

Nietzsche and Shakti: An Intercultural Analysis of Nietzsche's Experiment with the Eternal Feminine

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Abstract : During its independence struggle in the early 20th century, India witnessed trends of politicisation of various spiritual paths, one of them being that of Shaktism. Interestingly, Nietzsche's teachings were being interpreted as being essentially the worship of Shakti. The present paper aims at investigating this claim and hence undertakes an intercultural archaeological excavation in the realm of the Goddess archetypes that Nietzsche's work invokes. Ariadne is placed next to Radha, Baubo to Lajja Gauri, Medusa to Chhinnamasta, Hecate to Kali and Dhumavati and Athena to Sarawati. Indeed, the Eternal Feminine plays a vital role in Nietzsche's writings. One might recall that Nietzsche even declared himself to be the first Psychologist of the Eternal Feminine. The present paper aims to illustrate how, the matter of the Eternal Feminine, like all other matters, is subjected to Nietzsche's basic creative principle of transvaluation of values and new meaning making. In order to achieve this, Nietzsche applies what Heidegger calls a 'cross-wise striking-through' technique in his analysis of what can be termed as his engagement with Shaktism. Hence, not only is the mystical ascent and descent of the creative energy (Kundalini Shakti) dealt with under erasure in Thus Spake Zarathustra, but coincidentally also the Three Metamorphoses emerge as an instance of such an erasure, making the Devi invisible and yet not so invisible for an Indian reader.

Keywords : eternal feminine, Nietzsche and India, Shaktism, transvaluation of values

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