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## Book Review: "Swami Vivekananda and the Modernisation of Hinduism"

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found in the people of religious traditions different from her own. She effortlessly uses what appear to be "Western" terms in order to express the Hindu experience. Thus she gives the strong impression that she is well-informed in Western theory in this field and uses it effectively to present the Hindu position.

Machado's study is short and not as organized and complete as one might have desired it to be. His thesis is that the three paths to liberation proposed in the Bhagavad Gita, that is the *karmamarga*, *jnanamarga*, and *bhaktimarga* are actually considered by Jnaneshvar as one "triple path" or a single yoga under the generic name of *bhakti* in the Jnaneshvari (3). The first section of the essay presents a brief account of the *bhakti* tradition, focusing finally on Jnaneshvar, his brothers and sister, and those who succeeded him in the Maharashtrian *bhakti* tradition.

The second section presents a very brief history of Maharashtra and then recounts the life of Jnaneshvar. In this section, Machado also raises the issue of the indeterminacy of the image of Vitthal/Vithoba in Pandharpur. Is it an *avatara* of Vishnu-Krishna or of Panduranga-Shiva? This lack of a clear identification in regard to the image is reflected as well in Jnaneshvar. Having written a commentary on the Bhagavad Gita that speaks of Krishna as the highest Brahman, Jnaneshvar was, nevertheless, as *advaitin* in the Natha tradition (17). This ambiguity in regard to Jnaneshvar's position is also reflected in the questioning of his authorship of devotional *abhangas* by some scholars. They do not

want to attribute such songs to Jnaneshvar because they consider him an *advaitin* philosopher who would never have written in such a genre (28).

The longest section of the essay is devoted to the Jnaneshvari. Quoting other scholars, Machado makes the point that the Jnaneshvari is not merely a translation of the Bhagavad Gita into Marathi but is a literary work in itself that "brought pride, prestige and maturity to the Marathi language" (33). Most of this section discusses the three paths to *karma*, *jnana* and *bhakti*, first in general, then as found in the Bhagavad Gita, and finally as presented in the Jnaneshvari. Machado quotes many other authors in this section but does little to integrate their insights into his own "argument" such as it is. Rather, he offers a series of his own thoughts along with quotations from others which, while being sometimes interesting, does not leave one with the sense that he has communicated any significant insight into Jnaneshvar's thought. In his conclusion, Machado stresses the importance of religion, not as speculative knowledge or indiscriminate activity, but as an intimate experience of God. The essay is followed by two anthologies. The first is of verses from the Bhagavad Gita and other sources describing the three paths. The second is Machado's "rather liberal" translation of selected verses from chapter 18 of the Jnaneshvari interspersed with his own commentary. A bibliography is also included.

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Andover Harvard Library

***Swami Vivekananda and the Modernisation of Hinduism.*** William Radice. SOAS Studies on South Asia. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, 299 pp.

THE ARTICLES COLLECTED in this very useful volume were all written for a workshop held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, to mark the centenary of Swami Vivekananda's celebrated address to the 1893

World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago. The workshop sought to give scholarly attention to Vivekananda's social and religious ideals in the face of distortions that were being worked on them by Hindu fundamentalists keen to co-opt Vivekananda

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to their cause.

The focus and tone for the book is set by Tapan Raychaudhuri's opening article "Swami Vivekananda's Construction of Hinduism", which argues that any attempt to present Vivekananda as a Hindu fundamentalist or communalist grossly contradicts the evidence. Rather, argues Raychaudhuri, the Swami's concerns were (1) his personal quest for realization following the discipline of Ramakrishna, (2) at Chicago he countered the then popular Western view of Hinduism as a form of barbarism, and (3) the national revival of India in which the monks and nuns of the Ramakrishna Order were to play a central role (with the monistic doctrine of Vedanta as the key inspiration for this activity). In this context Vivekananda rejected all narrow forms of Hindu revival and therefore cannot legitimately be claimed as a progenitor of the VHP. He did not go to Chicago to champion Hinduism but rather to raise funds to support the poor in India, to help secure Western technology for India's industrial development, and to obtain funds to set up a monastery in India to help ameliorate the condition of the masses. This is clear, says Raychaudhuri, when one analyses what Vivekananda said at the different sessions of the Chicago congress. In his famous speech at the inaugural session he proudly presented Hinduism, not as a narrow religion, but as one which accepted all religions to be true – a presentation of Hinduism based on broad Vedantic metaphysics rather than on Vedic and Puranic ritualistic duties central to narrower conceptions of Hindu belief and practice. His was a universalist approach founded on the Vedanta perspective which enabled him to hold that one encountered God in every religion, and that no one religion should attempt to triumph over other (6). Following Ramakrishna, he argued for the removal of religious and communal barriers – a critique, as he saw it, of the orthodox and popular Hinduism of his day. Thus, argues Raychaudhuri, Vivekananda cannot legitimately be co-opted to support the RSS-VHP cause today.

Although he established the Rama-

krishna Mission as a neo-Vedanta reformist movement in India, Vivekananda's focus was on service to the poor, to the underprivileged masses of the country. In serving the poor, one served God. In his travels, said Vivekananda, he had not found God but had learned to love human beings (9). Vivekananda believed that the future belonged to the masses and that the task of the educated middle classes in India was to empower the masses through education. Vivekananda, says Raychaudhuri, had no patience for any religion that was unconcerned with the physical misery of people and he was contemptuous of *bhadralob* policies which paid no attention to things such as mass illiteracy. This was the task he gave to his missionaries, who were also to preach the message of Vedanta and practice Yoga until they realized the non-denominational spirituality of all doctrines. This they would do as dedicated celibate monks and nuns, freed of worldly attachments. Their goal was to arouse the brutish *tamas* of India's poverty of the masses to a *rajas* filled with this-worldly virtues (e.g. feeding and educating the poor). His aim was to achieve a Western type powerful material civilization in India, but one with a *sattva* soul inspired by Vedanta (11). Future Indians, said Vivekananda, were to have strong Muslim bodies and Vedantic souls. In his nationalist vision, he claimed the Indo-Islamic poet as part of India's heritage. Raychaudhuri makes a strong case for the deep chasm between Vivekananda's deep revulsion for many of the fundamentalists of Brahmanical Hinduism and his program to revive India by feedings, healing, and educating the masses – Hindus and Muslims alike. This is very different from the narrower Hindu nationalism of the VHP today, says Raychaudhuri.

In addition to Raychaudhuri's article and others specifically on Vivekananda, this volume includes two papers on nineteenth-century Banaras (Nita Kumar and Vasudha Dalmia); two detailed studies of contemporary critiques of caste – in India as a whole (Susan Bayly) and in the Ramananda

Order of Vaishnava monks (Vijay Pinch); and comparisons between Vivekananda and other significant leaders and thinkers: Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (Julius Lipner), two *sanatan dharma* propagandists in the Punjab (Kenneth Jones) and Govind Chandra Dev in East Bengal (Hiltrud Rustau). What the volume shows, says the editor, William Radice, is that for Vivekananda modernization meant both physical and mental reform. "His central project – uniting his work in India and the West – was to work out what in the religious traditions not only of India but of all countries and civilizations was valid and acceptable to modern scientific and

historical understanding: (ix). What should be preserved from the past and what should be discarded from the world's religions? These questions are as crucial today as they were a hundred years ago. Together with Rambachan's recent *The Limits of Scripture: Vivekananda's Reinterpretation of the Vedas* (University of Hawaii Press, 1994), this book would provide the basis for an excellent graduate/senior undergraduate seminar on "Vivekananda and Hindu Reform".

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***His Star in the East.*** Augustin Saulière, SJ. Revised and Re-edited by S. Rajamanickam, SJ. Madras: De Nobili Research Institute, 1995.

***Disputed Mission: Jesuit Experiments and Brahmanical Knowledge in Seventeenth-Century India.*** Ines G. Zupanov. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999.

***Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America 1542-1773.*** Gauvin Bailey. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

***The Call of the Orient: A Response by Jesuits in the Sixteenth Century.*** Anthony D'Costa, SJ. Mumbai: Heras Institute of Indian History and Culture, 1999.

**ROBERTO DE NOBILI** (1577-1656) was an Italian Jesuit priest who came to India in 1605, reaching the city of Madurai in Tamil Nadu in November 1606. For most of the next 40 years he lived and worked there as a missionary. De Nobili is best remembered – and admired and criticized – for his willingness to adapt to Indian customs of dress, food, and manner of living. In his first years in Madurai, de Nobili put into practice the methods of adaptation for which he is famous. He simplified his dress, diet, and lifestyle and sought to follow the ascetic lifestyle of a Hindu renunciant. A talented linguist, he was one of first

Europeans to learn Tamil, and perhaps the first to write theological treatises in that (or any) Indian language. He also read Sanskrit, the classical language of Hindu India, and was perhaps the first European to read extensively in that language. He used his learning to establish contacts within the Hindu community and to win over converts, beginning in 1607. He hoped in this way to make his spiritual mission clear, win the attention of his desired audience, and remove the impression that Christianity was merely a foreign, Western religion. He was determined to show that the Christian faith, the one true religion, could flourish in India.