

VEDANTA CENTER OF ATLANTA

May 12, 2019

Br. Shankara

The Non-dualism of Sri Sarada Devi

TODAY IS MOTHER'S DAY

Quote from the Chandi: “All mythologies and scriptures ...” AND

*“She who, since birth, has ever led me on
Through paths of trouble to perfection's goal,
Mother-wise, in Her own sweet playful ways,
She, who has always through my life inspired
My understanding, She, my Mother, She,
The All, is my resort, whether my work
(Is blessed with) with full fruition or with none.”*

— From Hymn to the Divine Mother by Swami Vivekananda

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Please mark your calendar for a weekend Retreat** in mid-July. **Swami Chandrashekharanandaji** of the Portland, OR center will visit with us on a Saturday and Sunday, to offer his wisdom on Karma Yoga. Dates and schedule TBD; they will be announced soon online & in your E-news.
- **Seva Saturday for this month** is next Sat, May 18. Please note that date —

it's NOT the 2nd Saturday of the month, as usual — and join us sometime between 10am and 2pm. This is an excellent way to demonstrate your dedication to the Center.

- **Also note that your Center will be closed in August — no activities except Arati.**

This will be our routine, each summer.

CHANT • SONG • WELCOME • TOPIC

The Non-dualism of Sri Sarada Devi

May is a month for study of Jnana Yoga (Advaita Vedanta). As a jnana yogi, you practice discrimination, reason, detachment, and *satyagraha* (insistence on Truth). The goal is freedom from limitation (*mukti*). Our teachers say that all miseries in life are caused by seeing *inaccurately*. An earnest and persistent jnani may break through this misapprehension (*maya*) and see only the Divine Presence everywhere, in everything and everyone.

When we learn to see *accurately*, what will we see?

Swami Vivekananda said: “Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter. ...

“Each (one of you) is only a conduit for the infinite ocean of knowledge and power that lies behind mankind. ...”

When we study the life of Sri Sarada Devi — Holy Mother — what do we find most inspiring? She worked almost continuously for others, cooking and serving meals, keeping house, mending clothing, and tenderly looking after her relatives' children. In fact, her daily life was so taken up with these tasks that some people thought of her as nothing more than an ordinary, overworked village woman.

So how can we think of her as a conscious non-dualist? In the dead of night she could be seen counting her beads for hours on end — not for herself, but for her disciples. Then during the day, Holy Mother lovingly conducted worship of Sri Ramakrishna at appointed times. Is this not all dualism?

This morning, we'll hear, in her own words, what Holy Mother said about her life, who she was, and what motivated her. We'll find that her life was consciously lived for us — that she intended her efforts to be an example of love and devotion to the One Divine Presence that appears in human and other forms.

Well and good, yet how do we see non-dualism in Holy Mother's thoughts and actions?

She herself said it was all done as the practice of Sri Ramakrishna's **VIJNANA (his special knowledge): Nirguna Brahman and Saguna Brahman — Shiva and Shakti — the un-manifest and the manifest realities —are one and the same, identical.**

The Master's metaphor = water still and water in waves is the same water.

1st quote from Holy Mother: “Sri Ramakrishna left me behind to manifest the Motherhood of God to the world.” As the Master said, “to serve Shiva as jiva ...”

What is meant by the Motherhood of God?

Excerpts from the Devi Mahatmyam — (Glorification of the Great Goddess) — a collection of 700 Verses on Sri Durga from Markandeya Purana: The Markandeya Purana is one of the major eighteen Mahapuranas, a genre of Hindu religious texts (stories, parables regarded as “near-scriptural”).

WHO IS SPEAKING: Brahma is the first god in the Hindu triumvirate, or Trimurti (three forms): the three gods who are responsible for the creation, upkeep, and destruction of the world.

Brahma's job was creation of the world and all its creatures. The other two gods are Vishnu and Shiva. Here's what Brahma says about the MOTHER:

72-74. ... You are verily that which cannot be uttered specifically. You are (the power of Brahman) made manifest and the supreme Mother of the gods (natural forces).

75-77. 'By you this universe is upheld, by you this world is created. By you it is protected, O Devi and you always consume it at the end. O you who are (always) of the form of the whole world, at the time of creation you are of the form of the creative force, at the time of sustentation you are of the form of the protective power, and at the time of the dissolution of the world, you are of the form of the destructive power. You are the supreme knowledge as well as the great nescience, the great intellect and contemplation, as also the great delusion, the great Goddess as also the great Demon.

78-81. 'You are the primordial cause of everything, bringing into force the three (gunas). You are the dark night of periodic dissolution. You are the great night of final dissolution, and the terrible night of delusion.

You are the goddess of good fortune, the ruler; (you are) modesty, intelligence characterized by knowledge, bashfulness, nourishment, contentment, tranquility and forbearance. Armed with (your celestial weapons), you are terrible (and at the same time) you are pleasing, yea more pleasing than all the pleasing things and exceedingly beautiful. You are indeed the supreme Ishvari, beyond the high and low. (!!!)

82-87. 'And whatever or wherever a thing exists... whatever power all that possesses is yourself. O you who are the soul of everything, how can I extol you (more than this)? ... Who is here capable of extolling you? Who is capable of praising you, who have made all of us – Vishnu, myself and Shiva – take our embodied forms? ...

From this comprehensive description to the specific: from Sri Durga, all that is and ever was, who cannot be spoken of specifically, to Sarada Devi, a very real woman who shared this world with us until 1920, **less than 100 years ago.**

HERE'S A MEDITATION ON SRI SARADA DEVI
by *Swami Abhedananda*; *the swami was a*

—Direct disciple of Sri RK: He knew, and served with Holy Mother for years in India

—Lived and taught in the U.S. from 1897 to 1921
(sent here by Vivekananda)

—Visited Atlanta twice: 1913 & 1914
(significance to us?)

- Here from March 3-10, 1913 — spoke to SRO crowds
- Sponsor: Atlanta Psychological Society & the Masons
- “Hindu Psychology” at Unitarian Church,
- Carnegie Library; Cable Hall (“Reincarnation”); Taft Hall (“Indian Thought & Social Ethics”)
- Returned to Atlanta by popular demand in 1914
- Went home to India in 1921, left the body there in 1939

Abhednanda’s poem —

1. Sri Sarada Devi, the grantor of all Knowledge, of golden hue, sitting at ease with her hair disheveled falling on half her breast;
2. Dressed in white cloth, adorned with gold ornaments, with two arms and fixed eyes, and her hands resting on her lap;

3. Ever having a contented or pleased look and her heart melting at the miseries of all creatures, full of resplendent light, the Effulgent One who ever grants boons, and is ever auspicious;

4. Whose soul is dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna, who is fond of hearing His name, the embodiment, as it were, of His thoughts, and who is the Mother of the universe;

5. Full of affection, the Auspicious One, ever calm, the grantor of bhakti (devotion) and Mukti (liberation), and the protectress of all creatures;

Thus should one meditate on her (Devi Sarada) in the lotus of one's heart.

○ ...

Having praised Holy Mother's attributes, his poem ends: ***Thus should one meditate on her (Devi Sarada) in the lotus of one's heart.***

Why? Picture (form), name, and sound are the same as the thing itself

2nd quote from Holy Mother: "I can't contain myself when one draws near me and calls me Mother." Draws near: Picture, her name, in your mind's eye.

3rd quote from Holy Mother: “To err is human, but how few know how to lead an erring man?”

Go to Her, pour out your heart — she can and will lead you forward; she does not judge you.

4th quote from Holy Mother: If my son wallows in the dust or mud, it is me who have to wipe all the dirt off his body and take him to my lap.”

What does this mean? What happens when She does this?

5th quote from Holy Mother: “The injunctions of Destiny are cancelled if one takes refuge in God. Destiny has to strike off with her own hand what she has decreed about such a person.”

Not a new promise:

Sri Krishna, 9th Ch. of the Gita: “Though a man be soiled with the sins of a lifetime, let him but love me, rightly resolved, in utter devotion, I see no sinner, that man is holy. Holiness shall soon refashion his nature to peace eternal ...”

6th quote from Holy Mother: Don't puzzle the mind with too many inquiries.

One finds it difficult to put one single thing into practising, but dares invite distraction by filling the mind with too many things.

Focus your efforts on the spiritual practice given to you by your Guru; trust in those instructions, that mantra, and the love of your Guru.

Final quotes from Sri Sarada Devi: Love is our (strength). It is through love that the Master's family has taken shape. ... Do not be afraid; the Master is behind you, and I am, too, as your Mother.

I am the Mother of the virtuous, I am the Mother of the wicked. Whenever you are in distress, say to yourself: "I have a Mother!"

My child, I bless you from my heart that you live long, attain devotion, and enjoy peace. Peace is the principal thing. One needs peace alone.

**Q&A AND DISCUSSION —
REGULAR CLOSING PRAYER**