

BOOK REVIEWS

Sheila McDonough, *Gandhi's Responses to Islam*, New Delhi: D K Print World (P) Ltd., 1994, pp. 133, Rs. 140.

Ours is an age of interreligious dialogue. Interreligious dialogue presupposes certain knowledge of the other religions with whom one is going to enter into dialogue. Do we have some models in dialogue? Is Gandhi a model? Do we find in him a vision on Islam which has a great influence on Indian culture? If he knew what were the components of this comprehensive vision, this volume, first in the series of "Islamic Heritage in Cross-cultural Perspectives" throws some light into the issue. The author, a specialist in Comparative Religion, more particularly in Islam, traces the intellectual influences and other social and political determinants that had helped Gandhi to shape his vision on Islam - a vision he particularly shared with many of his Indian contemporaries.

This study is divided into six chapters. Gandhi earned his 'First Impressions of Islam' in his school days from the Sufi hymns, especially that of Kabir. Second chapter 'Challenge in South Africa' vividly explains how Gandhi developed his religious symbolism both from Hindu and Muslim hymns to protest against Europeans in South Africa and Britishers in India. For instance, Rama - Ravana (Hindu) and God-Satan (Muslim). 'Challenge in India', the third Chapter enumerates Gandhi's efforts to make a 'heart-unity' among Hindus and Muslims. Gandhi sees his struggle as that of Prophet Muhammad who struggled to create a new civilization. Gandhi's joining in the Khilafat Movement was to win the support of Muslims according to the author.

Fourth and fifth chapters describe the political ingredients of Gandhi's responses to Islam. The riots in Noakhali and the continued atrocities, the undercurrents in the partition of India, differences of opinion between Gandhi and Jinnah etc., are explained with sufficient evidence. A key notion that Gandhi's loyalty to the "parent-stock" and Jinnah's resentment against it which quickened the partition is to be noted here. The concluding chapter 'Gandhi's image of Islam' gives an overview of how great writers on Islam like Gibbon, Carlyle and others enriched Gandhian vision.

Gandhi's relationship with Muhammad Ali, Shaukat Ali, Maulana Azad, Muhammad Iqbal and with his other contemporaries, is well explained. In short, this book is a valuable historical piece which combines both scholarship and readability.

Mathew Kareethara

Anantanand Rambachan, *The Limits of Scripture: Vivekananda's Reinterpretations of the Vedas*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994, pp. 170.

The scriptural authority has always been a bone of contention in Hinduism. For Swami Dayananda Sarasvati, Vedas were the only source of truth and knowledge. Many people believe that the reading and study of the scriptures alone will suffice for the religious experience. But here is a book that reconsiders the authority of the Vedas in the light of the contributions of Swami Vivekananda, a great reformer of Hinduism.

The aim of this study is to clarify Vivekananda's understanding of the authority of Sruti and its relation to personal experience (Anubhava). The first chapter analyses the immediate background (from Rammohan to Ramakrishna) in which Vivekananda's understanding and reinterpretation of the Sruti took place. For Rammohan Roy and to a certain extent for his contemporaries like K.C. Sen and Rebendranath Tagore the text is authoritative only if it teaches the 'true' religion. Roy's concept of right doctrine is extra scriptural. For Sri Ramakrishna sacred texts only just point the way to God and so what is important is the seeing or direct vision of God.

In chapter two we see Vivekananda taking a stand that scriptural Knowledge is not self-sufficient. Like maps, scriptures can only arouse curiosity. Verification alone can bring out religious truth. For him Vedas are not the only source of truth or of revelation.

The third chapter speaks about Karma, Bhakti and Jnana as the ways to Moksha. According to the author, Sankara and Vivekananda

agrees on the fundamental problem of avidyā (ignorance). However, avidyā is the basic human problem for Vivekananda. Knowledge alone can destroy the ignorance and thus impart liberty. Although knowledge is freedom, Vivekananda does not believe that liberating knowledge comes from Sruti as Sankara argues. Instead, for this he suggests the four yogas of karma, bhakti, jñāna and rāja which are further explained in detail by the author.

The fourth chapter examines Vivekananda's concept of *anubhava*. What should be the source of knowledge if it is to be liberating? For Vivekananda, Rambachan says, Anubhava or direct perception is the source of that knowledge against the position of Sankara that Sruti is the source of knowledge. For Vivekananda religion is realization.

In the fifth chapter we have many more points of crucial differences between Sankara and Vivekananda. The concluding chapter takes stock of the important aspects of the legacy of Vivekananda as a religious thinker and reformer.

While the work evaluates the coherence and consistency of Vivekananda's reinterpretation, it also draws attention to the important problems in his claim for the supremacy of personal experience. Moreover, the book is very scientifically arranged so as to present the sequence of thought in Vivekananda especially by the recapitulation of the previous chapter in a new chapter. Thus the book provides us with very important concepts in the philosophy of religion.

Mathew Kareethara

V. Krishnamurthy, *The Ten Commandments of Hinduism*, New Delhi: Wiley Eastern Limited, 1994. pp. xvi+344, Rs. 150.

There are a number of books on Hinduism. So one may ask, why one more in this category? Sacred books of Hinduism are very many, so are studies on Hinduism. All these points to the particularity of the Sanatana Dharma, as Hinduism is called, that ultim-

ately is a way of life. Hinduism is a multifaceted religion in its way of worship. Due to the multiplicity of sacred scriptures and complexity of their teachings, an ordinary Hindu finds it difficult to get a comprehensive picture of Hinduism. It is in this respect that this work differs from many other studies on Hinduism. It is an attempt to expose the teachings of Hinduism under ten headings. The effort of the author, as he says, is "to condense almost everything in one holistic presentation".

The encompassing of the Divine Presence in the world is the first commandment. Our unending struggle of life is to find out this all embracing divinity. In this divine presence man comes to understand the need for the purification of mind from the inborn *Vāsanās* that prod him into unhealthy channels. The third commandment is *Dharma*. *Dharma* is the concordance with self. Actions concordant to this natural order bring *Punya* or merit and the actions against it bring demerit. *Dharma* reflects itself in the service of humanity. Here Rama and Sanatkumara are the representatives. These are the underlying principles and the next seven are derivatives of these three.

The mind once cleansed from *vāsanās* (maladies) must never again accumulate filth. For this *Karmayoga* with its inherent qualities like detachment, dedication and selfless service is prescribed. Next four commandments are more or less concerned with *Bhakti*. One Godhead is adored in many names and forms. Each one selects the name or form he likes most and worships the One. The concept of *Avatara*, the various manifestations of the One Godhead, is next explained and the religious experiences of *Acharyas* and *Godmen* are considered as exemplary. Reciting God's names (*Nāmasmarana*) is the seventh commandment and *Prahlada* and *Ajamila* are seen as the great examples. The *Bhakti* in God ultimately leads one to the total surrender to God. This is the eighth commandment.

Ninth commandment is about self-revelation. The very essence of *Advaita* philosophy is explained here for the common man. The tenth commandment calls for an integration of the three *margas* and for a holistic approach. The importance of *Isopanishad*, in which these ten commandments can be found, is also explained.

The value of this book in popular Hinduism is that it can be used as a practical guide for every Hindu without theoretical complexities. Moreover, the long list of questions that may arise in the mind of the reader also is given with the pages on which the convincing answers can be found. Detailed notes, glossary and charts that picture both the ten commandments and the categories of Hindus also make this study a useful one. Any reader, Hindu or non-Hindu will benefit from the reading of this book.

Mathew Kareethara