

The Indian Religion
of the
Goddess Shakti.

BY DR. HANS KOESTER.

During the three years which I spent in India, from 1925 to 1927, I had the good fortune to travel in many different parts of that vast territory, both east, north, west, and south, visiting in turn the Shan States in Burma, Kashmere, the west coast of Bombay, and Southern India and Ceylon. There were two things which from a spiritual point of view attracted my attention most, and these were the type of Buddhism prevailing in Burma and Ceylon, and that special branch of Indian religion and philosophy, almost unknown in its essence in Europe, called the Religion of the Goddess Shakti, which flourishes in Bengal and Kashmere. Personal contact with many Indian friends, whose acquaintance I had the pleasure to make, gave me the chance of studying Indian spiritual thought more deeply and, if I may say so, in a more live manner than it is possible to do from books only, even if they are old Sanskrit texts. I was honoured by an invitation from the President of the Mahabodi Society in Calcutta to speak before an audience of well-known Buddhists on two anniversaries of the birthday of the Lord Buddha, and I also had the opportunity to deliver lectures at meetings of the Indian Philosophical Congress at Calcutta in 1925 and at Benares in 1926. There, while staying for some time with Indian friends with whom I was in sympathy by reason of a certain similarity in our spiritual-philosophical researches, I realised the strength and depth of eastern spiritual thought.

I do not wish to speak about Buddhism here in this country, where Buddhism plays such an important role, before learned people from whom I would prefer to learn. I have written a short article on "Living Buddhism" in the newly

started magazine of the Buddhist Society in Calcutta which, I was glad to see, was kindly received by its readers. My object to-night is to give you a short lecture on a particular branch of Indian spiritual thought, the religion of the Goddess Shakti, which is still unknown in its true meaning in Europe and, I must say, even in the greater part of India. What I have read about it in the different books on Indian philosophy have been only simple and short allusions, containing more often than not rather erroneous ideas. In that excellent work on "Hinduism and Buddhism," by Sir Charles Eliot, there are only a few remarks on Shaktism, as this religion is usually called, and these describe its deep philosophy and ritualism in a way which cannot be regarded as altogether impartial. The European attitude towards this religious system seems to me to be much influenced by not particularly well informed opponents of it, from whom, I imagine, Sir Charles Eliot has gathered his information. That is understandable because, as he himself remarks in a footnote, the new text books of Shaktism, which have now been published by Arthur Avalon, were at that time not available to him. These text books, which include introductions and some special interpretations, give for the first time a critical and philosophic foundation to this religious system and throw an illuminating light on this very important branch of human thought. I have the privilege to be personally acquainted with and, I may add, to be a friend of that Indian personality, Arthur Avalon, the editor of the text books of Shaktism, who from modesty, and following an old and good Indian tradition, is hiding his personal name under the above pseudonym. There are now, I believe, over twenty volumes, including the most important Maha Nirvana Tantra, which means the Philosophy of the Great Liberation, published under the patronage and with the financial assistance of the great Maharaja of Mithita on the borders of Bengal. It is good to know that there are in India men like this Maharaja, whom I had the pleasure to meet personally and who spends a good part of his great fortune in furthering the revival of the spiritual influence of Shaktism, to which he personally adheres. There has been founded by him, for

the purpose of enlightening the learned public on this subject, a special society of which he is the founder-president. This society which, if small in the number of its members, is important by reason of their personalities, intends to dedicate a complete collection of all the published books on Shaktism to His Majesty the King of Siam, who, as "the Upholder of the Buddhist Faith," is regarded by them at the same time as the principal stronghold and spiritual rock of eastern culture and thought.

In making an attempt to describe to you Shaktism, my object to-day is to present you with a sketch of the metaphysical aspect of the religion as compared with other systems of philosophical thought. It is not my intention here to dwell on the ritual and ceremonial aspect of the religion which would require a lecture of its own. However, at the close I propose to give you a line of comparison which may be drawn between one of the fundamental tenets of Shaktism, and a certain aspect of Christianity and Northern Buddhism.

The expression, Shaktism, is derived from the word "Shakti." The word Shakti means "Power" both latent and manifest. When personalised it means the Devi of Power; she is Devā. The Devi Shakti is the power aspect of the supreme spirit. The doctrines and ritual of Shaktism are contained in a special branch of the holy Scriptures of India, called Tantra Shastra, which acknowledges the authority of the great Veda. "Veda" means the God inspired word which has from the oldest times been the foundation of Indian spiritual thought and culture; but it is not confined to what is called the four Vedas. They are but parts of it and based on the one Veda—for 'Vak' or 'Logos' is one.

Shaktism is an eminently practical religion. Practically the whole content of its scriptures consists in rules and ritual by which the higher realisation of the spiritual truth may be gained. This way of personal spiritual attainment, or Yoga, which is known to all

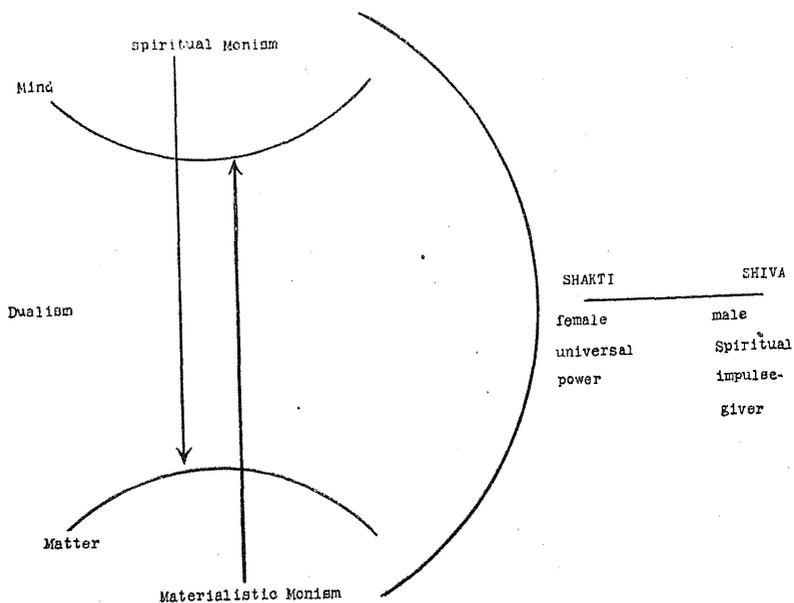
Indian religions, is called in Shaktism, Sadhana. Very often the remark can be found in the Tantrik texts that by merely pondering about the husks of words nothing is done, i. e., mere book-knowledge is useless—but that only by practically touching the truth itself can liberation, bliss and the highest consciousness be won.

This truth, to which Shaktism is devoted with all its energy, is represented by the conception of the goddess Shakti. Such a conception, that truth unveils itself spiritually in a female aspect, can only be grasped with difficulty by the European mind. The European mind is not accustomed to see differences between male and female in the spiritual world, and finds them only as far as physical sexual differences can still be discerned. But the idea of a female quality of the spirit has always been known to the deeper minds of humanity and stretches through the whole inner history of culture. Leaving aside the cults of aboriginal tribes, animism, etc., there may be mentioned, in addition to the Goddess Shakti of Indian culture, the conception of Isis in the Egyptian religion, of the figure Kwannon in China, the idea of Eve in Babylonian times and many others leading up to that connected with the Madonna of the Roman Catholic Church. Certainly there are very interesting and important differences in all these great conceptions; but it would go too far here to treat of this special subject. It is mentioned only to show that female spirituality has always played an important role in human thought.

The Goddess Shakti is the "power" which pervades the whole of the universe, and from which the Universe has emanated. There is nothing within the manifest world which is not Shakti in its essence. The manifest world is mind and matter, that is to say, all that we call our thought, will, imagination, etc. is mind, and all the realm of nature is matter. She—in her highest aspect—is pure spirit or pure consciousness—as such she is called Chit-Shakti—but her nature and essence become apparent also in all that we are aware of through our senses. So She is matter—substance too—and as such

She is called Maya-Shakti. Here is no antagonism between the spiritual and the natural sides of the universe, since she is both of them.

In order to illustrate more clearly this important principle of Shaktism, I would like to compare it with the structure of other philosophical systems in Europe or India. It may be said that all the great and well-known philosophical expressions of human thought are either monistic or dualistic, that is to say, have as their basis one or two original eternal units. Let me show it in a diagrammatic way. The dualistic view presupposes two basic units, Mind and Matter:

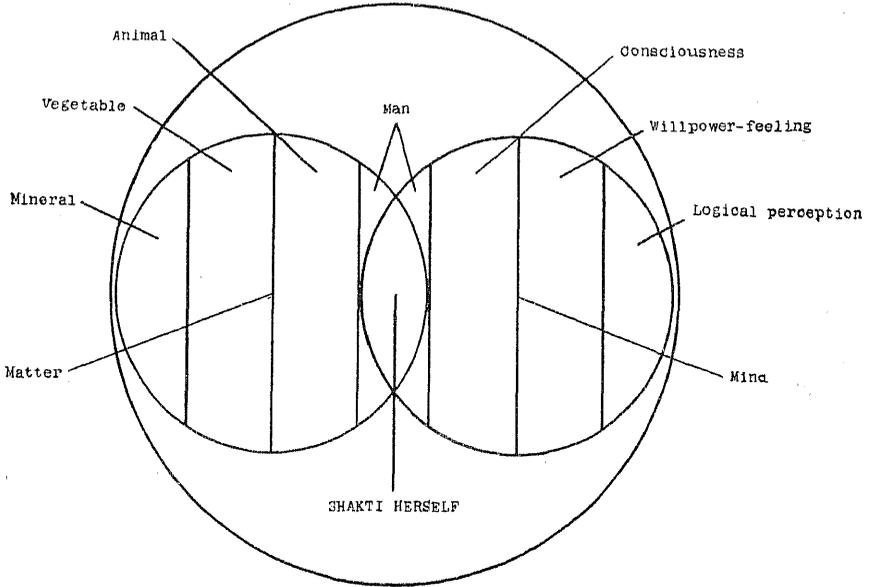


Both of these are absolute and ultimate, and everything can be derived from either of them; whereas monism takes either mind or matter as the single existing principle, of which the other is only an appearance, a different aspect or a mere effect. Taking mind as

such a principle, the expression is called "Spiritual Monism", meaning that the Spirit is the only ultimate true reality and all the material world is an "illusion" or its effect, issuing from it (a downward line would indicate this); on the other hand, regarding matter as the only basic ultimate reality, mind and spirit have no substance of their own and are mere products of matter, which could be shown by a line going upwards. Now Shaktism is something quite different from the denominations of Monism and Dualism, in so far as Shakti lies behind both mind and matter, without giving preponderance to either of them. Mind and matter as represented by the created universe are Shakti, and Shakti is bound up with Shiva, the male spiritual element whose position in the system it is difficult to describe to the European mind, but who may be taken to represent the inert Spirit lying apart from, and unconnected with, the Universe, but whose touch is necessary to give to Shakti the impulse to create. Both of them, female universal Power, Shakti, and the male impulse-giver, Shiva, constitute therefore the spiritual background of the Universe. Thus in terms of philosophical thought Shaktism is neither wholly dualistic nor wholly monistic, but constitutes a monistic dualism or dualistic monism, a "two in one" or "one in two".

The follower of Shaktism, the worshipper of Shakti, is called Shakta. His conception of the Goddess is described in the Shakti Tantra Shastras, i. e., the holy scriptures of Shaktism, often in a very poetical way. Whereas we speak of Mother Nature only in a comparative manner, for the Shakta it is absolute reality. Nature is Her body. Her presence is personally felt by him, when he is standing on the fertile ground of the earth; he touches Her life in the blossoms of the pure lotus-flower. She animates all living creatures. His own body is a part of Her great body. Worshipping Her in all Her different forms, he will find Her light, too, within his mind and consciousness. Thus, to the Shakta the whole universe of mind and matter reveals itself in its unity; he see before him Her great body which he adores; Her sacred feet, Her heart, Her mind.

It might be useful to describe this poetical view, which is at once physical and transcendental, by means of another diagram. We may for this purpose represent matter and mind by two circles which intersect each other like this :



Where they intersect, there is Shakti, so to speak, in Herself. But Her influence, Her being spreads into the whole realm of matter as well as that of mind. Nowhere is She absent, but Her presence is less distinct, is somehow veiled in those parts which are further from the centre, where She is in Herself. Thus, for the sake of linear explanation, the mineral world—the solid matter—would have to be situated the furthest from Her, because there, as for instance in stone, She—Life Herself—is much veiled, stone to the ordinary human view appearing to be dead. Nearer to Her is the realm of plants, where, with their growing and blossoming, She already becomes more apparent. I need hardly remind you of the well-known researches by Sir Jagadis Bhowse of the University of Calcutta, who is endeavouring to make visible the actual

heart-beat of plant life. Then, in due order with regard to Her would come the world of animals, which being animated have within their life—although perhaps still unconsciously—some access to Her. Lastly, within the highly developed organism of man She, for the first time, is inherent in her essential being. There She finds the possibility of being consciously awakened, so that she appears to him, who is looking and striving for her, in Her true nature as Shakti herself. The other side—the mind-circle—comprises the mental faculties of man such as consciousness, will, feeling and logical perception, which, with regard to their aptitude for Her realisation, may be put in such order. The directions of development therefore go in the matter-circle from left to right—from stone, vegetable, animal to man, where Shakti will be realised; in the mind-circle, from right to left—from mere logical thinking to feeling, will-power, consciousness to man—where Shakti may be realised. Thus, as you can see from this diagram, everywhere there is Shakti. She is inherent in everything and at the same time transcends every thing; by meditation and religious ceremonies She may be realized everywhere, being inherent in the whole physical universe as it is given to us. And, moreover, above this we may touch Her in Her transcendental aspect as well. When She appears in Her true nature, then there is no more mind or matter, but only She Herself, in no sense bounded by such limitations. As such a one She may well be represented by a circle, *the universe in its true aspect.*

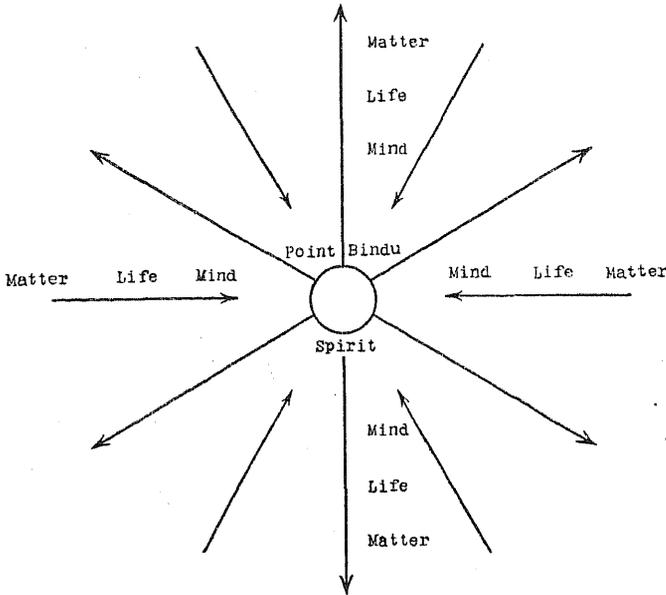
To the European it may perhaps at first sight appear to be a mere poetical presentment and but little different from the theory of vitalism of modern natural science or from ancient animism in the religious aspect. But with regard to Vitalism, even if there be similarities the essential difference seems to me, that the Vitalism of the natural sciences is based principally upon the conception of a material world which is regarded as being animated by, for instance, the “*élan vitale*” of Bergson. But Shaktism holds its standpoint entirely on the spiritual side. She, the great mother, exists, and what in the material world is vitalised or animated, certainly comes

from Her, but is only a veiled appearance of Her, who in Her true being can only be experienced spiritually. And Shaktism is also not animism, if by animism may be understood the primitive idea of everything being ghost-like, being animated by "Phi" or spirits, resulting in as many ghostly spirits as there are different things. Shaktism represents a spiritual unity, all different things being united within Her always greater aspect.

The principal doctrine of "Shaktism", that the whole Universe of mind and matter is created by Her, the Powerful Goddess Shakti, is described in full detail, with Indian accuracy in spiritual matters, in the Cosmogony of Shaktism. It must be understood that every great Indian philosophical system has its own Cosmo-Genesis, that is, its special conception of the evolution of the world and its beginning. As a matter of fact, every conception of life and the Universe requires such a foundation to give it the necessary firm hold. For Shaktism this source, out of which the Universe as mind and matter has evolved, is the female spiritual Power, Shakti, who is the Great Mother of the Universe. In Her most concentrated form, when Her Power is just ready to expand, She is represented by a point called Bindu. This Bindu Point is mere Spirit. Everything manifested and created in this Universe has Spirit as its source and essence. In the Christian Cosmo-Genesis of the Gospel of St. John it is called "logos" or "the word". By expansion the Spiritual Power Shakti becomes, going through many different stages, Mind, Life, and Matter. She—the Goddess—is contained, in all the manifestations of the universe, but She remains, so to speak, unexhausted by being the material cause of the Universe. She in Her essence remains unaffected and greater than all the created world.

In a diagrammatic way this cosmogenetic evolution can be represented like this. The active, most concentrated Point Bindu is red, the colour of activity. From this point the lines of evolution

expand through the stages of mind and life towards matter, the mineral world. So the material world stands not first but last in the evolution of the Universe.



According to the general doctrine of Indian metaphysics, this whole created universe is not everlasting but will one day be dissolved. The life or appearance of the universe lasts, as it is figuratively expressed, one day of Brahma, the Almighty, that is, millions and millions of years. After that the whole expansion contracts again in the opposite direction; first, matter will be dissolved, then life and mind will disappear till it reaches the state of the beginning, the spiritual Point, Bindu, where it will find its rest; until the dawn of a new day of Brahma, when a new creation will start. This Bindu Point is the great Goddess, the universal mother—womb—yoni—the creator and receiver of the Universe, which, as Shakti, is worshipped by the followers of Shaktism.

So the whole created world has as its creative Power Shakti, the Goddess, just as in this world the female element is constantly

maintaining it. But She, the creative Goddess, can do nothing without Him, the God, Shiva, just as no woman can bear fruit without the co-operation of the male element. The relation of Shakti to Shiva is of a very subtle, spiritual nature. He, Shiva, is in contrast to all creation, be it mind or matter. He is the underlying pure consciousness which is independent of, and superior to, all creation. In a very famous picture of Shaktism the goddess Shakti stands black-coloured on the white-coloured Shiva who lies inert. The symbolism is this. Shiva is white to represent a colourless form, since all colours belong to the created world, which is the domain of Shakti. He lies at absolute rest, since movement and activity belong to the created world, which is dependent on him, but not he on it. She, the Goddess, is black-coloured because, compared with the light of the spiritual world unmixed with any objective realisation, she is dark as the night; in all creation she is veiled in darkness, both her face and her raiment.

I have mentioned already that there can be found traces of Shakti in the conception of the Madonna of the Catholic Christian Church. As some of you may know, there exists in Czestochau in Poland the famous sculpture of the so-called Black Madonna, who is much adored by the population. Why is she black? Well whatever kind of outer-influence may have taken place, the spiritual reason must be the same as in Shaktism. She, the Madonna, the creatrix femina, is dark, is spiritually veiled in darkness during the process of creation. She is the deep and creative night. Darkness, compared with the light of day, has always been regarded spiritually as the deeper element. The darkness of the body is intended to show that the personality belongs to the spiritual world as the creative background of all physical appearance. It is very remarkable, too, that near Barcelona in Spain, on Mount Serrat, a black Madonna with the Christ child on her knees is worshipped by the Catholic Church. This famous sculpture, is said to have been on this holy mountain for over a thousand years. Her throne shows an uncommon shape. She holds in her right hand a globe,

representing the Universe. Thus here, too, the conception seems to be that She, the Goddess-Madonna, is the Creator and Upholder of the whole Universe. In my opinion these figures—in their spiritual meaning—show the very deep connection which exists spiritually between East and West. And Shaktism may help to bring an understanding between East and West, the importance of which is always becoming more apparent.

One of the deepest secrets of Shaktism is the union of the highest spiritual male consciousness, Shiva, with the all-pervading female power, Shakti. As I have already mentioned, the all-powerful Shakti would not be able to create the universe out of Herself; She needs the touch of Shiva. This union of Shiva and Shakti takes place in the highest spiritual regions before anything has been created, so to speak, in the night of Brahma. Out of this union the Universe is born—Shakti evolves as mind and matter, whereas Shiva remains as the underlying background, unaltered. This highest spiritual state of union is inexpressible by words; but it is approximately circumscribed by the Sanskrit words; Sat—Chit—Ananda. Sat means Being; Chit means Consciousness, and when these are united with one another, there Ananda—Bliss—the highest spiritual bliss, is the issue. For the Shakta, as for the Hindu generally, the essence of the world is joy, bliss, ananda. Whenever truth, living truth, is approached or touched by man, then he feels that bliss of the union of Shiva and Shakti which is the origin of all life. The highest state of consciousness or liberation (Mukti) in Shaktism is the attainment, the spiritual realisation, of this highest, unchanging, eternal, absolute union of Shiva and Shakti within himself, into which his being is to be ultimately absorbed. The man who has realised this and transplanted himself into it is in his lifetime called Jivanmukta (liberated though living). In this union is everything essential contained.

But within space and time, within the world of separate things and forms,—in this world of limited experience in which we

are living—this highest union is interrupted. Shakti, being separated from Him, is, so to speak, in Her actual body distributed among all objective experience.

There is a deep and striking picture, a story of Indian mythology, which tells how the body of Shakti has been dismembered and has fallen in pieces into this world. Wherever any part of Her holy body is supposed to be lying, there an Indian temple has been built; to a certain extent comparable to the Stupas which are erected by Buddhists for the relics of the sacred body of Gautama. Everything in the objective appearance is individual on account of its being separated from that union, and its material substance or embodiment can be measured by the interval of that separation; the further away from the union, the more its spiritual essence is veiled.

It follows consequently that in every individual being, which to a certain extent becomes conscious of itself, there must be living a tendency to become liberated from this separation, to come back to this primordial union. "Back to the mother", it may be said, is the shortest expression for the spiritual aim of the whole of Indian culture and especially of Shaktism. A deeply-felt longing prevails within the religious mind of India; a longing like that of a child for its mother. It is important to note this, since it is this longing which gives the impulse to the means by which the aim of coming back to the Mother may be attained. These means are called the Yoga of Shaktism, i. e., Sadhana. The principles of Yoga are almost the same in all the different Indian systems, of which they form an essential part. By urging concentration of thought upon certain important ideas, they aim at giving to these ideas more strength and clearness than they usually have. The meditator excludes himself from all outer influences, in order to bring his mind into direct contact with the spiritual world. In the end he will eventually realise what his Scriptures have taught him, that his essence is Spirit, and his mind and body its manifestations. I may

mention here that a modern "western" way of "Yoga" has been introduced into Europe by the spiritual system, "Anthroposophy", of Dr. Rudolf Steiner. In all ages such kinds of spiritual endeavour have been practised. If man succeeds in actually realising the inner meaning of metaphysics, he becomes, as it is called, "initiated", that is, he becomes a citizen of the spiritual world, just as he is a citizen of the natural world by his physical birth. The Yoga of Shaktism specializes in conceptions of the Goddess Shakti. If She appears to the Shakta, as She is in Herself, the highest realisation, the Union with the mother is attained. Then the Shakta says: She I am, and feels himself full of the greatest spiritual bliss.

As I have already mentioned, Shaktism is an eminently practical Religion. It attempts an immediate realisation of truth by the practical methods of "Yoga" and has an abundance of rites and ceremonies. These vary according to the competency of the Shakta. The ritual has been rightly called the Art of Religion. The worshipper follows certain prescribed rules in his adoration, which give him the right direction. Every Religion knows the value of ritual—Buddhism as well as Christianity and Shaktism. I may mention here only a few special points, which distinguish the rites from all other similar cults in India.

It is well known what an important role the caste-system has always played in India. Even now the distinctions of the different castes are much observed, especially in the case of marriage. Principally the Brahmins, as the caste of priests—now there are Brahmins who are doctors of medicine, barristers, watchmen, etc.—would never mix with other castes in their ritual worship. The Shakta, however, the worshipper of Shakti, does not pay any regard to these caste distinctions. The Brahma Shakta has no objection to worshipping the Goddess even with the Shudra outcast, the Pariah. Such a non-Indian uncommon attitude shows that the rites of Shaktism may have their source from abroad; it is not yet quite certain, but it is probable that the special rites of Shaktism have come to India from China through Tibet.

This would explain, too, the other striking feature of the Shakta-worship, which is also non-Indian—that during the ritual worship of Shakti it is allowed to eat meat and to drink wine. Everyone knows how the Hindus abhor the slaughter of animals; how the adoration of the cow is an essential part of their religion, which has been again and again emphasised, especially by Gandhi himself. The Shakta, however, eats meat and drinks wine during his worship of the Goddess Shakti. He feels himself spiritually above this custom. As in his view everything is She—the Goddess—there can be made no exception with regard to the offerings to Her.

The third unique quality of the Shakti-worship is the active participation of women in the ceremonies. Ordinarily women are always kept apart in India. Everyone has heard of the Purdah system, which holds in some parts of India the women-folk life-long in their houses. But the Shakta treats them as altogether equal; even more. She, his Wife, is regarded by him as his Shakti Goddess; She, the mother of his children, represents to him the Great Mother. Such an attitude is naturally reflected in the daily life of Shakti Hindu families, where the mother—quite contrary to Miss Mayo's statements in "Mother India"—is much venerated. There is the so-called Panchatattva Ritual—the most important ritual of Shaktism, which is still nowadays performed in Bengal. The name "Panchatattva" is derived from the words "Pancha", five, and "Tattva", elements. The five elements of this ritual are Wine, Meat, Fish, Parched Corn and Sexual Union. Men and women meet as equal partners. They sit together—the man beside the woman—in a circle, called Chakra. Following elaborate rites, they offer to the Goddess wine, meat, fish and corn. After that they take their meal, which consists of these four elements; the idea being that they unite themselves with Shakti in these products and fruits. The highest presentment of the Goddess for the Shakta is the woman who is sitting by his side. By uniting with her—according to the Maithuna rites—he experiences the bliss of the great union of Shiva and Shakti. Pro-

creation is the individual counterpart of Cosmic Creation. It must be understood that the purpose of the physical union of the Shakta with his Shakti in this ritual is not satisfaction of his physical senses but the spiritual realisation of the highest union of the individual with the Goddess, the Cosmic-Whole. It may be mentioned that, as far as I have heard, during the ceremonies in Bengal the last mentioned Maithuna rites are not actually performed but are only indicated, as for example by bowing to the woman sitting at his side in the Chakra. Nothing is wrong or forbidden according to Shaktism, if it is done with a pure heart and spiritual feeling. Certainly it is possible that, weak as man's nature is, abuses of this special rite have taken place—and it would be wrong to deny that they are in fact happening. But my intention here is to show its spiritual meaning and intention, which, in my opinion, cannot be affected by abuse in its interpretation; and the principle of the rite is sound, grand and spiritual.

All the rites of Shaktism, of which I have here mentioned only one, tend in such a direction as to awaken within him the spiritual and aesthetically productive forces of man. As soon as these usually slumbering forces are awakened, the Shakta knows and feels himself as being born again within the spiritual world. The Shakta says, "As I am born in my physical body from my mother, so I must be spiritually born again from my spiritual mother, the Goddess Shakti." By the grace of Shakti the Shakta himself becomes Brahma. As a matter of fact, every spiritual man strives for the attainment of such a state, of being reborn in the spiritual sense. Only the expressions are different and the means and ways vary. In Shaktism it is striking to notice with what absoluteness and how independently of all other systems of religion the physical appearance and the highest spiritual realisation, are combined together. If Shakti is everywhere, then she is, too, in the bodily appearance of the women and there, however veiled, in her fullest essence. So he makes use of her for the greatest spiritual aim of man, namely *to be reborn by the grace of Shakti.*

Now I have said that this aim of being reborn within the spiritual motherhood is known to almost every religion, and, although Buddhism in its fundamental basis at first seems to be utterly different from Shaktism, yet Northern Buddhism knows well what is meant by Shakti. Mahayana Buddhism, as it is prevalent in Tibet, by which country Shaktism too has been much influenced, has introduced into its system during its development the Goddess Tara. She represents what Shakti is for Shaktism. She is the embodiment of all that within the spiritual realisation is distinctly female; and it is a very secret saying in esoteric Northern Buddhism that man, by being reborn from Tara, will become a Buddha, that is, will attain the highest spiritual state of life to which man is destined and for which he is striving. Within esoteric Christianity there is the picture of Jesus Christ lying in the stable-manger as the new-born child before the immaculate Virgin Mary. It is intended to portray not only the story of the historical birth of Jesus, but at the same time a representation of the idea that we all have to be reborn as such a Christ-child of the Virgin Mary, the Shakti of Christianity.

You see, there can be discovered, within so widely-differing religious systems as Shaktism, Northern Buddhism and Christianity, the same important idea as that of being reborn by the grace of Shakti as Brahma, of being reborn by Tara as a Buddha, and of being reborn by Madonna as a Christ. As a matter of fact, the female spiritual element as it is venerated by Shaktism, being a living truth, can to a certain extent become a combining factor to embrace the great cultural outlook both of the East and the West. Humanity is one over all the earth, and Womanhood is its essential part. In Shaktism the idea of the spiritual creative force of Womanhood finds its most absolute and exclusive expression. For this reason this system is so interesting and striking for anyone who takes the trouble to go more deeply into it. Shakti, as she is pleased to reveal herself to-day, is present, too, within the depths of European culture. It would take me too far afield to prove

it by further details. I would only mention that Goethe concludes his great poem, "Faust", with the words: "The eternal female is raising us". Certainly, Goethe had no knowledge of the system of Shaktism and of those texts which we are now privileged to study. But by his poetical inspiration he touched by himself the truth which we find so clearly expressed in the system of Shaktism. If one would try to express the deepest meaning which Shaktism may have for us in our days, it cannot be done better than by those words which the mystical chorus sings at the end of this great poem: Das Ewig Weibliche zieht uns hinan. "The eternal female is raising us".
