

Power, Authority, Tradition

Cultural change and Social Accommodation of Tradition in Colonial Bengal: Vivekananda's Ramakrishna for Higher Bhadrak

Nineteenth century Kolkata: Environment for agendas of bhadralok

Center of British business and colonial administration

Center of Science and Education

Orientalist vs. Anglicist controversy – common ground – state of degradation of contemporary India (while Golden Age in Vedic times)

Minto's enactment of Colebrook's? Minute on education: „*It may be hoped that the introduction of the art of printing among the Hindoos, which has been thus begun by the institution of a Sanscrit Press, will promote the general diffusion of knowledge among this numerous and very ancient people at the same time that it becomes the means of preserving classic remains of their literature and sciences*“

Bentnick enacts Macaulay's Minute on Indian education (1835): Education in India was to “*form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect*”.

Vernacularist – the third group – vernacular education (Western+partly traditional) for masses

Center of new intellectual life and orientalist research

traditional intelligentsia works with British

developed print industry, media and public discussion

Center of social reform

Religious reform and revival and nationalization as resistance against racism and degradation

Western criticism of Indian manners and the reform agenda

Idolatry

Kulin polygamy and sati

Social status of widows and the ban on widow remarriage

Child marriage

Infanticide

Status of women, dowry and rights of inheritance

Lacking mass education (and specifically women education)

Caste inequalities and marginalization

Ramakrishna: Living vernacular tradition for chakris



Key biographical dates

Gadadhar Chattopadhyay (1836-1886)

poor village brahmin family

***pathshala* education in local zamindar's house**

since 1850s - Kolkata - 1856 pujari in Daksinesvar Kali mandir (Rani Rasmoni)

1859 - married to Sarada Devi

1861-63 - tantric sadhana by Brahmani Bhairavi

1864 - pagal bhakti sadhana

vatsalya bhava (child to a parent) - Kali

madhur bhava (woman lover towards lover) - Krishna

Totapuri - vedantic initiation

1866 islamic practice - union with Allah

1870 - pilgrim period

since 1875 - Christian practice (union with Jesus) + meeting and developing relation with Keshabchandra Sen

1879 - first chakri disciples

1880 - meeting with a college student Narendranath Datta (Vivekananda)

1882 - visit at Vidyasagar's

1884 - attending and blessing Binodini Dasi acting

since 1885 - illness (Shyampukur and Kosipur), 1886 siddhi transfer on Narendra

Traditional education and background

Few books (*Ashtavakrasanhita* - descriptions of samadhi)

Verbal literate knowledge through meetings - Karampukur and Daksinesvar pilgrim routes crossroads (deep knowledge of Gaudiya vaishnavism) - bhakti bhavas

Itihasa knowledge through folk drama (himself an actor)

Family and neighborhood - Śitala cult (father), śakta tradition (brother), rich neighbours - śaivit, vaishnavit

Gurus

Brahmani Bhairavi – Bengali śakta tradition

Vaishnavacharan – low cast vaishnava sampradaya (Kartabhaja)

Djatadhari – initiation into orthodox vaishnava tradition (Ramayata)

Totapuri of Panjab - advaita-vedanta

Practice after pagal sadhana

**vatsalya and dasya
bhakti bhava towards
Kali (pujari in
Dakśinesvar)**

**all women as Mothers
(solution for kamini-
kanchan)**



Modern guru for urban bhadralok

Guru for chakris

grhastha sannyas (Íśvara and samadhi for all) + kamini-kanchan (sexual abstinence after having children as saving from unpleasant arranged marriage to non-educated wife)

inner exile through pagal bhakti (from Victorian time discipline of office routine)

living rather than book-mediated tradition of old times

informal relations with students (as opposed to traditional family or math / ashram gurus)

Since meeting Keshabchandra Sen acquaintance with higher bhadralok

unity of religions in practice for intellectual seekers of universal religion

Guru for students, young and married women

freeing from burden of sex (after giving births to sons), offer of motherly care (cooking), intellectual stimuli for housewives

Patron saint of Kolkata prostitutes in Victorian environment

blessing of actress Binodini Dasi (1863-1941)

Svami Vivekananda: From oral and transgressive to scientific and universal



Narendranath Datta (1863-1902) - key dates in life of an outsider to tradition

1878/79 - Presidency college

1880 - crisis and stay in Bodhgaya

1881 - Scottish Church College, Keshab's party in Brahmosamaj (universal practical sadhana), first meeting with Ramakrishna

1884 - father's and Keshab's death, financial difficulties - short teaching in Vidyasagar's school

1885 - slowly (sceptically) Ramakrishna's disciple

1886 - founding *Baranagur math* (with youngster disciples of Ramakrishna)

1887 - ordination as sannyasis (Svami Saccidananda)

1888/89 - pilgrimage period (Varanasi, Rishikes etc.) - first disciple (Saratcandra Gupta>Swami Sadananda), meeting pundit Mitra (Varanasi)

1890 - need to harmonize Ramakrishna's experience with advaita-vedantic tradition

- Mitra neglects jati independence of qualification for *brahmajnana* - *sruti* not over *smrti* on this issue → Ramakrishna's samadhis not derived from advaita-vedanta

- raja-yoga studies by Pavhari Baba → *alaukika pratyaksha* (extatic experience) as proper *pramana*

1890 - return to *Baranagur math*

1891 - leaving math to gain financial support for reform and seva (with minimal success)

Traditional sadhana beyond Christian dogmatism and vaidika prejudices

Sadhana for himself and his peers (rational Western educated, socially reformist youth)

vaidika but not socially prejudiced and backward – a ground for active social reform

offering *moksha* irrespective of jati-dharma limitations (moksha for brahmins and other jati alike, for women and men, sannyasis and grhasthas)

(unlike Christianity, Islam etc.) harmonious with science and rationality →

based on prove – *samadhi* as personal experience of truth

vaidika but not idolatrous but absolute – *advaita-vedanta*

tolerant, encompassing other ways (simpler – saguna)

Reinterpretation of Śankara's advaita-vedanta

High value and life-task of a householder / charity as the task of a monk as well as a householder

Advaita-vedanta as *nirguna upasana* as highest, and essential teaching of Hinduism - and source of all religions

***Karma* as mundane (at best unselfish) action, not the ritual action**

Brahmajnana* as grace and experience, not the grasp of *śabda

Widow as ideal karma-yogi (against widow and woman oppression)

Vivekananda's transition of Ramakrishna

Experience: from village life metaphors to scientific grounding

Grhastha sannyasa / karma-yoga: from concession to *bhadralok* householder to active engagement and sacralization of the strength over the world and senses (withdrawal from selfishness to brotherhood)

Catholicity: from the mark of social transition to hierarchized universalism

From kamini to kama and women liberation (Sarada Devi as Holy Mother)

From rustic Bengali to chaste Bengali and English (from parables and similes to lectures)

From Bhakti to Jnana (and Karma)

From sakara to nirguna upasana

From acceptance of social status quo and dwelling on prescriptions to engagement and criticism (*seva* to *daridra-narayan*)

From *chakri* to high bhadralok

From diversified society to united Hinduism and Indian nation

From home abroad (anti-colonialism and defence)

Global guru, working authority out

1892 - find information on a World Parliament of Religions in Chicago

1893

leaves for Chicago, takes part in the Parliament as „the member of Indias oldest order of sannyasiš

lecturing around USA

1894

regular lecturing in Brooklin

unsuccessful connection to Baranagur Math

establishment of Vedantic Society in New York

1895-96

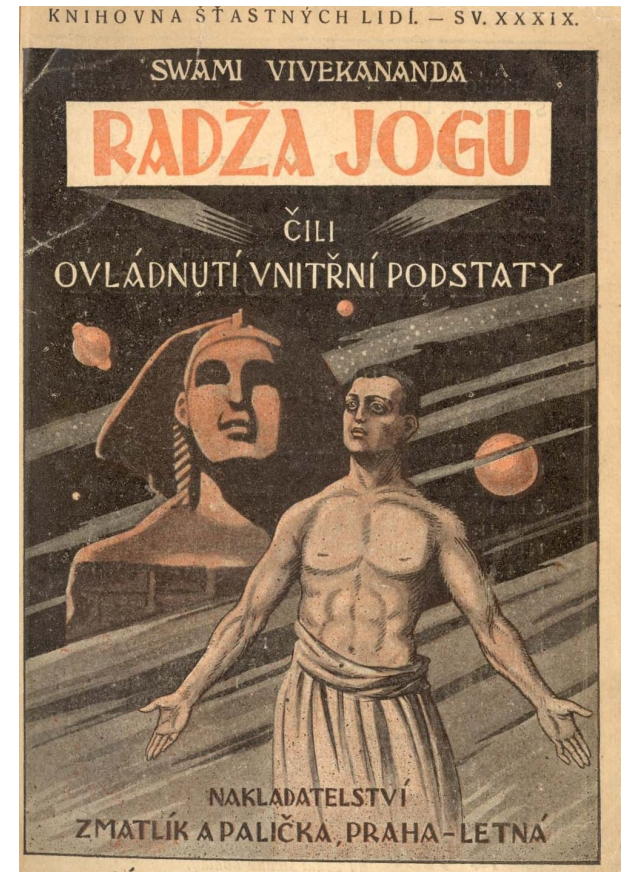
lecturing in USA on raja- and karma-yoga (published from transcriptions)

visiting GB (Mergaret Nobel aka Sister Nivedita) and returning to USA

returning to GB, meeting Max Müller

continental Europe – meeting Paul Deussen

December 1996 - return to India



Returning global guru: Authority at home

1897

arrival to Colombo – lectures from Colombo to Almora
return to Kolkata – founding Ramakrishna Mission

1898

Margret Nobel (Sister Nivedita) founds girl's school in Kolkata
Ramakrishna Math moves to Belur

1899

math in Mayavati
return to USA

1900

European tour
return to India

1902 Mahasamadhi in Belur Math



With Western woman disciples during a pilgrimage in Himalaya

