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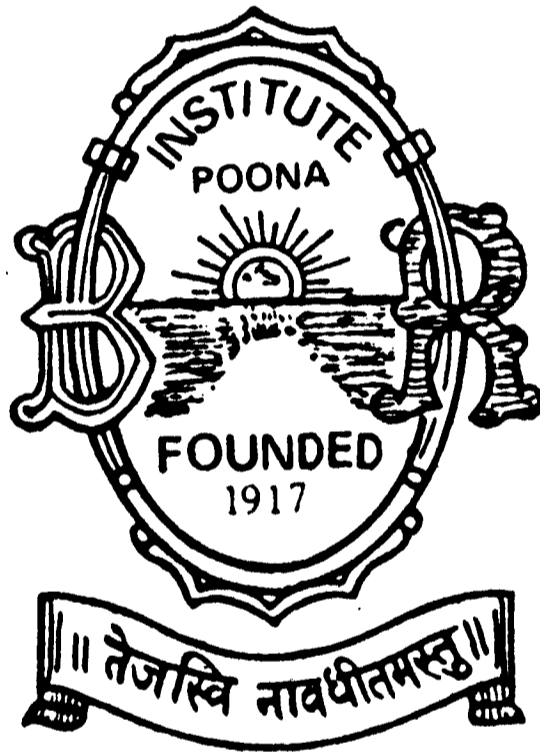
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EDITED BY

R. N. Dandekar

S. D. Laddu



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OFFENBARUNG, GEISTIGE REALITÄT DES MENSCHEN; ed. Gerhard Oberhammer; Publications of the De Nobili Research Library, Vol. II; Wien; 1974; Pp. 237.

It is to be sincerely regretted that, through oversight, this important publication has remained unnoticed in this Journal so far. But, in view of its perennial value, this time-lag may not be considered to be very serious. (Of course, this is a poor editorial attempt at getting absolved!)

A strong plea was once made — and I find that it has been revived with greater urgency in recent times — for rescuing the *Rgveda* from its exclusively aesthetic or exclusively ritualistic bondage. It is argued that the Vedic Ṛṣis were not mere poets nor mechanical sacerdotalists. As claimed by the Indian tradition, they were the inspired receivers and transmitters of a divine revelation of the highest reality. It is even affirmed that, for the understanding of the *Rgveda*, knowledge of Sanskrit and Indian tradition, however profound, is not sufficient; a deep study of the mystics of the different parts of the world, from the point of view of a universal tradition, will bring about a greater appreciation of that Veda. The present volume of the proceedings of a symposium on the concept of revelation in India will prove highly enlightening to all serious students of the *Rgveda* — indeed, of the entire cultural tradition of India. These proceedings contain six Indological contributions and six theological contributions. Oberhammer's brief introduction to the concept of revelation as spiritual reality of man prepares a suitable background for the learned papers which follow. In the first paper in the first section on "Self-comprehension of Hinduism as Religion," Oberhammer mainly considers the *āgamas* and the *tantras*. Heesterman's approach to and treatment of the "Authority of the Veda" is quite original and thought-provoking. However, some observations on this subject, not necessarily arising out of Heesterman's paper, may be made here. To begin with, one wonders whether the Veda is believed to possess absolute *prāmāṇya* because it is the result of 'revelation' or whether the Veda is believed to be the result of 'revelation' because, for epistemological purpose, it needs to be invested with ultimate authority. Secondly, the Vedic *mantras*, being the result of 'revelation', possess sacred authoritativeness in solemn ritual; would the translation of those *mantras* in any other language possess the same authoritativeness? Does such authoritativeness not emanate from the 'sound' of the *mantras* rather than from their 'sense'? Further, can it be said that the corpus of revelation in Hinduism is always open to new texts? It is also to be noted in this context that, though the various later commentators, on the *Brahmasūtras* for instance, unequivocally accept the ultimate validity of the Veda, their interpretation of the Vedic-Upaniṣadic texts, is

not always identical. This would show that the acceptance of *Śabdaprāmānya* had not in any way proved detrimental to the free intellectual activity of the Indian thinkers. While reading Oberhammer's paper on the "Authority of Tradition in Hinduism", the present reviewer was reminded of the usual characterization of Asia as being essentially more traditional than the West. It is argued that tradition, no less than truth, is considered to be sacred in India, China, and Japan. Tradition, it is pointed out, means truths or principles of a divine origin revealed to mankind. In a sense, orthodoxy may be said to represent but a coherent traditional system. The next three papers in this section deal with *Śabdaprāmānya* as understood by Kumārila (D' Sa : "Revelation without a god"), Bhāsarvajña (Oberhammer), and Sarvajñātman (Vetter : "The function of the *mahāvākyas*"). The papers included in the second section treat of 'revelation' from the Christian theological point of view. Three of them directly refer to Hinduism : Schoonenberg, "Christian-theological view of Hinduism"; Kehl, "The relevance of historical Jesus for the encounter of Christianity with Hinduism"; and Camps, "Some Indian theologians on revelation in Hinduism".

R. N. D.
