intention in it. By doing so, we live a fulfilled life, not a blind race to nowhere. Spirituality then becomes a constant experience, not just a sublime but elusive moment in meditation. Gradually, inner and outer merge into an integral life: 'Not by abstention from works does a man enjoy actionlessness, nor by mere renunciation does he attain to his perfection' (3.4).

India and the World:

The third part of the book titled *India and the World* dwells on how 'Hindu' - the basic identity of Indian civilization is wounded. The distortions of the history: Factual distortions like Aryan invasion theory, Dravidian, Dalit, Tribal separateness, Goan inquisition, Islamic record, Ayodhya, British Rule's denigration of Indian Civilization and concealment of colonial barbarity, etc. And model distortions like division of Indian history in Vedic, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, British periods, or focusing on the diversity of India but never on what constitutes its unity - all these points are dealt by the author though briefly but very pointedly and are worth studying in depth by

the youth if they want to correct the course of Indian history.

The author writes, "In India's present intellectual climate, a Hindu identity is either denied or projected as regressive, obscurantist and divisive, while in historical fact, it proved to be assimilative, non-aggressive and open to new knowledge. Subtly or not so subtly, the Hindu is made to feel guilty for being one... The very word 'Hindu' - the same which evoked in a Schopenhauer, an Emerson, or a Carl Sagan some of the human mind's boldest explorations - is made to acquire a dubious odour."

But lamenting would not do. We have to understand the problem and then look ahead. The author writes very candidly, "As unpleasant as the reality may be, we must face it. If we are told, for instance, that Christianity and Islam preach peace, love and brotherhood, we must ask why their histories are full of the very opposite values. We must ask why in their obsessional quest for heaven, they strove so hard to turn this earth into a living hell. And we must keep asking until we get as honest answer."

Generally the books on Indian Culture only tell what was or what is but not what has to be the road ahead. In this book, Michel Danino puts forward a triple task. He writes, "The rich non-aggressive indigenous cultures of Amerindians, Africans, Polynesians, Australians or Indians represent the saner and the deeper side of humanity. It behoves then to show the way to a third option - the way of the thousand-branched tree. Their immediate task is triple. First, they must reject collective amnesia and study the history of religions - the conquering ones and the conquered. ...Forgetting the past only serves the aggressor, not the victim. The latter's motive should be not 'Forgive and Forget' but 'Lest we Forget' ...Secondly the non-aggressive cultures must avoid the snare of 'unity of religions' - an impossible proposition as long as any of them claims exclusive property of the truth and a divinely ordained mission to overrun the

earth...They must also work to share, rediscover and revivify their common worldview and heritage – a considerable one—and formulate it anew, in a language of our age....Lastly the surviving ancient cultures of the world must strengthen their naturally fraternal bonds and join forces, realizing that in union there is strength. ...As always in human history, aggressive elements are winning short-term victories. And as always, what the conquered represent in the evolutionary experiment will outlive their conquerors.”

“For in the world of the ideal—a world more real than our compartmentalized minds imagine—India is more than a piece of land; she is a continent in humanity's inner geography: a quest for the true, the beautiful, the lovable.” The quest must continue. As Swami Vivekananda had said, “Not a single atom in this universe moves without dragging the whole world along with it”. Thus for the sake of India, for the sake of the world, the quest of infinite should continue, of perceiving Many as the One should continue.”



The Audacity of Ignorance



Off-late there has been an Orchestrated campaign to de-link Yoga from its roots in Hinduism. Our society should be aware of such designs and react in the best manner possible. This is a counter given by Hindu American Foundation to one such canard.

The HAF counters Meera Nanda's "not-so-old, nor-so-Hindu" argument about modern-day yoga
The author is Member, Board of Directors, Hindu American Foundation

The Hindu American Foundation (HAF) started a conversation on the deepening American embrace of yoga with letters to magazines and a position paper nearly a year ago. Struck by the disconnect between "Hindu" and "yoga", HAF felt compelled to argue that delinking yoga from its Hindu roots was ahistorical, at best, and insincere and malicious at worst. The position struck a chord, and a debate with Deepak Chopra, a frontpage article in the *New York Times*, and a CNN segment later, more Americans are connecting the two.

Meera Nanda's *Open* story alleging that Hindu texts have few asanas and that the yoga master Krishnamacharya borrowed most from European gymnastics is the latest salvo against HAF's position, and mimics a similar rebuttal by Wendy Doniger. Nanda's criticism of HAF's 'Take Back Yoga' (TBY) campaign as being based on a false, non-existent history misrepresents TBY and maligns HAF as a casteist, sleazy political operation (Indo-American Lobby? HAF is neither Indian nor a political lobby). Where she makes relevant points about the Mysore Palace, she vastly exaggerates her case. Perhaps, as William Dalrymple said, Nanda is "overtly hostile to many expressions of religiosity." Whatever her agenda, her audacious and flippant claims are both stunning and flawed.



WHAT IS TAKE BACK YOGA?

Nanda concedes that American yogis say "Namaste," quote from the Gita and play Kirtan music. Why then is she so bothered by TBY? TBY makes three key contentions:

1. Yoga is more than just asana
2. Yoga is rooted in Hinduism
3. The asana-based practice of yoga found in many Western yoga studios is inspired by the Hindu Hatha yoga tradition

An important spark for TBY came from the editorial practices of the influential 'Yoga Journal' magazine, which sees asanas as integral to a broader spiritual practice. So what's the problem? The editors avoid the words 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism', but not 'Christianity', 'Islam' or 'Buddhism'. Repeated references to Hindu teachings as 'ancient Indian' or 'Yogic' or 'Eastern' seemed disingenuous. "Hinduism has a lot of

baggage,” HAF was told. Similarly, Deepak Chopra calls his philosophy Vedic, Yogic, Advaitin, or Sanatana Dharma, but never Hinduism, which he calls “one-eyed” and “tribal.”

In this context, TBY asserts that Yoga is one of six orthodox Hindu darshanas and indispensable to the practice of Vedanta. Non-Hindus can practice yoga as a secular activity by limiting themselves to asanas alone, but many go further into chanting, meditation, kirtan and other Hindu practices. Another driver behind TBY is the attempt to create “Christian Yoga” by some Christians who are worried that Yoga is leading Americans to Hinduism. Other Christians oppose Yoga outright, but it is ironic that Christian leaders are more honest in acknowledging the Hindu roots of Yoga than Mr Chopra and Ms Nanda.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ASANAS

Nanda is right that Hatha Yoga is not a monolithic 5000-year-old tradition, but requiring that everything Hindu be traceable back to Vedic times is ludicrous. Two traditions that Nanda elicits, the Natha Yogis—Shiva and Shakti worshipping founders of Hatha Yoga—and TS Krishnamacharya of the Mysore Palace taught yoga in a way inseparable from Hindu traditions.

Nanda demeans the Natha Yogis as seeking only magical powers. But the three key hatha yoga texts tell a different tale. All three are dedicated to Lord Shiva and teach methods to obtain *samadhi* through yoga. Verse 4.113 of the 14th century *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (*Pradipika*), written by Natha Yogi Svatmarama (whose name means “one who delights in the Atman”) emphatically states: “As long as the *prana* does not enter and flow in the middle channel and the *bindu* does not become firm by the control of the movements of the *prana*; as long as the mind does not assume the form of *Brahman*

without any effort in contemplation, so long all the talk of knowledge and wisdom is merely the nonsensical babbling of a mad man”.

The Shiva Samhita (*Samhita*), written in 1300-1500 CE as a conversation between Shiva and Parvati, cautions at the start of Chapter V that material enjoyments are obstacles to emancipation; and the *Gheranda Samhita*



(*Gheranda*), a 17th century text, proclaims the truth of oneness in *Brahman* (verse 7.4) and calls *maya* the greatest fetter, yoga the greatest strength, *jnana* the greatest friend and Ego the greatest enemy (verse 1.4). No paeans to magic here. Powers may accrue to yogis, but they are never the aim. Far from wanting to “banish the matted-hair, ash-smeared *sadhuis* from the Western imagination”, HAF cherishes them as one of pluralistic Hinduism's time-honored traditions.

Nanda argues that asanas, even pranayama, are not found in the Vedas. Inconveniently for her, the *Maitrayaniya Upanishad* presents a six-limbed discipline, including *pranayama*, virtually identical to Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga. She argues that while BKS Iyengar taught some 200 asanas, *Pradipika* listed only 15. Indeed, not all 200 existed at first, but a clear trend of development exists. Asana lists appear in the 6th-7th century commentaries

on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras by Vyasa (nine) and Shankaracharya (three), with "etc" following both lists, clearly indicating knowledge of more asanas. Shankara, who wrote before the three hatha yoga texts, also refers to "asanas mentioned in other shastras". *Pradipika* 1.33 says: "84 asanas were taught by Shiva. Of those, I shall describe the essential four", and *Samhita* 3.84 says: "There are eighty-four postures, of various modes. Out of them, four ought to be adopted, which I mention below". This indicates that at least 84 were known by the 14th century. Finally, the *Sritattvanidhi* (early 1800s) illustrates 122 asanas.

MODERN YOGA TRADITIONS

The crux of Ms Nanda's allegation is that Krishnamacharya built on the *Sritattvanidhi* by borrowing from European gymnastics. First, it's unclear the number of Krishnamacharya's innovations that were inspired by his guru versus gymnastics. His first writings featured *vinyasas* (sequences of asanas synchronised with breath) that he learnt from his guru, illustrating that the Gurus' parampara always had teachings not available in texts. Ms Nanda cites Mark Singleton's observation that "at least 28 of the exercises" in Bukh's manual are strikingly similar to yoga postures taught by Krishnamacharya's students, Pattabhi Jois and BKS Iyengar. But even if their combined repertoire has asanas that are "similar" to gymnastics, is that enough to deny Yoga's Hindu roots? Rather, Singleton in his book points out that his comparison should not be construed as evidence of Krishnamacharya's having borrowed directly from Bukh, and in fact names an equally influential Indian tradition of Swami Kavalayananda, with whom Krishnamacharya spent time. Singleton concludes that "This does not mean... posture-based yogas...are "mere gymnastics" nor that they are necessarily less "real" or "spiritual"

than other forms of yoga."

Norman Sjoman, whom also Nanda mentions, states in his book that Iyengar's 200 asanas are found in two independent yoga traditions. "The asanas themselves are not unknown, for a similar set of asanas with different names was shown by Swami Vishnudevananda, published in his book *The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga*. He was a student of Swami Sivananda, a Dravidian belonging to the Dikshitar family, the traditional guardians of the Chidambaram temple. He must have inherited their traditions. Swami Yogesvarananda brought out a book in 1970 titled *First Steps to Higher Yoga* containing 264 asanas".

Many yoga traditions popular in the West, such as the Yogoda System of Paramahansa Yogananda (from which the Bikram School of Yoga is derived), Yogi Bhajan's Kundalini Yoga, and Satchidananda's Integral Yoga are not in Krishnamacharya's lineage. Also not examined: the 108 dance poses of Shiva containing many *vinyasa* movements. The Indian Government has created the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library, an effort being coordinated by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, to prevent patenting of Yoga. Thus far, they have documented 1,300 asanas with the cooperation of nine traditional yoga institutions.

TBY is succeeding in its quest to link yoga with the Hindu spiritual tradition from whence it comes. This is not a facile claim of ownership. Rather TBY roots this practice within its metaphysical framework that practitioners eventually discover on their own. Om Shanti.

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The author is Member, Board of Directors, Hindu American Foundation



Sister Nivedita: Who Gave Her All to India - 7 Her Master and India

Anirban Ganguly

As is my wont I shall start with indicating a lacuna when it comes to remembering Sister Nivedita nationally and in presenting her before youth as an example and symbol to seek inspiration from. In his preface to Lizelle Raymond's biography of Sister Nivedita, Jean Herbert (1897-1980) made an interesting point when he wrote that even though Nivedita spent a few years in India 'her guru Swami Vivekananda, had given her the key to the country and its people, and she had submitted herself to the austere and exacting discipline which enabled her to make use of this key. Her amazing vitality, both multiplied and channeled by that asceticism and that consecration, was such that even today there is scarcely any field – religion, pedagogy, science, art, politics, society – in which she did not leave her mark.¹ Herbert lamented the fact that even forty years after her passing Nivedita was yet to have a biographer. Though the gap was ably filled, at first by Raymond herself and then later by revered Pravrajika Atmapranaji, an aspect of the truth of Herbert's observation persists. The near total eradication from the national mind of the memory of Sister's contribution to the



awakening of the national self-hood is indeed baffling. And it is with this that I had begun the present series – I had argued that a nation which is unable to discern and then preserve and present its icons to succeeding waves of youth shall continuously remain in the vortex

of an identity-confusion. Thus Sister Nivedita, except in some dedicated circles, is hardly ever upheld today as an emblem of national womanhood; perhaps it is a difficult task and needs a great degree of identification with the country, her people and her condition. Herbert himself quite poignantly spelt it out, 'for an intimate understanding of this women, who was both astonishingly multiple and profoundly one', he wrote, one needed to have the 'same fire', the 'same absolute devotion' that Nivedita felt for India: it would have to be a person who 'would be able to enter into all the anguish, all the righteous anger, all the inner experiences, all the joys also, that she herself knew.'² A leader thus identified with the nation can alone perhaps understand Sister and present her before the collective youth-mind as an ever-living icon. Unfortunately on this front we have been facing a deficit for a quite a while now!

Before speaking of Sister's epoch-making journey to India after receiving her Master's call, I wish to digress here – chronologically and historically – and briefly discuss a particular piece on her Master that she produced a few months after he had attained *mahasamadhi*.. It serves to understand Swamiji – his work and his mission for India as understood and interpreted for us by one who was herself one of the foremost founding pillars and embodiment of his work in the country. In her piece in the Hindu of 27th July, 1902, Sister discussed the '*The National Significance of the Swami Vivekananda's Life and Work*' and made some very illuminating points that continue to serve as guiding-lights for those seeking to know, understand and appreciate India and to work for her in any self-giving manner. Describing her Master as the eternal 'archetype of the Sannyasin' to his

disciples she observed that 'Yet the self-same destiny that filled him with this burning thirst of intense Vairagyam embodied in him also the ideal house-holder, - full of the yearning to protect and save, eager to learn and teach the use of materials, reaching out towards the reorganization and re-ordering of life.'³ Such a combining of dimensions today can alone produce true leaders and mentors of men. But the point to be highlighted here is her observation on her Master's dealing with the foreigner. In a surrounding of overwhelming decrepitude he never ever lowered his banner and the flag. Sister saw in him a man 'who spoke naught but strength. Supremely free from sentimentality, supremely defiant of authority, [who] refused to meet any foreigner save as the master.'⁴ In order to demonstrate how such an attitude inspired awe even in those for whom it was meant she referred to the observations of a noted Englishman who commented that the Swami's 'great genius lies in his dignity it is nothing short of royal!' To her it was evident that he had 'grasped the great fact that the East must come to the West, not as a sycophant, not as servant, but as Guru and teacher.' Nothing Indian for him 'required apology' and if something did 'to the pseudo-refinement of the alien' he would jump at it and 'without denying, without minimising anything his colossal energy was immediately concentrated on the vindication of that particular point, and the unfortunate critic was tossed backwards and forwards on the horns of his own argument.'⁵ Such a stance, Sister noticed, though 'frankly unpleasant' to some was yet 'superb in the manliness that even enemies must admire.' For him his country's hope 'was in herself. Never in the alien.' Even though his heart was wide in its embrace and he did sound a 'universal promise to the world' yet 'he never sought for

help, or begged for assistance. He never leaned on any. What might be done it was the doer's privilege to do, not the recipient's to accept.⁶ To him everything Indian 'was absolutely and equally sacred, - "This land to which must come all souls wending their way Godward!"⁷

While talking of India to his European [read Western] disciples [and today it may well perhaps be equally applicable to westernized Indians talking ever so-glibly on what needs to be done for India by Indians] the Swami's position was reflected in the following words boldly articulated, 'Remember, if you love India at all, you must love her *as she is*, not as you might wish her to become.'⁸ Sister saw this 'great firmness of his, standing like a rock for what actually was' as having the greatest effect on the opening up of the alien mind to the deeper rhythms of India and her common life.⁹ This rock like firmness hardly shook or swayed - 'The best of every land had been offered him, but it left him still the simple Hindu of the old style'¹⁰ wrote Sister giving a directional hint that remains ever so true at the present time when the onslaught of a trend of de-culturisation is evident all around.

But perhaps what must echo, inspire and guide for all times to come is Swamiji's perception of the essential national unity and then himself embodying that unity in his life and action. Sister movingly described it. She saw his whole life as a 'search for the common basis of Hinduism.' For him, 'the idea that two pice postage, cheap travel, and a common language of affairs could create a national unity, was obviously childish and superficial. These things could only be made to serve old India's turn if she already possessed a deep organic unity of which they might conveniently

become an expression.'¹¹ It was in order to re-discover just such a unity that the Master began his wanderings all over the country 'gaining a vision as accurate and minute as it was profound and general'¹² eventually coming to embody that very unity in his inner being and its outward manifestations. The description that Sister gives of that expression of national unity which exuded from the Master is perhaps unequalled in its lyricism and imagery: '...he had learnt, not only the hopes and ideals of every sect and group of the Indian people, but their memories also. A child of the Hindu quarter of Calcutta returned to live by the Ganges-side, one would have supposed from his enthusiasm that he had been born, now in the Punjab, again in the Himalayas, at a third moment in Rajputana, or elsewhere. The songs of Guru Nanak alternated with those of Mira Bai and Tanasena on his lips. Stories of Prithvi Raj and Delhi jostled against those of Chitore and Pratap Singh, Shiva and Uma, Radha and Krishna, Sita-Ram and Buddha. Each drama lived in a marvelous actuality, when he was the player. His whole heart and soul was a burning epic of the country, touched to an overflow of mystic passion by her very name.'¹³ Thus 'the India that he saw presented a spectacle strangely unlike that visible to any other eye...he held in his hand the thread of all that was fundamental, organic, vital; he knew the secret springs of life, he understood with what to touch the heart of millions. And he had gathered from all this knowledge a clear and certain hope.'¹⁴

The essential meaning of her Master's Sannyasa Sister believed was to 'reassert that which was India's essential self, and leave the great stream of the national life, strong in a

fresh self-confidence and vigour to find its own way to the ocean.¹⁵ Once this self-confidence re-ignited, once this new energy is re-awakened 'no power on earth would stand before her' the only rider being that 'in her *own* life [would] she find life, not in imitation; [it was] from her own proper past and environment that she would draw inspiration.¹⁶

The re-discovery of this essential unity, the re-stating of the expressions of this unity, the re-launching of this quest for discovering a living unity in the nation's life, the defining and re-visiting of the common bases of Hinduism ought to be the inspiring motives of the national celebrations observing Swamiji's 150th birth anniversary. Such an approach would be a truly fitting tribute not only to his life and message but would also allow a collective understanding of the national significance of Swamiji's life and work to develop again. Sister

Nivedita's words and impression remain *the* guiding light for those willing to make this effort she cannot be omitted in any national understanding of the Swami's message!

Endnotes

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to be continued...

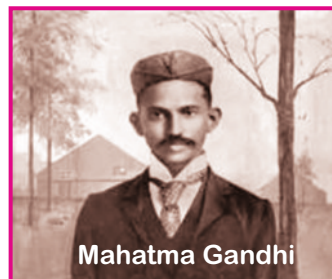
Economic policies of Independent India borrowed from the West

Prof.P.Kanagasabapathi

The independence of India was the dream realized after the struggles and sacrifices of millions spanning around two centuries. For about eight centuries earlier, India had been facing difficulties due to invasions and governance by rulers from alien backgrounds. Hence Indians were looking for independence which would provide them an opportunity to frame 'their own' policies based on the background, experiences and ethos of this age-old nation. There was also an urgent need to set right the distortions that had set in during the regime of the alien rulers during the previous centuries. The British domination had already reduced India to 'the poorest country in the civilized world' from the long-held status of the most developed nation in the world.

More than any other personality in the contemporary period, Mahatma Gandhi articulated the need for India-centric economic policies for her overall development, much before independence. Even during his early years of public life, he firmly believed that the western ideas

would not suit our country. In his much celebrated work "Hind Swaraj" written during 1909 while he was travelling from London to South Africa, he underlined that the western civilization was doomed for failure and the Indian civilization, with her unique background and fundamentals, should opt for native approaches. In fact even earlier, from 1880 to 1905, some of the Indian leaders advocated nationalistic economic policies.



Mahatma Gandhi

Later even while he was completely involved in the freedom movement after his return to India, Gandhiji wanted to initiate a discussion with regard to the type of economic policies that would be suitable to the country after Independence. He was aware that mere transfer of political power from the Englishmen to the natives would not be able to improve the conditions in the country, unless economic policies suitable to the country were evolved. Everyone was sure that the policies of the Britishers would not be suitable as they were designed to benefit them. Hence Gandhiji's initiative

assumed significance, as he was really concerned with the situation in the post-independent India. However the leadership of the Congress scuttled his efforts. As a result there was no discussion or debate about the economic policies of free India at the national level.

After independence, when India got the opportunity for the first time after many centuries to plan her economic policies, there was no clarity. Unfortunately many



in the policy making circles were not aware of the ground realities of the Indian situation and her history of sustainable economic systems, as they were guided by the western ideas due to their education and understanding. Gandhiji also died within a few months after independence. Subsequently, the Congress under the leadership of Nehru, adopted socialism as the guiding ideology of the party.

As a result the socialistic policies were imposed on this great country, which had had her own time-tested economic systems that had sustained her as an economic power and prosperous nation for centuries. One has to remember that socialism was born in the west as a reaction to the conditions prevailing there

during the nineteenth century. It was based on their outlook and approach. History shows that the ideas and approaches of the western world remained too narrow. Their history itself is very short compared to ours.

For more than thirty years from the 1950s, India's destiny was driven by the economic policies based on the socialistic ideas. The license-permit raj with the *neta-babu* syndrome was obstructing growth.

The results were disappointing and the country was not able to achieve even the basic objectives. When the communist USSR collapsed in 1989 and was broken to pieces, socialism was reduced to a text-book theory. Even a decade earlier, the other powerful communist country at that time namely China opted to move away from the ideology of their party. It was only after socialism was widely accepted to have failed that the Indian establishment slowly woke up to the realities. Moreover the serious conditions that the economy was facing during the beginning of the 1990s compounded the situation, and as a result socialism was abandoned.

History gave another chance to the country to discuss and frame a policy frame work suited to the experiences and aspirations of her people. But the people were let down once again by the elite and the policy making circles. This time the market driven capitalistic model, born and developed in the west, was adopted as the state policy, again without serious debates and discussions. As a result for the second time in independent India, another alien ideology not suited to the culture and ethos of the country began to be

implemented. The market centric model is the latest version of the western capitalism whose roots lay in individualism.

As a result, beginning from the early 1990s, the economy began to be opened up, with many of the controls being removed. Liberalization, privatization and globalization became the *mantra* for the proponents of the new ideology and the United States became the model. Foreign participation and investments were being freely encouraged in different sectors.

Now after twenty years of experience with the market ideology, more than one fourth of people go to bed with an empty stomach. The most critical sector of the economy namely agriculture is in serious trouble. Farmers' suicides have been increasing; in many places the country sides wear a deserted look with villagers opting to go out in search of jobs to make their ends meet. Rural industries are facing extinction. There has been an increase in unemployment resulting in social problems. At the same time the 'consumer culture' is spreading fast especially among the higher income, urban and younger sections of the society. Moreover the gap between the rich and poor has been increasing.

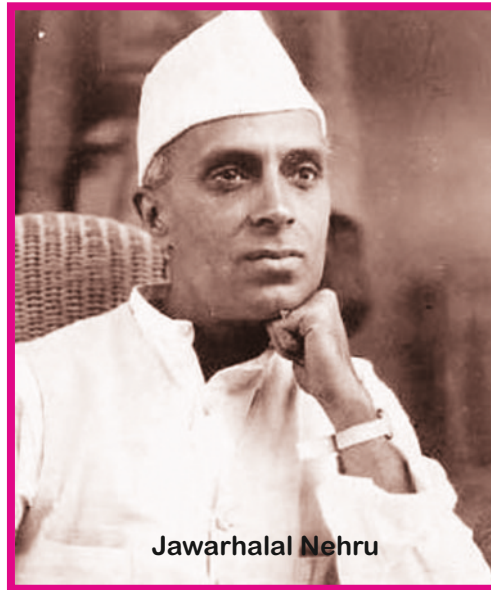
The market ideology has failed to deliver the desired results in India. In fact it is failing even in the west, and many of its supporters have started raising serious doubts about the very theories that govern the ideology. The global economic crisis has revealed to them once again the true nature of their favorite ideology. Paul

Krugman, Professor of Princeton University, US and the winner of the Nobel Prize in economics for 2008 notes: 'much of the past 30 years of macro economics was "spectacularly useless at best, and positively harmful at worst."

Thus the economic history of post-independent India shows that the ruling establishments and the policy making circles have let down the

country each time an opportunity was presented to them to frame suitable policies for the country. With the result, the country is not able to fulfil even the basic minimum requirements of her citizens, after sixty years of planning. All these years, we have been only aping the west; applying their policies and waiting to listen to their sermons, without the expected results.

It is another matter that in spite of all confusions and contradictions at the policy making levels, India is emerging as an economic power overcoming many hurdles that lie before her.



Jawaharlal Nehru

Our Heroes

Lachit Borphukan Man who guarded our North East

Lachit Borphukan

A demoralized army, from their lines of defense, was watching the huge enemy boats sailing up the river. The Brahmaputra that fed and nourished them with her plentiful waters was now carrying the enemy nearer. Along with the army, the Commander-in-Chief also observed these approaching boats.

The flotilla of boats manned by Europeans and Turks belonged to the Mughal army. The Mughal army under Raja Ram Singh had sieged Guwahati for more than a year. They had suffered losses as the Ahom warriors were prepared for this war. However, very recently, the tides had turned in the favour of Mughals. The war was approaching its climax.

The year was 1671. Leading the Ahom warriors was Lachit Borphukan, the most famous son of Assam.

The Only Successful Mughal Invasion of Ahom

In 1662, the Ahoms had suffered their only defeat in centuries at the hands of Mir Jumla. At that time, the Ahoms were in a state of dissension. Mir Jumla himself was not in a good position, but utilizing the disquiet among the Ahoms, he captured the Ahom capital Garhgaon. The Ahoms however, refused to accept defeat and continued to raid the Mughal forces attacking them through guerilla warfare. The climate and the environment also took their tolls on the Mughal forces.



In 1663, Mir Jumla ceased Mughal occupation of Garhgaon, but imposed humiliating conditions on the Ahoms through the **Treaty of Ghilajharighat**.

The Ahom King Sutamla, popularly referred to as Jayadhwaja Singha, at the time of his death entrusted the task of redeeming the Ahom Kingdom from this humiliation to his successor Chakradhwaja Singha or Supangmung.

Preparations for the War

Chakradhwaja Singha initiated efforts to rebuild the Ahom nation, helped by the industrious people. He needed an able and courageous warrior to lead his army against the Mughals. At this time, Lachit was Superintendent of the Royal Household Guards or *Dolakasharia Barua*. After testing his efficiency and commitment, the king resolved to appoint Lachit as the Commander-in-Chief of the Ahom army. He presented Lachit with the ceremonial Hengdang.

Lachit was the son of Sukuti, who was

popularly referred to as Momai Tamuli, the first Borbarua and also Commander-in-Chief of Ahom forces during the reign of King Prataapa Singha. Momai Tamuli ensured that his son Lachit was properly educated in the disciplines necessary for nobility. After the completion of his formal education, Lachit was appointed as the scarf bearer of the Ahom Swargadeo, a post equivalent to that of a private secretary.

From his father, Lachit had inherited an unwavering sense of duty, involvement and loyalty. He now immersed himself completely in the preparations for the war. He was a harsh taskmaster, but very sincere to his job that he did not hesitate to behead even his uncle, who was found lacking in performance.

Liberation of Ahom territory

In August 1667, Lachit accompanied by Atan Burhagohain lead the Ahom warriors towards Guwahati. In November 1667, he captured the Itakhuli fort and later drove the Mughal forces beyond Manas after taking the faujdar Firruz Khan as prisoner.

In December 1667, the tyrant Aurangzeb was informed of the defeat of the Mughal forces at the hands of Ahom warriors. He ordered a massive army commanded by Raja Ram Singh to attack and subdue the Ahoms. Aurangzeb added an additional 30,000 infantrymen, 21 Rajput chiefs with their contingents, 18,000 cavalry, 2,000 archers and shielders, and 40 ships to Ram Singh's forces of 4,000 troopers (from his *char-hazaari mansab*), 1,500 *ahadis* and 500 *barqandezes*.

Selection of the Battlefield

Lachit Borphukan anticipated such a move by the Mughals. Therefore, immediately after capturing Guwahati he began strengthening the defenses around the Ahom territory. He used the Brahmaputra as a natural perimeter

defense and augmented her banks with stockades and mud embankments. He was fully aware that he did not stand a chance against the Mughal troops on the plains. He cleverly choose the hilly and forested terrain just outside Guwahati as his battleground, where the Ahom warriors had an advantage over the Mughals.

Siege of Guwahati and the Alaboi Confrontation

The Mughal forces attacked Guwahati in March 1669 and for over a year laid siege to it. During the entire period, the Mughals could not achieve any breakthrough as the Ahoms had erected secure defenses. The unaccustomed terrain and climate also turned against the Mughal forces. The Ahoms had the advantage and were using it fully by conducting guerilla raids against the Mughal troops.

The Mughals tried to sow dissension among the Ahoms through trickery. They shot an arrow into the Ahom camp with a letter addressed to Lachit. In that letter, the Mughals offered to pay Lachit one lakh rupees and urged him to evacuate Guwahati. This incident was informed to the Ahom king, which raised doubts in his mind about the loyalty of Lachit. Atan Burhagohain quelled the king's doubts about Lachit's loyalty.

Followed by this the Mughals lured the Ahoms for a confrontation on the plains. The Ahom king urged Lachit to take this up as a challenge. A small force of Mughal troops commanded by Mir Nawab was to engage the Ahom warriors at Alaboi. The Ahoms had made elaborate preparations and concealed their reinforcement in trenches. This helped the Ahoms capture Mir Nawab and rout his troops. The Mughals enraged by this defeat let loose their entire forces on the Ahoms that led

to a massacre of 10,000 Ahom warriors.

Lachit withdrew his forces up to the Itakhuli fort after this major setback. While the war was raging on, the Ahom king Chakradhwaja Singha died. He was succeeded by Udayaditya Singha. Observing that none of the Mughal strategies were successful, Ram Singh offered the Ahoms 300,000 rupees to give up their claim on Guwahati and return to an earlier treaty agreed in 1639. However, this was fiercely opposed by Atan Burhagohain, who raised the suspicion that the tyrannical emperor of Delhi may not abide by this proposal.

Meanwhile, Munnawar Khan, the Mughal admiral joined Ram Singh, with a rebuking message from Aurangzeb to make war with the Ahoms and not friendship. Ram Singh was now forced to move in full strength against the Ahoms. He was informed of a breach in the



embankment near Andharubali. At this time, Lachit was down with severe illness and could not actively oversee the battle preparations.

Victory and Defeat

The Ahom army was demoralized after their defeat at the hands of the Mughals in the previous battle at Alaboi. When they saw the huge enemy boats looming nearer, they were devastated and were on the brink of deserting and fleeing the scene. Sensing this, Lachit

immediately ordered a flotilla of seven boats to be prepared for him and forced himself from the sickbed and on to the boats. He firmly stated that regardless of what happens, he will never desert his country. Seeing their general back on foot and hearing his words gave the Ahoms a big morale boost. All soldiers rushed to Lachit's side and their numbers swelled immediately.

The Ahoms launched their small boats and Lachit led them to a head on confrontation with the Mughals in the middle of the river. The smaller Ahom boats had greater maneuverability as opposed to the large Mughal vessels. The Mughal boats were stuck in the water unable to navigate efficiently. In a closely fought battle, the Mughals were decisively defeated. The Mughal admiral Munnawar Khan was killed in battle. Many of the Mughal commanders and numerous troops were also killed.

The Ahoms chased the Mughals up to the Manas, which was the western boundary of the Ahom. Lachit also instructed his troops to be always alert for counterattacks from the Mughals. All these events are presumed to have taken place in the month of March in the year 1671.

Though Lachit emerged victorious in the war against the Mughals and restored the glory and dignity of Ahoms, the strains of war had taken their toll on him. He never recovered from his illness and died an year later in April 1672.

Legacy

He was put to rest at the Lachit Maidan built by the King Udayaditya Singha at Hoolungapara in 1672. His statue was unveiled at the National Defense Academy at Khadakwasla in 2000 by then Governor of Assam, Lt. Gen. S K Sinha. Every year the best cadet passing out of the Academy is awarded the **Lachit Medal**.