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Editor: Bettina Bäumer

Glory to you, O Sarva,
who are the essence of the 'right-handed path',
who are the essence of the 'left-handed path',
who belong to every tradition
and to no tradition at all.

Glory to you, O God,
who can be worshipped in any manner,
in any place,
in whatever form at all.

Utpaladeva, Śivastotrāvalī 2.19-20

One who knows several mental (or religious or spiritual) languages is incapable of absolutizing any formulation whatever - of the gospel, of the Upanishads, of Buddhism, etc. He can only bear witness to an experience - about which he can only stammer...

All formulations are *upāśanās*, approaches in prayer, in contemplation, in humility.

Swami Abhishiktananda, Diary, 30 April 1973

Editorial

The question of religious pluralism is inescapable, in India and anywhere in the world. It has been a theme that has engaged us directly or indirectly in these last issues of SETU. For us it is not a theoretical issue but one of eminent practical importance. Professor B.N. Saraswati throws light on this issue in the context of the Indian tradition and of the political use and misuse of religion. The Indian religious pluralism or "spiritual federation of faiths" could be a wonderful model if it was not distorted by fundamentalist forces.

Mystical traditions, East and West, have always been aware that God cannot be encapsulate in our way of seeing or understanding Him/Her, and Abhishiktananda has been an example in our times of one who suffered from the narrowness of religious views. His spiritual Diary which is finally appearing in English translation is a witness to his struggle to broaden and deepen the experience of both, Christianity and Hinduism. In the mirror of his experience many contemporaries may find themselves and may be encouraged on their own ways.

INDIA: A SPIRITUAL FEDERATION OF FAITHS

Baidyanath Saraswati
Editor's Note: Professor B.N. Saraswati is a noted anthropologist of India who has done extensive field work on tribals and cultural and religious traditions of India. He is at present UNESCO Professor attached to Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi. His publications include: Traditions of Tirthas in India; Kashi: Myth and Reality of a Cultural Tradition; Prakriti, Vol. 1 (Primal Elements: The Oral Tradition), Vol. 5 (Man in Nature), and many others. The present paper was delivered at the Dialogue Panel in New Delhi in October 1996 (see the report in SETU 18).

Opening

The sacred texts of Indian tradition reveal that the world is made up of matter – the five primal elements: Earth, Water, Fire, Air and

Sky. What forms matter is itself formless. That which is formless is full. That which is full is one. That which is one without a second is unborn. That which is unborn is infinite. That which is infinite is void. That which is void is One. That which is One is omnipresent. That which is formless is omniform. That which is many is born. That which is born is finite. That which is finite is perishable. And so on. The realization of all this is verily the essence and the goal of human life.

The drama of life is a 'play' (*lila*) in which the One becomes many and many become One. This One is not a numeral one. No numeral precedes it, none follows it. The all-encompassing One is both formed and unformed, full and void, finite and infinite, born and unborn, with and without name, form and attributes.

The spirit of Indian tradition does not permit ultimate dichotomies between matter and spirit, thinker and thought, creator and created, sacred and secular, man and animal, man and God, and God and Gods.

The Indian vision is cosmocentric. The humans are differentiated but not separated. All the four classes of men have originated from the four limbs of the Cosmic Man. The fourfold classification applies not only to man but also to all living beings and objects of the world.

From the Indian view-point, religion may be defined as a set of symbols and acts that gives the ultimate meaning to life. Religion refers to a basic experience of reality and recreates it in an intelligible corpus. Faith is a factor rooted in each experience of reality, without discrimination.

Forms of Religion

Central to all religions is faith. Faith binds man to his temporal and transcendental foundations. Cultures have envisioned the various articles of faith that constitute religion in all its variety and complexity. The basic forms of religion may broadly be classified into 'simple', 'complex' and 'mixed'.

The characteristic features of the 'simple form' of religion are: a) beliefs in the ordained life, originating at the beginning of the

world; b) beliefs characterised as ahistorical, unfounded, unformulated; c) practices transmitted orally from one generation to the next; d) experiences interwoven with aesthetic life, shared collectively in all such performances as dance and festivity; and e) expressions essentially descriptive, mythical and archetypal.

The main features of the 'complex' form of religion are: a) pride in historical origins; b) 'founder' attributed with divine powers - often recognized as the Incarnation of God, the Son of God, the Messenger of God; c) personalism - faith organized around the personality of a founder; d) beliefs and rituals arising from the revealed textual knowledge - scriptures containing the sacred words of God, God's spokesperson worshipped as a divine being; and e) complexity growing around the body of original doctrine - new doctrines added up in course of scholastic development.

The 'mixed' form of religion has the following features: a) without pride in temporal history; b) with and without scholastic explanation; c) with and without organization, minimal bureaucratized order; d) believing that its source is not in space and time, and e) combining the elements of both the 'simple' and the 'complex' forms of religion.

Thus the three ways of speaking about religion: cosmocentric, anthropocentric, and theocentric modes and forms of faith. The 'simple form' is cosmocentric. The 'complex form' is both anthropocentric and cosmocentric. The 'mixed form' is the combination of all the three.

The features of the 'simple form' find reference in what is popularly known as 'tribal' or 'natural' religion. All organized religions such as Buddhism, Christianity and Islam carry the essential features of the 'complex form'. Hinduism in its manifold dimensions represents the 'mixed form'.

Interfaith Spirituality

In a 'mixed' form of religion the phenomenon of 'interfaith spirituality' is an obvious aspect of the believers' everyday life. Polytheistic belief is its natural order. For obvious reason, the other forms of religion cannot tolerate, or coexist with an alien faith. It

can do so only at the risk of losing its pristine purity and identity. Interfaith spirituality is neither a symbiosis nor a synthesis but the simultaneity of heterogeneous faiths that pattern religious life.

The best example of interfaith spirituality is Hinduism. In it there is nothing like exclusive Christian uniqueness. What is decisive is the existential reality and *not* the doctrinal continuity. Hinduism may be seen as an existence with many streams of faith flowing in.

The tradition of saints, within the pluriverse of Hinduism (i.e. Brahmanism, Buddhism, Vaiṣṇavism, Saivism, and other faiths), is founded by establishing a strong ligament of spiritual kinship with different faiths. Sikhism, for instance, is the confluence of the three rivers of faith - the *guru* (the saints), the *granth* (the book containing the words of the saints) and the *panth* (the organization of religious life) - that flow from and enter into the spiritual traditions of India. This means, however, that unlike protestantism emphasizing the literally interpreted Bible as fundamental to Christian life and teaching, Hinduism does not stress literal adherence to a single book or to a single set of principles.

As a primordial tradition, Hinduism is complete and universal. By self-identification it is *sanātana dharmā*, the eternal cosmic order. One of its most distinguishing features is the practice of 'interfaith spirituality'. Indeed, it is this genius that has provided Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and other religious traditions of Indian origin, with a unifying interiority of spiritual belief. At one point of time, within the horizon of its all-encompassing spirituality, Hinduism had received Judaism, Islam and Christianity as generic diversity in a faith that does not destroy but fulfill.

Centres and Networks of Faith

Within the Hindu universe all individuals and cultures are allowed to self-organize their faiths in the spirit of the whole.

At a higher level of abstraction, it is believed that man has a fivefold constitution, each called sheath (*koṣa*) or envelope: namely, the beatific envelope (*ānandamayakoṣa*), the poetic or intellectual envelope (*vijnānamayakoṣa*), the mental envelope (*manomayakoṣa*),

the vital envelope (*prāṇamayakoṣa*), and the vegetative envelope (*annamayakoṣa*). These are hierarchical orders, the first and the highest is the beatific envelope. The constitution of man is stated in yet another way. Man is made up of the five primal elements (of which the world is made), the ego, the intellect, the mind, the ten organs and five objectives of sense (sound, touch, colour, taste, and smell). The human body consisting of all these is called as the field (*kṣetra*) and the one who lives in the field is called the knower of the field (*kṣetrajñā*), the Supreme Spiritual Being.

Man moves upward in the spiritual plane through a ritual process. From the moment of conception to the last rite of cremation, a number of body-cleansing rituals is required to be performed. Only then can one become a full-fledged member of the society.

To make the man of matter capable of transforming into a cultural person, there are ways of establishing correlation between the transcendent order of nature and the natural order of culture. Cultural activities are determined by body, mind and spirit. Satisfaction of the bodily needs is a critical factor in survival. The mind responds to the physical needs and creates an urge for satisfaction. The spirit, which transcends both body and mind, mediates and allows the satisfaction of needs to an extent to which the living physical world can be maintained. This has been the concrete con-texture of Hindu cultures in India.

Man's living relationship with his world demands faith. There are three types of faith, each rooted in the human heart:

Acting Faith

Through Faith men come to prayer,
Faith in the morning,

Faith at noon and at the setting of the Sun.
O Faith, give us Faith.

Rg Veda X.151

Thinking Faith

When a man has faith, then he thinks.

Nobody thinks until he has faith.
Only by having faith a man thinks,
When a man perseveres, then he has faith.
No one has faith without having perseverance.
Only by having perseverance one has faith.

Chāndogya Up. VII.19

Loving Faith

A man of faith, absorbed in faith,
his senses controlled, attains knowledge, and, knowl-
edge attained,
quickly finds supreme peace.

But the ignorant man, who is without faith,
goes doubting to destruction.

For the doubting self there is neither this world
nor is the next, nor joy.

Bhagavad Gītā IV.39-40

Faith is the 'inner source' from which the real human growth pro-ceeds. Faith in countless Gods wraps the whole Hindu world. Each individual may venerate one, or more than one Gods. Each family has a presiding deity (*kula devatā*). Each caste is an endogenous cultural group following its own customs and traditions (*lokācāra*). Each region has developed a variety of faiths, rituals and festivals. There are innumerable shrines of Gods and Goddesses all over In-dia.

Pilgrimage is a path of devotion. It is an act of truth-seeing and truth-saying. It is imperative to use the hand and foot to move into the shrines of Gods, and to let the wings of the soul fly. The human body is compared with the place of pilgrimage. Both are called *kṣetra* in which the God resides. The presiding deity of a place of pilgrimage is a point in the circle. All holy places and all Gods and Goddesses are believed to be present in the *kṣetra*. The pilgrims are enjoined to circumambulate the *kṣetra* clockwise in spacetime.

Faith is rendered visible in and through the tradition of saints and mystics, rituals and ceremonies, prayer and pilgrimage. The universe of Hindu society is criss-crossed by self-organizing centres and networks of faith. It is designed as a collection of individuals, each independent in his beliefs and practices and yet functioning together as a community of faith. The individual self splits into two - male and female. The husband receives his wife from Gods. Their relationship is indissoluble, in so far as the two make a unit, each is only half the body of the other. Fidelity is the essence of married life. A more perfect unit is formed of the husband, the wife and the off-spring. The individual is linked to larger and larger units. The family extends to lineage - to clan - to subcaste - to caste - to village - to subregion - to region - and to larger organization of human beings, called 'Universe as Family' (*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*). The fundamental forces of faith operate centrifugally. Each centre (individual) is closely linked with the other by the cognizance of faith and fidelity emerging from the divine principle of One-and-many.

Beyond Faith and Fidelity

It is logical or ontological that a culture where interfaith spirituality is not a mere possibility but a practice will view the emergent nationalism, secularism and faithless modernism as perverted ideologies alienating people from truth and goodness.

Contact by conquest has caused an ocean of confusion in Hinduism. The advent of Islam was the most important event in the history of Hindu India. It was the first major impact of an alien worldview on India's primordial culture. But, as history reveals itself, Islam neither lost its identity nor conquered the country culturally. Christianity arrived here during the first century, even before it went to Europe. Each of these three religions maintains its identity, even today. Together they formed a community of faith interacting frequently at healing rituals, festivals, and ceremonies. But eventually colonization by Europeans initiated the final death blow to India's unique worldview. Hinduism came under the grip of faithless rationality of the 'enlightened' Europe. It allowed the western centralism and formalism to be reproduced within its-fold.

At the end of the colonial rule, India was left with a shadow mind, a dysfunctional social structure, a divisive politics of religion and a divided land of the seers and sages. With significant cultural mutations taking place over a thousand years it is fantastic to assert that a united India was divided because of deep religious differences between Islam and Hinduism.

Tragically, but not surprisingly, the wave of Hindu nationalism is threatening the generic diversity of beliefs and practices. Today, nationalism and secularism, the two major political ideologies, dominate Indian life. The Hindu militant nationalism signifies a re-enforcement of counter secular forces in Indian politics. But what it speaks resoundingly is the voice of its self-destruction, the inevitable loss of its primordial features, its transcendental essence. Within the emergent Hindu nationalism, perhaps there can still be a democracy. But, then, that will not make it a federation of faiths. The entire enterprise is directed towards reducing Hinduism to a body without soul.

Secularism is an irrelevant concept not only for India but for the entire humanity. It is not a universal concept, and has no place in the cosmo-centric worldview. It had no place in the traditional West. It is unknown to all traditional societies. In the Indian language there is no word for secularism, no word for religion, no word for culture, no thought for minority. The modern usage of the term *dharmanirapeksata* is neither a valid concept nor a true translation of secularism. The Sanskrit word *dharma* is not religion (which comes from *religare*, i.e. what unites man to his divinity). It is far more comprehensive than religion. It stands for the cosmic order used in different contexts: attributes of mind (compassion is *dharma*), function of the sense-organs (the *dharma* of eye is seeing), duty (the *dharma* of a spouse), nature of attributes (the *dharma* of heat is expansion), deeds (the *dharma* of a thief), peculiarity (the *dharma* of a villager), objects in a holistic perspective (the *dharma* of the temporal world), order of time (the *dharma* of the Kaliyuga, modern age), in special sense (Baudha *dharma*. Jain *dharma*). If such is the meaning of *dharma*, can one ever become *dharmanirapeksa*, neutral to the cosmic order? The term

sarvadharmasambhava is implicit in the notion of *dharma*. But it is neither the literal meaning nor the essence of the word 'secularism'. Secularism is a false light. Neither secularism nor secular nationalism makes any sense to Indian thinking.

Concluding Remarks

The timeless India is a spiritual federation of faiths. The modern secular India has ceased thinking about the sacred.

Secularism is not able to deliver the deeper aspects of life but to fill the anti-religious backwash. Secularism is not religious pluralism as many secularists in India pretend to believe. It is anti-religion. Religious pluralism is inconsistent with political pluralism. It is not a democracy of religions. Political pluralism makes the fetish of nationalism. It does not allow any other fetish or faith to grow. Religious pluralism works in the spirit of Truth. It concedes that Truth is one and there are many roads leading to ultimate truth. Religious pluralism can thrive only if all religions form a federation of faiths.

Typically Hindu nationalism wears the mask of religion, deprives Indian society and religion of its deeper roots and constructs a force of universal degradation. In truth it reduces Hinduism to the clownish shifts and disorders of the modern world.

We live in a state of human emergency. This is not the time to argue on what happened in the past, but to contemplate and to enter into a dialogue on what is happening today. All religions must form a sustainable federation of faiths to face the antireligious secular nationalism and faithless modernism.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Diana L. Eck, *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras*, Penguin Books, 1995, xv+259 pp, Rs. 250/-.

This book is written in three parts. The first two chapters are a prologue, the next four make up the heart of the book, while the last two are an epilogue.

In the first chapter Eck introduces herself, telling us something of her own life's journey. She grew up in 'Bozeman, Montana, in the Gallatin Valley, one of the most beautiful mountain valleys in the Rockies'. We learn of her Swedish Lutheran forebears, her childhood and youth as a Methodist, which gave her deep roots in Christian faith, her years as a student during the time of the Vietnam War, and of her first and deeply formative encounter with Banaras at the age of twenty.

She begins the second chapter by describing the World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in 1893. At that time her great-grand-parents were new arrivals in America and were struggling to make a living. The famous Statue of Liberty which welcomed them and many thousands of others in those years significantly faced towards Europe. Immigrants from Asia were not welcome and often subject to persecution even if they were able to settle. Moreover white Americans largely ignored the religion and life of America's

indigenous Indian populations. It was only in 1965 that the door was opened to Asian immigration. The USA is now, like many other countries, inescapably plural.

By introducing herself and her background in this way Eck ensures that the discussion which follows is never abstract or lifeless, for what she has done is to enable us, so to speak, to walk alongside her as fellow-pilgrims and partners in conversation as in the next four chapters she explores the Hindu tradition and struggles to relate what she finds to her Christian inheritance.

She brings to this task an impressive knowledge of Sanskrit texts, with a no less impressive knowledge of centres of pilgrimage all over India. She obviously has a great gift for making friends readily and this shines out in the galaxy of characters to whom she introduces us. Few westerners can claim to know India as widely or as deeply. She is generous in acknowledging the debts she owes to others, and although modestly disclaiming the title of theologian she has a sound grasp of the intellectual implications of her own faith. Her writing is always vivid and at times moving, not least when she tells of her struggle with cancer, the violent death of a dearly loved brother, and of her father's suicide.

In chapter three she discusses 'The Names of God - the Meaning of God's Manyness'. The Hindu concepts of *devān*, the understanding of the inherent limitations of language, the nature of Mahātmyas, Trimūrti, and *Īṣṭadevatā*, all afford different and fruitful ways for thinking about the manyness of God within the Hindu tradition, ways from which Christians can fruitfully learn. Further,

"if we insist that God is one, with all the complexity, plurality and multiplicity that oneness entails, it is not surprising that we - whether Christians or Hindus - might have many moments in which we "recognise" God in the forms and modes of worship of religious traditions not our own."

In approaching the Hindu tradition, she says that Christians have to divest themselves of too easy assumptions about idolatry. In our tradition 'The word gained primacy over the image. And yet

words were also shaped into images'. It is Hindus or Christians whose devotion stops at the image, whether material or verbal, who are idolaters.

The next chapter is devoted to the Faces of God, Discovering the Incarnation in India. When Hindus look at Christianity their 'problem is not with incarnation, but with the seemingly impossible notion that incarnation is an event in the singular - only once and so very long ago and far away'. That cannot do justice to Hindu experience of God, but to make Jesus simply one of the many Hindu *avatāras* does not do justice to Christianity either. Likewise,

"*pūjā* has an integrity and beauty all its own, and it must surely be one of the many ways in which God truly enjoys a relationship with men and women. But as Christians, even in those churches where images and incense abound, we don't do *pūjā* to Jesus."

Eck struggles with the meaning of 'uniqueness' and concludes:

"Faith in Christ rests on two remarkable affirmations: Jesus Christ reveals to us the face of God, which is love. And Jesus Christ reveals to us the meaning of the human, which is love. This double revelation is enough. I do not need to know that it is the only true story on earth to affirm that it is worth giving my heart to. I do not need to convince myself or anyone else that Uncle[. Hindu friend]'s stories are wrong."

Hindus speak of the 'many faces of Shiva' of the many 'tastes' of Krishna. Christians could learn from this and speak of the distinctive images of Christ through which faith is shaped. She takes us through a series of extended meditations on Christ as child, teacher, healer, the one who suffered and died, and the one who rose from the dead. There is much here which needs further pondering.

Chapter Five is on The Breath of God, the Fire and Freedom of the Spirit. Here Eck takes three key Christian images of the Spirit, breath, fire, and the dove, and offers us reflections on each in the light of Hinduism and of her own experience. Reflections

on the Upanishads, the North Cheyenne Indians of the USA, the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Canberra in 1991, and a Russian Orthodox convent in rural Estonia – all these improbable companions are woven together into a rich tapestry of meditation. In the last part of the chapter she suggests ways in which the idea of *sakti* could enlarge Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Six is on Attention to God: The Practice of Prayer and Meditation. Eck was first introduced to the idea of attention as a student by an itinerant Zen master in the USA. And

“from that day on, the importance of this word attention began to grow on me, or within me. Just being awake, alert, attentive is no easy matter. I think it is the greatest spiritual challenge we face. Finally, I think, it is the only one.”

I believe she is right, and the whole of this book can be read as a commentary on these words. Her own experience of attention was shaped by keeping watch at the bedside of a dying friend. She and an increasing number of other Christians are exploring Hindu and Buddhist ways of attention and integrating what they have found into their Christian way of praying. Without this spiritual discipline the exploration of another tradition becomes arid and cerebral.

In the epilogue which makes up the last two chapters there is a shift of perspective. Instead of concentrating on her own rich experience Eck examines three contemporary Christian approaches to other faiths, exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. She claims, as do many of us, that these three ways of thinking about diversity are part of the ongoing dialogue within herself, but hardly maintains that position in the rest of the chapter. She adopts a pluralist stance and writes about what exclusivists and inclusivists believe, but I can think of several people who hold these positions who would not recognise themselves in Eck's descriptions. Ironically, she becomes an exclusivist advocate for pluralism! She is not alone in this. Many of us are now learning to be generous to those of a

completely different religious tradition. We find it much harder to be similarly generous to those who hold a conflicting version of our own.

Further, this threefold paradigm is being seen by some of us as increasingly threadbare, for in each of the three positions the Christian is trying to exercise a measure of control over what is different. They are all ways of making the otherness of the other less strange. My own view is that Christian theology does not yet have the categories with which to make sense of the kind of experience which Eck puts before us in the first three quarters of this book. In becoming an advocate for pluralism she 'tames' her own material and does herself less than justice.

The final chapter is entitled *The Imagined Community, Spiritual interdependence and a Wider Sense of "We"*. The modern world has made us all interdependent and life on the planet cannot survive unless we realise such interdependence much more fully than we have done. This we already know, and hardly need this final chapter to tell us. Here too, advocacy has taken over from description and reflection.

However, I would not wish my disappointment with these two final chapters to undermine my enthusiasm and admiration for the rest of this book. It is one that I shall want to read again and warmly recommend to my friends.

Roger Hooker

Bettina Bäumer (ed.), *Mysticism in Shaivism and Christianity*, New Delhi, D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd. 1997, xviii+365 pp. INR 450,-. Introduction by the editor, bibliographies, notes on the contributors.

This is a remarkable book.

It is the record of a meeting which took place in the foothills of the sacred Himalayas, at Dehra Dun in 1990, under the auspices of the Abhishiktananda Society. However did the convenor, Dr. Bettina Bäumer, manage to arrange such a meeting? It was perhaps the first of its kind where Shaivism and Christianity were brought face to face.

The book contains the papers read at that meeting. However, the papers are only a pale reflection of the real dialogue which took place, namely the meeting of the soul. Such an event cannot be contained within the covers of a book.

The occasion was remarkable for the quality of its participants. Twelve authors have contributed their papers to the present volume and their variety shows the colour of the human spirit. The authors are united in their combination of intelligence and insight, prayer and theology.

The method, as Dr. Bäumer notes in her crafted introduction, is not to absorb or refute, not to syncretise or to ignore. The aim is not to by-pass each other's mind but to enter into each other's heart. It is an expansion and a purification of each one's tradition, a true ecumenism. May we look forward to further occasions of such dialogue?

The article 'What is Mysticism?' of Dr. Alois Haas, Professor of German Literature who did not attend the conference, provides the introduction. Without trying to define the undefinable, he gives the necessary parameters for the papers which follow.

Swami Nityananda Giri, who is from Tamil Nadu and is deeply involved in Hindu-Christian dialogue, gave a paper which clearly presented the rich tradition of the Śaiva Siddhānta. The paper is rich in valuable quotes.

The longest of the papers - presented at the meeting and expanded later - was by Professor Raimon Panikkar. By his own background and in his own name he represents both the Christian and the Hindu traditions. He daringly and successfully investigates what we too easily forget: that the Christ was a mystic. He displays prodigious learning, he teases and stimulates and makes vertiginous leaps.

Pandit H.N. Chakravarty, a traditional pandit of Benares, a man of courtesy and piety, gave an exposition of 'recognition', *praty-abhijñā*, one of the most important insights of Kashmiri Śaivism: the act of acknowledging one's identity with Śiva.

Sr Brigitte, German Anglican nun, prioress, hermit, *ācāryā*, now living in Pune, tackles some of the boldest of Meister Eckhart's

sayings.

Dr B.N. Pandit, Professor of Sanskrit from Kashmir, described clearly and in detail the highest means of attaining the divine, the *sāmbhava* method in the Kashmir Śaiva tradition.

Fr Serge Descy, theologian, political scientist, hermit, now living in Palestine, is in himself a bridge between East and West. He shows how the Greek tradition which he follows occupies 'a privileged but not exclusive position in this comparative task' between the mystical philosophies of India and Christianity.

Pandit J.N. Kaul ('Kamal'), Sanskrit poet, disciple of Swami Lakshman Joo, spoke on the all important notion of grace in Śaivism and the descent of energy, *śaktipāta*.

Odetie Baumer-Despeigne, originally from Belgium, intimately connected with the preservation and publication of many of Abhishiktananda's writings, examines the mystical poetry of a medieval 'lay-religious' woman, a beguine, Hadewijch of Antwerp and Hadewijch II.

Rev. C. Murray Rogers, Anglican priest, much involved in the Gandhian Movement, looked at the writings of another mediaeval woman, Julian of Norwich, one of the greatest English theologians, the recluse who saw all reality in a hazel-nut.

Fr George Gispert-Sauch, Jesuit, relates the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola to key elements of Śaivism.

Finally, in a later paper, Dr Bettina Bäumer, convenor of the meeting, reviews the relationship of beauty to mysticism. The aesthetic is a means of entry into the Ultimate reality, *anuttara*.

These inadequate summaries show something of the rich variety of the book and its contributors. The reader is informed and involved. The reader must allow the ideas to reverberate in the mind and, by going beyond the content, perceive the burning furnace from which all proceeds. The articles are best approached by the process of *lectio divina*, meditative reading, not for information only - though the writers have not forgotten the demands of scholarship - but in order to acknowledge the tradition which is dear to each contributor. The book as a whole is an invitation to go out of oneself and to explore not lands or moon but the heart.

The cover bears a symbol: the trident of Shaivism seems to flower from the wood of the cross; or again, the trident is like the figure of Jesus incarnate in a new way. The symbol shows that these mystical traditions do not conflict but can be brought together and can lead to a new outpouring of the Spirit.

Rev. John Dupuche

OBITUARIES

Sri H.W.L. Poonja

In September we received the news of the passing away of Sri H.W.L. Poonja in Lucknow (called 'Papaji' by his devotees). He was an old friend of Abhishiktananda and he appears under the name 'Harilal' in his book *Arunāchala* where their first and impressive meeting is recorded. A longer obituary may follow in the next issue of SETU.

Pandit Jankinath Kaul 'Kamal' (1914-1997)

by Bettina Bäumer

A great scholar and spiritual personality, Pandit Jankinath Kaul from Srinagar left us on 15th October 1997. On his way to the library in Jammu he was knocked down by a scooter and he died of the shock a few days later. His daughter described to me that he was fully conscious till the end, and simply closed his eyes as if entering into *samādhi*.

I first met him in the Ishvar Ashram of Swami Lakshman Joo at a *yajña* which the Master performed for his Guru. His quiet, self-contained and dignified figure attracted me, and occasionally we would exchange a few words. I realized in him the depth of his knowledge and at the same time the humility of a true disciple at the feet of the Master. It was later that we got to know each other better and collaborated in editing a book, and in preparing the interreligious dialogue seminar on mysticism. Pandit Kaul was well-versed in the traditions of Vedānta, Kashmir Śaivism and Śāktism.

Being rooted in tradition, he was open-minded and very receptive. Besides being a Sanskrit scholar who edited and translated texts such as the Pañcastavī, Bhavānīnāmasahasruti and others, he was also a sensitive poet in Kashmiri, Hindi and Sanskrit.

It is significant that in his last letter to me he was happy to acknowledge receipt of the book on mysticism to which he had contributed.

Being a refugee from his home in Srinagar due to the political unrest in Kashmir, he had lost his house with a big library and a valuable collection of manuscripts, but he accepted his fate with a peace and dignity characteristic of one who lives what he preaches. He will be remembered as a great soul.

Extracts from Correspondence

Nirmala Deshpande ('Didi'), daughter of Sri P. Y. Deshpande and disciple of Vinoba Bhave, is one of the most eminent and active social workers in India, who is also very much engaged in inter-religious understanding. Recently she has been nominated by the President of India as Member of Parliament. She wrote an encouraging letter:

New Delhi, June 14, 1997

Dear Bettina,

It is a treat to receive the issue of the journal SETU. I read almost every word of it. It gives ample food to every spiritual seeker. I am very thankful to you for sending me the journal. You are doing great service by editing it. I would like to read more about Swami Abhishiktananda...

Nirmala Deshpande

NEWS AND PUBLICATIONS

The following books by Abhishiktananda have been reprinted by ISPCK, Delhi: *Hindu-Christian Meeting Point; Saccidānanda; The Further Shore* and *The Secret of Arunachala*. These books can be ordered from the publisher: ISPCK, Post Box 1585, Kashmere Gate, Delhi - 110006 (Fax 011-2965490).

The English translation of Abhishiktananda's Diary is finally coming out in 1998:

Ascent to the Depth of the Heart. The Spiritual Diary of Swami Abhishiktananda - 1948-1979, translated by David Fleming and James Stuart, Delhi (I.S.P.C.K.), 1998. Price in INR 240,- (C.C.), 275,- (H.C.). (An order form is enclosed.)

The papers of the Rajpur Seminar of 1990 have been published, enlarged and enriched:

Mysticism in Shaivism and Christianity, edited by Bettina Bäumer, New Delhi (D.K. Printworld), 1997 (ISBN 81-246-0096-1) (see Book Reviews).

The correspondence of Abhishiktananda with Fr. J. Lemarié is being published in French by Le Cerf (Paris) in early 1998.

The French version of the Letters is also expected to come out in 1998, edited by M.R. Salen.

The Tamil translation of *The Further Shore* has come out.

Activities of Odette Baumer-Despeigne: In the years 1996-97 Odette Baumer has delivered talks about Abhishiktananda in Switzerland at the Cistercian Abbey of Maigrange, at an interreligious Colloquium at the Tibetan Buddhist Institute of Karmaling and before an association of Protestant pastors in Lausanne. She has also helped students writing theses on Abhishiktananda (Canada and Strasbourg).

Bettina Bäumer who is at present visiting Professor at the University of Bern, Switzerland, has lead a seminar with the students of religion on pioneers in Hindu-Christian dialogue, among whom J. Monchanin and Abhishiktananda. In August 1997 there was again a week of meditation in Puregg (Austrian Alps) on the theme "the transfiguration of the body", learning from Hindu and Christian traditions.

Donations received in 1997

We are thankful for donations received from the following friends: Noel Cleary, Sharon Smith, Divya Dan, Vandana Mataji, J. Matam SJ, Paul T. Harris, S.K. De, Prof. Fairy v. Lilienfeld, Fr. J.B. Simon Vernor, Mrs. Isabel Ryrrie, Susan Vishvanathan, Frances E. Pyecroft, Fr. John Dupuche, Fr. Ken Petersen (Sancta Sophia Meditation Community), Dr. Jacques Vigne.

Donations towards the cost of printing and postage of SETU are welcome. Cheques should be issued in the name of Abhishiktananda Society.

Abhishiktananda Society, Registered Office:
Brotherhood House, 7 Court Lane, Delhi - 110054
Address of the President:
Dr Bettina Bäumer, B 1/159 Assi Ghat, Varanasi - 221005

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