

BOOK REVIEW

Patrizia Norelli-Bachelet. TIME & IMPERISHABILITY: ESSAYS ON THE CAPRICORN HEIREOGLYPH. Published by Aeon Books: P O Box 11 Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu, India 624101. Reviewed by David Johnston.

During 1985 and 1986, Patrizia Norelli-Bachelet wrote a series of insightful essays that have now been collected together in a modestly sized book entitled Time and Imperishability: Essays on the Capricorn Hieroglyph. Based on discoveries of the true Vedic measure of the year, the author penetrates to the core of India's eternal meaning and potential role in the contemporary world. In the process of defining a "new way" for both individuals and the nation itself she draws on ancient truths that are deeply embedded in India's spiritual heritage.

The author contends that the country's higher destiny is to preserve the sanatana dharma, which includes the authentic expression of diversity in unity and some form of federation with both Pakistan and Bangladesh. As the symbol soul-nation of the earth it is not only for India itself that this needs to be done, but for the world. The choice facing the country has been either to plant the seeds for a spiritual rebirth or to face a degenerating collapse of energy. Widespread corruption that permeates all levels of society today speaks to the latter phenomenon while energy directed towards co-operation between India and its dismembered regions speaks to the former.

Since the time of the Buddha, who taught the impermanence of life and then Shankara who considered the world to be an illusory Maya, India has suffered from a debilitating devaluation of the world and the truth of time. The result has been a loss of divine measure, the real meaning of Maya, and the alignment of action and dynamic energies with spiritual reality. The fact that the Makar Sankranti festival is celebrated 23 days after the sun enters the zodiacal sign of Capricorn on January 15 instead of December 21, the winter solstice, is symptomatic.

Very few people seriously consider the possibility of marrying a spiritual reality with life in the world; few think that it is at all feasible. A conversation I recently had with a disciple of India's great saint, Sri Ramana Maharshi, as I was climbing Tamil Nadu's sacred mountain, Arunachala, is indicative. He adamantly insisted on the fact that economics and spiritual life do not, cannot come together, that they mutually exclude each other, and that it has always been thus. Moreover, in today's world of sophisticated marketing practices and consumerism, the separation is, he contended, total.

But the author of the book does not believe that this need be the case, at least, potentially. Both spirit and matter are two sides of the same coin, a truth that was realized by the Vedic seers, where evidence attests to the realization of the

highest spiritual truth involving earthly reality and not divorced from it. Norelli-Bachelet applies astrological insight to show that the 10th day of victory alluded to in the Rig Veda refers to the zodiacal sign of Capricorn which, according to tradition, rules India. In fact, superimposing the Capricorn hieroglyph onto the map of India suggests that the land itself is shaped accordingly.

Astrologically, the sign for Capricorn symbolizes spirit in matter and the name of God. In the dark ages in the West, it represented the devil. It represented the devil, that is to say, when the dynamic aspect of reality became divorced from the spiritual.

The goal of the Vedic Rishes was the attainment of Swar, the highest plane of existence, which was reported to take place in the 10th month of sacrifice when the sun enters the zodiacal sign of Capricorn. As the author shows, it involves a movement of time on a place on earth represented by India, where the land formation itself is the hieroglyph for Capricorn. Thus, she argues, the attainment of truth took place in the daily round of life on this earth, reconciling spirit and matter. But in Vedic times this truth was reserved for the spiritual elite. We live in another time, that of the ninth manifestation, almost 72 years into the Age of Aquarius.

The Mahakala or time-spirit today allows for the possibility of a greater number of people to participate in living a life of truth and the sanatana dharma to prevail. During the past 125 years, the author contends, there has been an avataric descent from the Transcendent through the Cosmic to the Individual Divine, and then the Divine son, which provides a blueprint for this eventuality. With the birth of the son principle, that is to say, the 10th avatar Kalki, there has been a reversal, allowing for the avataric Truth to now be fully realized in the horizontal dimensions of life.

So argues Norelli-Bachelet and with impeccable logic. Time and Imperishability: Essays on the Capricorn Hieroglyph is a book containing penetrating insights and profound knowledge. It is both challenging and provocative, putting to question any conceptual or practical separation of spiritual reality from the body and life in the world. This book is a clarion call for the reconciliation of spirit with dynamic action and the return of the divine measure. For anyone concerned with truth and dharma, personal and/or that of the nation, this book is an invaluable source of inspiration and guidance.