I smile when I see you now so interested in giving a form to the formless. That is just what cults, myths, theologies have done since the beginning... You need a sign in order to possess your freedom! Oh the infinitely free man who needs a sign that he is beyond all signs!... I am indeed a little to blame for all this. I have talked to you too much and have put ideas into your head – ideas of silence!

...Whoever talks about vijnana, about realization etc. shows that he has not understood anything at all. Whoever expects an 'experience', so that he can say that he is 'realized', knows nothing about anything. There is nothing to be renounced, nothing to be released from...

Dhyana (meditation) is not a means. For there is no means – neither meditation nor rite nor gnosis nor guru nor scripture.

Abhishiktananda, Letter to Marc, 1.5.1973

(James Stuart, Swami Abhishiktananda. His life told through his letters. Delhi 1989, pp. 331-332)

There is no sign of Him whose name is 'Great Glory'.

Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad 4.19
Editorial

The world has gone through tremendous dramas in this last year, dramas of cosmic dimensions, equally human, social, political. The question to be asked is always the same: Is our spiritual life, and our search for a dialogue of cultures and religions, an escape from these painful realities or is it a contribution to reduce the tensions that grip our world? In the spirit of Abhishiktananda we are convinced that any authentic spirituality, of any tradition, has to be concerned and cannot be removed from any human problem.

The present issue does not contain any major article, but it focuses on the one hand on the memory of the great disciple of Swāmījī, Marc-Ajatandia, on reports of events connected with interreligious dialogue, mainly the Fourth World Parliament of Religions in Barcelona. Here we also start a series of short mystical texts from the Indian tradition which can nourish the spiritual life and invite to a dialogue among mystical traditions.

Bettina Bäumer

ARTICLES AND REPORTS

A Hymn to the Absolute by Abhinavagupta
Anuttarāśīkā: Eight Verses on the Unsurpassable
Translation and commentary by Bettina Bäumer

Abhinavagupta was the greatest mystic and philosopher of the advaitic Shaivism of Kashmir or Trika of the 10th-11th centuries.

1. There is no need of spiritual progress,
nor of contemplation, disputation or discussion,
nor meditation, concentration, nor even the effort of prayer.
Please tell me clearly: What is supreme Truth?

Listen: Neither renounce nor possess anything,
share in the joy of the total Reality
and be as you are!

2. In reality no world of transmigration exists,
so how can one talk about 'humans in bondage'?
To try to liberate one free already
is futile, for he was never in bondage.
All this just creates a delusion like that
of the shadow of a ghost or a rope mistaken for a snake.
So neither renounce nor possess anything.
Enjoy yourself freely, resting in your self,
just as you are!

3. What words can describe the Unsurpassable? In the Absolute
can there be any distinction between the worship,
the one who worships and the object of worship.
How and in whom can there be spiritual progress?
What are the degrees of absorption?
Illusion itself is ultimately the same
as non-dual Consciousness, all being the pure
nature of the Self, experienced by oneself—
so have no vain anxiety!

4. This bliss is not comparable to that which is experienced
through riches or wine or even union with the beloved.
The dawning of that Light is not to be compared
with the light of a lamp or that of sun or moon.
The joy that is felt when one is freed from the burden
of accumulated differences can only be compared
to the relief felt while setting on the ground a heavy weight.
The dawning of the Light is like finding a lost treasure,
the state of universal non-duality.

1 I thank Mary Rogers for putting my translation into poetic English.

2 Bheda: divisions, separation, duality.
5. All states of mind like love and hatred, pleasure and pain, arising and disappearing, to you appear distinct. They are, however, part of the universal body, their nature is not separate. Whenever you observe any one of them arising, at once become aware of their oneness: contemplate in them the form of pure Consciousness. Filled with this contemplation, will you not experience joy?

6. The non-existent suddenly is brought into existence. They are always the states of being in this world. How, being intermingled due to deformation of the intermediate state, can they possess any reality? How find reality in the unreal, unstable, in multiplicity of worldly things, a dream's confusion, or in deceptive beauty? Transcend the impurity that causes doubt and fear and awaken!

7. It is not the Innate Being that gives rise to these various states. They appear, created by you. Though unreal, they become real through a momentary confused perception. The glory of this universe is born from your will to exist. It has no other origin. Therefore your glory shines in all the worlds. Though one, you have many forms.

8. Both the real and the unreal, the simple and the complex, the eternal and the temporal, that which, due to illusion, is impure and also the purity of the Self— all shine in the mirror of Consciousness. All this is seen as having the nature of pure light, Consciousness arises in self-awareness. Recognising your glory rooted in your own experience, share in the universal power of the Lord!

Commentary

A snommara, The Unsurpassable, Transcendent, Ultimate or Absolute is neither the object of devotion of this mystical Stotra, nor is it described philosophically. Rather, Abhinavaguapta is moving here in a mystical state which can only be described negatively as "that which has nothing beyond it", anunntara. The word occurs only once, in verse 3, and there too it is called indescribable. In fact, it is not surprising that Abhinavaguapta gives as many as sixteen definitions of the word anunntara in his Paritarśika Vivaraṇa on the very first verse of the Tantra.

In his Stotras Abhinavaguapta is free from any literary, devotional or philosophical restrictions and he allows his mystical inspiration a free flow. Here he describes both the highest state possible to be reached by a spiritual being, and he instructs his most advanced disciples in experiencing such a state. The first three verses and verses five and six end with a personal address which can go directly to the heart of the disciple/listener/reader. Only a Master like Abhinavaguapta can utter such mystical instructions, and only advanced disciples can receive them. He removes their doubts and worries.

In the case of immature disciples these instructions could prove dangerous, since they negate everything that belongs to spiritual practice: meditation (dhyāna), concentration (bhāvanā), reflection or discussion (cārī), concentration (dharana) or recitation of mantras (japa) (verse 1). The very idea of moving on a spiritual path and progressing on it is denied (saṃkrāma, verses 1 and 3). For spiritual practice only has meaning if there is a state

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3 Abhinavaguapta's Stotras have been translated and commented upon in French by Lilian Silburn and in German by myself:
Lilian Silburn: Hymnes de Abhinavaguapta. Paris (De Boccard) 1970;
of bondage from which one wants to be liberated (verse 2), but Abhinavagupta denies that ultimately such a bondage exists. And if there is no bondage in samsāra, what is the use of the action of liberation? What is then to be done?

Nothing, for every action, practice or effort is only a sign of the limited being and is not fit for the anuttara. Thus both acts or attitudes have to be abandoned: renunciation and possession (na tyāgī na parigrahi, verse 1, mā kīṃcit tyāja mā gṛhā, verse 2). What remains then? The joy of being as one is and having a share in the totality. Not by chance Abhinavagupta uses the imperative bhaja in the first and last verse, because the one who is established in his natural state (sahaja, verse 7) shares in the divinity, in universality and universal lordship (viśveśvaratvāt, verse 8). The injunction "be as you are" is not an invitation to egoism, but a reminder of our Divine and universal nature.

What is it then that separates us from this spontaneous state of being if there is no bondage in reality? It is only the illusion of not being free already, but an illusion which is not substantial, which is nothing but the shadow of a ghost (verse 2). But since illusion has no independent reality, it is also ultimately not different from non-dual Consciousness. Therefore, even the fear of being in illusion has no basis and one should be free from the worry of not having realized one's true nature (verse 3). Nothing could be more liberating to the troubled mind but these condensed verses.

What Abhinavagupta says here in very personal terms is expressed more theologically in the Śāndikā Kārikā:

"Inasmuch as nothing can veil His nature, there cannot be any obstruction of his in whom all this world rests and from whom it has come forth." (I.2)

In his Parāśītikā Vivāraṇa, he comments on this: "Even if He (Śiva) is supposed to be obstructed by a cover, He still shines by His freedom in the form of that cover itself, and thus the Lord is always of the nature of knowledge and activity." (transl. Jaideva Singh, p. 79)

Therefore Abhinavagupta concludes in the last verse (8) that everything, even the so-called impure, the temporal, illusory and unreal, belongs to the one, pure light of Consciousness. It is Consciousness alone which creates all these states and conditions, and one should see only its glory shining in everything (verse 7).

But is there a way of piercing through this veil and discovering its oneness with universal Consciousness? Starting from the ordinary experience of the disciple which is always an experience of dualities, like pleasure and pain, love and hatred, Abhinavagupta points out a very subtle method in verse five:

Since all the opposite mental states are aspects of the same Consciousness, one should fix one's awareness on the moment of arising of any emotion or experience. By catching hold of this initial moment, called prathamākāṣṭa, one enters into the oneness of Consciousness. In this way one experiences a bliss and freedom which cannot be compared with any worldly joy (verse 4).

If there has been any burden, it was the burden of separation, of living in duality and fragmentation (bheda), but the moment one is freed from this, there is a relief as by putting down a heavy load from one's head. This is a moment of enlightenment, like finding of a lost treasure, the treasure of the non-dual state (verse 4).

This awakening to one's own original glory makes one share in the universal Divine Power (viśveśvaratvāt, verse 8).

Thus the entire hymn glorifies the unsurpassable state – anuttara – and leads the disciple from duality to non-duality. By the powerful expression of pure spontaneity Abhinavagupta achieves a liberating effect.
Marc, the Unborn

Marc Chaduc, a 27-year-old Frenchman, met for the first time Swami Abhishiktananda in Delhi, in October 1971. Immediately there was mutual recognition of the profound relationship of guru and disciple. Afterwards for two consecutive years, Marc would spend much time with Swamiji during which the latter initiated him into the essence of the Upanishads as well as in the highest Christian spirituality.

Marc had a deep and substantial spiritual experience on 10th May 1972, in the presence of his master, while they were spending a retreat together in Phulchatti ashram (near Rishikesh). This experience left within him an evermore intense longing to realize the divine Self and generated a spirit of utter dispassion and renunciation.

On 30th June 1973, he was initiated into sannyasa at the bank of Holy Ganges, in Rishikesh, by H.H. Swami Chidanandaji Maharam, who represented the monastic Tradition of Shri Adi Shankaracarya, and by Swami Abhishiktananda, who represented the Western monastic Tradition of St. Benedict and, more widely, the eremitical Tradition of the Desert Fathers. Thereafter, Marc came to be known as ‘Swami Ajatananda Sarasvatii.

After Swami Abhishiktananda left his body in December 1973, Swami Ajatananda went into strict seclusion as per his own deep aspiration and his wish to fulfill his guru’s instruction. After having reached a very high spiritual state, he mysteriously left his kutiya (hermitage), in Kaudiyala, in the early period of 1974, and no one has seen him since.

The publication of his writings (in French) is under preparation and we are glad to present here an excerpt from his spiritual diary, *Années de Grâce* (‘Years of Grace’), viz. the account of his ‘ecumenical’ diksha. The reader may find it useful to refer to *The Further Shore* where an entire chapter explores at great length the deep meaning of the ceremony.

Swami Atmananda

Sannyāsa dikṣā in Rishikesh (June 30, 1973)

(…) All has been accomplished. The rite proper of the dikṣā* can’t but unfold in the nakedness of its ultimate symbolism, (mysterion, or mystery, sacrament), which stands for the great interior departure beyond one’s self towards the Awakening to the Self, which alone permits one to utter in truth the perennial upanishadic wisdom: “ahām brahmāsmi”9, I Am Brahman!” This bare ritual doesn’t last more than half-an-hour.

We found both Swami Chidananda and Swami Krishnananda sitting in silence on the banks of the holy river Ganges, absolutely serene, radiant and solemn. Then Swami Chidananda addressed the following words to us, “This is a very important day. Do you see John the Baptist? He is present here!” and with a broad gesture he embraced the Ganges, its waters and its waves – imperishable! A gentle daybreak haze hovered over the raging waters, as if to envelop them with a luminous, divine light. I got into the bosom of the river, with my hands raised high up in the sun’s direction, and thrice did I repeat the “sannyastam mayā”*10. Henri joined me. I dove my entire being into the waters. He raised me from the waters as the Glorious Purusa just like the fiery sun that ascends from the waters, and he told me, simultaneously.

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4 President of the Divine Life Society.
5 ‘Ajatananda’ means lit. “the bliss of the Unborn”.
6 Kaudiyala is located around 40 kms upstream from Rishikesh.

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8 Ceremony of initiation.
9 Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up. 1.4.10
10 Sannyāsa dikṣā mantra (lit. “I have renounced everything…”).
"uttishta purusat!" or "Arise O Man! Arise and open your eyes! You have received the boons: Keep awake!"

Facing the rising sun, we then chanted our two mantras: the vedāham and the esa sampradayah that Henri finalized that morning; and to which we spontaneously added the following sacred words: "sa eva-aśītvah", or "That is the unborn". With our arms raised, hand-in-hand, we were transported into an unutterable state of rapture and illumination. Next, I threw all I was wearing into the Ganges. Henri had been waiting for me when I, absolutely naked, walked out of the waters. Swami Chidanandas, assisted by Henri, wrapped the kāpurī ṅāvī around my waist. After that, in a very gracious and solemn moment, he donned me with the dhoti and the chadar ṅāvī, the characteristic saffron robe traditionally worn by saṁnyāsīs, and said, "May he who puts on this robe ever be free from the phenomenal world, completely absorbed into the inner and transcendental divine mystery!" This cloth, with the colour of fire, is a sign indicating that everything is now burnt, consumed in the golden-radiance of the Tejomayāḥ Pūruse who ascends from the ancient waters. No outer or inner garment can cover this original Pūruse, except for a cloth of fire, that of the self-consuming Spirit's own flame, inside the ever-present crucible of the essential nakedness of the non-dual Spirit.

11 Katha Up. 3.14
12 Hymn to the Purusa from the Śvetāvatara Up, (3.8): "I know Him, that Supreme Person, of the brightness of the sun, beyond all darkness; only by knowing Him one goes beyond death; there is no other path for going there" (See also Rg Veda Sāṃhitā 31.18).
13 These first words refer to a sacred mantra of the Chāṇḍogya Up. (8.3.4).
14 Loincloth of saffron colour worn by sāṁghas.

We walked into the Shivananda Kutir.15 Swami Chidananda and Swami Krishnananda were chanting the hymn to Dakṣināṁriti, the Perfect Guru: At a very young age, he revealed the Supreme Truth through words of Silence to the Rishis who were already established in Brahmān. Through this hymn, the unique Guru, chanted and glorified, the Eka Guru, the Ekarshi who freely and unfailingly manifests himself through time and space wherever the heart of some sincere seeker would open itself up calling for Grace — for there's only one Awakening and a sole Awakening within the non-duality of the Spirit.

I found myself reciting the mantra of the parāmahāṁsā16 and then the 'ahāram'.17 Swami Chidananda synthesized quite briefly the meaning of these lofty moments that were soaked with both the traditional wisdom of the Rāj as well as that of John the Baptist. He then told me my new name: Ajātānanda, or the 'The Bliss of the One Who Was Never Born'. Next, Swami Krishnananda gave me the māhāvīrya18 and asked me to repeat them. Finally, when both Swami Chidananda and Swami Krishnananda, together and in unison, solemnly, uttered "tat svam asī",19 my entire being at once responded: "aham brahmāsmi". The tone of their voices was firm and fast. The mantra, shot like an arrow, went straight to the centre of my own being and permanently emptied me of any "I-consciousness". Indefinitely and unceasingly, the arrow was

15 Gurudev's Kutir (Swami Sivananda).
16 A parāmahāṁsā is an ascetic of the highest level of renunciation. The mantra here recited is taken from the Nāradaparivṛťāka Up 4.38: "I have risen, beyond all desires, the desire for progeny, the desire for wealth, the desire for worlds".
17 "Let no creature have fear of me, since everything emanates from me" (Nāradaparivṛťāka Up 4.38). The sannyāsi here expresses the principle of non-injury (ahīmā).
18 Lit. "great sentences". These sayings are Upaniṣhādic statements that teach the identity of Brahmān and the Self.
19 "That thou art" (Chāṇḍogya Up. 6.8.7)
thrown again and again, ever sharper, ever more penetrating; from abyss to abyss; and the response spread, ever denser, from the half-open abyss, in which all consciousness is absorbed. Within this powerful crescendo, the two mantras ended up concomitantly and merged into just one single magnificent expression of divinity. It was the pinnacle.

At that moment, out of Henri’s heart there flowed some words of advice: “Go on, in the freedom of the Spirit, across the infinite space of the heart: go to the Source from which there is no return. Go to the Unborn, yourself unborn!”

It was time to go. I prostrated my whole being at the holy feet of Swami Chidananda, Swami Krishnananda and Henri, whom I embraced and pressed to my heart with so much veneration, and with such an emotion and a joy never experienced before. Henri gave me my luggage: a spare cloth and a shawl; together with a metal water container. In addition, Chidananda Swamiji gave me a wooden cup, so that I could beg for food with the mantra “Nārāyaṇa Hari”, and also a coconut bowl in which, just a little while before, he had put a mango — a kind gesture of love and thoughtfulness. That was to be my very first bhikṣa.30 Then, since the moment of my departure was fast approaching, he suddenly, embraced me with infinite love and affection, with both his big arms outstretched. His face was radiant and glowing with intense happiness. The hug I had been waiting for a very long time! My happiness was total. Henri and I clasped each other’s arms and I embraced him perhaps for the last time, for now he was such a part of my self that I felt no need to see him physically again. Without looking back, I left for the parivṛṣṭa,21 while Swami Chidananda intoned, with a grave voice, a final mantra expressing his blessings.

Nirnai waited outside. He witnessed everything from far. A simple ajarā between us, and without saying anything or stopping, I followed my path... without any objective... not knowing anything about my destination... It so happened that I ended up turning left, towards Haridwar... Henceforth, there was no way to follow — except for the footpath laid down before the Self: “The path of the origins, imperceptible and unfathomable.”

The first thought that crossed my mind at the outset of my wanderings, “Oh! But what am I doing?” conveyed the bewilderment that I felt finding myself in this utterly unexpected situation. “What have I done?!” somehow aware that I had just embarked on some irreversible journey — a way infinitely beyond me, of which I knew nothing.

Soon after this moment filled with surprises: I felt ānanda, bliss without limitation, within the infinite ocean of the glorious Self...

(Translated from the French original by Omar Djezzini has been annotated and edited by Swami Amananda. All rights reserved)

Barcelona 2004: The Colourful World of Religions
The Fourth Parliament of the World’s Religions

by George Gispert-Sauch, S.J.

The Parliament of the World’s Religions, made famous by the speeches of Swami Vivekananda in its first session in September 1893, held its fourth session in Barcelona, Spain, July 7-13, 2004. It was perhaps the most significant event in the four-month Forum 2004 celebrated in Barcelona from May to September of the same year. This Forum was a new idea which emerged out of the experience of the Barcelona Olympic Games of 1992. It intended to be a sort of Olympics of Cultures, i.e., a periodic meeting of all

20 Alms.
21 Holy wandering.
22 Brahmachari Nirnai Tripathi.
23 The hollowed hands placed together in salutation.
peoples of the globe in their rich cultural expressions at all levels. But it is doubtful that it will be repeated, at least in the way the Barcelona Forum celebrated the variety of cultures of humanity, including those of minorities and little known worlds. In concrete reality, the Forum stressed more the folkloric aspects of culture at many levels, including artistic production, games, inventions, and economic life. The Parliament of Religions gave it new depth.

By contrast, this Parliament was first conceived as a once event, a celebration in Chicago of the fourth centenary of the 1492 "discovery" of America by Christopher Columbus. A large international exposition and fair was organized on that occasion, but many thought that it lacked depth as there was no representation for the most universal and the most significant output of cultures, i.e., religion. We all now know the significance of that event that for the first time in history brought together in a single platform believers of many religions, and particularly, an encounter of the eastern and western religions. This was the beginning of the inter-religious movement worldwide. When in 1992 the world remembered, in a more somber mood, the fifth centenary of the Columbus voyage, the idea emerged of repeating the 1893 Chicago meeting of religions. The response was tremendous: about 8000 delegates from around the world met again in Chicago and opted to work for harmony of religions and to explore together the ethical issues that face humanity. At this second meeting a permanent Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions was created with headquarters in Chicago (http://cpwrglobal.net/library.cfm). The Council was entrusted with the responsibility of organizing occasional sessions of the Parliament. And so in 1994 the Third Parliament took place which called the world's attention to the powerful role religions and spiritual communities played in the struggle against apartheid. And then came the Fourth Parliament, the first in a non-English speaking country, fittingly imbedded within the 141-day Universal Forum of Cultures in Barcelona, Spain. Again more than 8000 participants from all over the globe gathered in what turned to be a very colourful and intellectually rich celebration of dialogue.

Surely the most important feature of the meeting for those who had the good fortune of living through it was the spirit of harmony that prevailed throughout and the respect maintained for all the religious traditions of humanity, however 'exotic' any of them may have appeared to some or even to most of the participants. One must acknowledge here that a great contribution to this spirit of harmony was made by the strong representation of the Sikh community that created a kind of Gurudwara in an area close to the Forum, where the Parliament was taking place, and graciously offered every day a succulent vegetarian meal to all the participants who wanted to share it. The experience of this "langar" was for many participants a highpoint of the Parliament. For the Sikh community there was the happy coincidence that the Parliament took place in the fourth centenary since the Adi-Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the first compilation of the Sikh sacred scripture, was installed at the Golden Temple in Amritsar in 1604.

The overarching theme of the Parliament was well expressed in the motto "Pathways to Peace: the Wisdom of Listening, the Power of Commitment." Coming from India, the theme echoed in my mind and heart sentiments drawn from our tradition: Wisdom and Power, jñāna (vidyā) and śakti, two essential pillars of most Indian religions. Wisdom according to the Upanishads starts with śravaṇa, or the active assimilation of śruti, not only referring to the listening to the ancient traditions we inherited, but also with reference to listening to all traditions of humanity mediated to us through our fellow believers, through a dialogue that enables us for vīveka (another word for wisdom) or discernment of Truth. But listening must result in śakti, the power of commitment which is another expression for love. It is through
these practices that we shall come to universal peace, which all peoples are desirous of.

The Barcelona event was prepared by a number of preliminary meetings, the most important being two Pre-Parliament Events in Chicago, 7-8 October 2003 and in Birmingham, U.K., 13 October 2003, the International Summit Towards a Culture of Harmony and Peace in New Delhi, 7-10 December 2003, and the Conference on The Power of Commitment: Refugees and Debt Cancellation, in Kericho, Kenya, 10-14 January 2004. Besides this, just before the celebration of the Parliament in Barcelona there was a two-day Parliament Assembly in the famous Benedictine Monastery of Montserrat, on the mountains a few miles from Barcelona, attended by about 400 specially invited delegates. It prepared the main agenda of the Parliament around four human issues with deep religious connotations: The issues were “Overcoming Religiously-Motivated Violence,” “Supporting Refugees Worldwide,” “Eliminating International Debt in Poor Countries,” and “Creating Access to Clean Water.” Both at Montserrat and during the Parliament itself in Barcelona, competent scholars discussed these issues and a search was made on how religions could contribute to their solution, problems that deeply threaten humanity at present. Interesting information leaflets were distributed on each of the topics and people were invited to make personal commitments to one or more of them for an impact in their own personal surroundings. Thus the study and sharing of religion acquired a concrete human relevance.

The seven days of the Parliament were replete with spiritual, intellectual and cultural activity. For the Sikh community it began at 6.00 a.m. with the Aa Cu Vaar. For the general participants we had morning religious observances from 8.00 to 9.00. Then there were four hundred sessions and workshops to choose from between 9.30 and 11.30 (for instance, Jain Teachings on Non-Violence, The Art of War the Tao of Peace, Exploring Christian Motivations to Dialogue...), Inter-religious dialogue sessions between 11.30 and 1.00 (such as, Buddhist and Hindu Approaches to Dialogue, Building Peace in the Middle East [a prominent concern in the Parliament], Reaching out to Other Religions...).

In the afternoon, there were sessions specially focused on engagement to critical issues (like Global Responsibility, Spirituality and the Arts, Peace Building among Women,...), followed by a “Open Space” to share on topics of special interest. Anybody could offer a workshop on subjects of his or her interest and there was scope to get an interested group formed around it. There were spaces for public announcement and queries, times and places for meditation and personal sadhana (besides the Morning Observances), time to browse through interesting books and other literature as well as being enlightened and helped by other activities of the Cultural Forum. Above all, there was time to meet people from other religions and through dialogue be inspired by them.

There was also a memorable evening of sacred music from all religions, in a magnificent stage specially built in front of the oldest entrance to Gaudi’s famous and incomplete Temple of the Sacred Family, in Barcelona. In another end of the city the Tibetan monks put together the most elaborate and largest mandala in history, with a beautiful explanation in several languages of what a mandala is and how it helps meditation and the spiritual life. Thousands of people visited the tent where it was displayed, a work of splendid filigree made with coloured powders; it must have cost many, many hours of patient labour.

There was probably, in the Parliament, more vivid participation from small religious groups and new movements than from the traditional organized religions as a whole. Some may have wished for a more serene presentation of the main issues within each religion and between religions, although many were raised in the various seminars and sessions. Nobody of course could attend all the sessions, and so each member could only have a very partial experience about what the Parliament really was. A fuller picture
of the Parliament can only emerge once all the reports and papers of the sessions are published. One thing was clear: that inter-religious dialogue has come to stay and that the era of polemics and fight was on the way out at least as far as the delegates of the Parliament were concerned. Dialogue is the in-word and the only religious today is to be inter-religious." Swami Abhishiktananda would have cheered. Another evident point was that religious people want to engage the secular city, i.e., the human world with all its problems and dimensions. The time of "seeking refuge" in religion away from the troublesome world has passed. Religion is at the service of the whole human society, not a haven for the chosen ones. There was also good evidence of a continuing tension between the religious and the purely secular view of life. The latter came often from local or European participants. An "apology" for religion is not out of place in the modern world. Why religion? Is it a residue of past cultures or irrelevant wisdoms, or is it "the salt of the earth"? 

India was quite visible in the Parliament, both through delegates in religious garb and those in ordinary clothes, and through those coming directly from India or through many NRIs from Europe and America. Apart from the Sikh community already mentioned, the Jains were visible, as were many groups and traditions of Hinduism. Unfortunately the Dalai Lama could not attend because of an indisposition, we were told. But one of the most eagerly expected-and listened to—speakers, though she spoke in Malayalam, was Amritanandamayi Ma, whose message was itself an embrace reaching out to the thousands of listeners in the concluding session. One of the persons most influential and most often listened to in the Parliament, with great respect, was our own Reunion Penikkar, who in spite of a very delicate heart condition was actively involved in the preparation and present in the celebration of the Parliament, both in Montserrat and Barcelona. He was once introduced to the delegates of the Parliament as "the wise man from Barcelona". (He stays now in a village not far from Barcelona and participates much in the cultural life of the city and region.) He spoke in many forums during the sessions, about the need to listen to the others, specially to the message from the East. He has a deep influence in Barcelona: a friend of mine involved in the dialogue activities in the city told me how lucky they were to have Penikkar available to guide them in their concerns, and how deep his influence is. As for the Parliament as a whole, he told me that he had done for the dialogue growth in the city more than twenty-years of regular organized activity could do. One can only wish that the Parliament of Religions continues to inspire people to grow along the path so felicitously inaugurated in 1893.

Delhi, Vidyajyoti, January 2005

"Extraordinary Ordinary Abhishiktani"

by Bernard Kilroy

Bernard Kilroy24 attended a seminar retreat in England in July 2004, whose main focus was Abhishiktananda.

That a retreat inspired by Abhishiktananda should take place in Britain is itself significant, the more so since most of the 48 people who attended were "non-professionals". Indeed, the weekend was slightly over-subscribed. The retreat is an annual event of the Bede Griffiths Sangha. 25 This is a very loose association of enthusiasts, which has a mailing list of about 1200, mostly in the UK. For the first time, it focused on someone other than Bede, because the usual main guest speaker has been Brother Martin from Shantivanam and this year he was unable to come. His place was taken by Shirley du Beaulay, a chapter of whose forthcoming biography of Abhishiktananda was published in Setu No.24

24 Bernard Kilroy is doing doctoral research with Vidyajyoti on Francis Acharya of Kuriumala Ashram, Kerala; www.SOULutions.co.uk/InScapeRetreats
25 www.bede.com and the weekend was held at Park Place Pastoral Centre, Fareham
(December 2003). She and her biography26 of Bede are well known in the Sangha.

Shirley's presence was matched by the privilege of also having (Revd) Murray Rogers – Abhishikt's welcoming host at Jyo tiniketan on the journeys to Rishikesh and Gyans – as a guest speaker and to preside at the concluding Eucharist; as well as Raphael Salen to accompany the video film of Abhishikt's life, Swamiji: An Interior Voyage, in which he is the commentator; and in addition (Fr) David Fleming, co-translator of his diaries, who came from Rome just to take part.

The interest in Abhishikt had already been evident in 2003. Shirley had then been a guest speaker at both the conferences held in Britain to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Bede's death. At one of them, she also chaired an optional workshop on Abhishikt in a large seminar room, which was full to bursting, with perhaps 40 people.

I mention all this because, for British people, Abhishikt is relatively inaccessible. Only two of his works have been re-published here27 (unlike the number in his native France): he never came here; only a tiny number of people now living in Britain could have met him before he died 31 years ago. This is in sharp contrast to Bede, many of whose books are readily obtainable here in his native country, and whom a significant number of people here will have either met at Shantivanam or have heard here on one of his lecture visits in the years before he died only 11 years ago, or at least link with other British landmark personalities or places. No doubt, for many Bede enthusiasts, especially those at the margins of institutional religion, Abhishikt represents a furthering and pathfinder figure in a pilgrimage inspired by Bede.

All three speakers seem to have had a free choice for their theme, and all of them focused spontaneously on what Abhishikt was like as a person: a person to live with, be with, talk with, pray with; be silent with. Both Shirley, who never met him in the flesh, and Murray, who was perhaps as close to him as anyone, experienced him as quintessentially natural, "extraordinarily ordinary", and whose practical common sense was learnt upon by Merchan. Both see him as a person of contradictions and surprise, spiced with impish humour and occasional outbursts, 'impossibly' passionate. Both remark how constantly self-disparaging he was about his spirituality, the intensity was an inner compulsion. And both see him as one of the great mystics of his time.

How fitting it was, therefore, for even this short weekend from Friday evening to Sunday lunch time, to attempt to make Abhishikt an experienced presence in our meditations. Shirley did, this by suggesting seven themes for our reflective discussion, along with, in each case, half a dozen brief and brilliant quotations: on the present moment, 'experience', being, 'signs', 'salute', 'advice', and 'Christ'. Murray did it by relishing his experience of 40 years ago, as it was only yesterday that they were helping Abhishikt through the train window of his third class compartment with his voluminous baggage (mostly books?) or posting off the money he saved from the half-pint of milk foregone for the sake of a poor family in Kulithalai. Raphael did it by reminding us what a long and painful road it was for Abhishikt to strip himself of so much of his, this time, spiritual baggage.

For hard copy, readers will undoubtedly gain gem insights from just nine pages of Murray's reminiscences in a new pocket booklet.28 Otherwise, Shirley's biography will be
.awaited with interest. However, can it possibly add to James A. Stuart’s comprehensive work or Antony Kaliati’s profound analysis of Abhishikt’s spirituality? First, in practical terms, each is practically unobtainable in the UK and, no doubt, elsewhere outside India. Secondly, Shirley’s experience in the public arena of biography prompts her always to ask: “why does this matter to us?”, especially to the potential readership among women who can identify with easily. Thirdly, a woman’s antennae may have a twist of insight we have previously overlooked and this is crucial in the West, where it is women who are the lifeblood of spirituality. Hence, we are likely to see a quiet mushrooming of interest in Abhishiktananda in the English-speaking world outside India in the next decade.

BOOK REVIEW

André Gozier, Un éveilleur spirituel: Henri Le Saux: Un moine à la rencontre des Upanishads, Magny-les-Hameaux (France); (Soceval); 2004; 136 pp.

The book recently published by Dom André Gozier, OSB, former Prior of Sainte-Marie Benedictine Abbey in Paris, takes an appreciative look at the mystical quest of Swami Abhishiktananda. The Author concedes that he owes quite a lot to him: “The discovery of his project, his adventure and his book, was a major inspiration in my own spiritual evolution” (p.105). This new approach is in stark contrast to his previous work published in 1989, which was reviewed very critically in our Bulletin.

Right from the outset of his book Dom Gozier acknowledges: “Henri Le Saux was a bridge between two worlds and two different cultures, the East and the West” (p.9) and sums up his work in one sentence as “to rethink Christianity within the Indian pattern” (ibid). This time the A. doesn’t wish to deal with the tricky subject of reconciling advaita and Christian faith but focuses on the figure of Swami Abhishiktananda as a spiritual master whose essential function is to awaken the seekers to the Divine. “All his work is incentive to find out the inner path and to lead the souls to the centre of the heart, where man by awakening to his own self awakens to God” (p.79). The A. even goes to the extent of exclaiming gratefully: “May Le Saux be your guru!” (p.111). His encounter with him, although he never saw him and discovered him only through his books – was a real and genuine encounter (pp.92-107) in the sense that it revealed to him his inner being, for “one of the graces of Le Saux is to reveal the Self to oneself” (p.106). One can say that the entire book of Dom André Gozier is oriented towards Self-Realization as being the very core of the spiritual search.

As the experience of Awakening is indescribable and transcends all theological formulations. This is the reason why the A. dedicates a few pages to the mystical poetry of Swami Abhishiktananda (pp.37-40), which is the deepest expression of the passage from self to Self. It was also the supreme form of language chosen by St John of the Cross to convey his highest contemplative experience. As a matter of fact, the poems of the mystic are all born out of silence and lead to the same.

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29 To be published by Orbis Books, 2005
30 Ascent to the Depth of the Heart, Delhi (ISPCK) 1998, etc
31 The Word in the Cave, New Delhi (Intercultural) 1996.
32 Note by the Editor: These books published in Delhi should not be unobtainable, since ISPCK (and other publishers and distributors in India) has a website and e-mail to make ordering through the Internet possible.

Besides his role as a guru, the Swami has opened the frontiers of the mind in two main fields: acculturation on one hand, and monasticism on the other as a key instrument of the Hindu-Christian encounter (p.22). In fact, such an encounter has taken place ultimately at the deepest level, which is the spiritual level. The taking of sannyasa, whose very purpose is to experience the Supreme Reality in the depth of one's being — and his thorough study of the Upanishads provided precisely the inner and common ground for such profound meeting to happen between the two religious traditions.

Dom Gozler who is a well-known specialist of Christian spirituality, devotes interestingly a chapter to The Cloud of Unknowing (pp.57-62) in which he makes parallels with the path of interiority as beautifully expressed by Swami Abhishktananda: "Plunge into oneself, to the greatest depth of oneself. Forget one's own I (sham), one's own self. Lose oneself in the ahm of the divine atman which is at the source of my own being: of the consciousness which I have that I am." He sees the anonymous masterpiece of medieval mysticism, which is a handbook for the contemplative life and advocates an apophatic spirituality, as a real footbridge between different faiths (p.58). Just as the Upanishads have been central to interreligious dialogue in India, it belongs also to the universal spirituality at the heart of all religions.

In another chapter (pp.91-97) the author brings together Swami Abhishktananda and Master Eckhart as M.-M. Davy already did in her brilliant essay. Dom Gozler writes: "For the seekers interested in Asian spirituality, Eckhart may be an invitation to deepen their Christianity," and he adds not without a touch of humour: "The Church had condemned only a third of his proposals" (p.92).

However, it is regrettable that Dom Gozler gives too much importance to the "fulfillment theology", that Swami Abhishktananda had for granted in the early sixties, viz. "assumption of the convergence upon the historical Christ and the Church, of all the religions and spiritual experiences of mankind." The A. has not brought out the later developments of Swamiji's thought nor the significant implications of his enlightenment experience, which occurred on 14th July 1973, in Rishikesh. On the contrary, the A. devotes an entire chapter (pp.53-56) to The Mountain of the Lord, which reflects the said "theology of fulfillment". He admits though a little further that Swamiji eventually didn't try to place himself in relation with any category but endeavoured to go ever beyond into the depth of India's mystery. "His thought was changing — very much changing — as fast as his inner journey" (p.68). Indeed, in the late sixties, his understanding of the relation between Christianity and Hinduism changed dramatically and he was no longer satisfied with the theory of Christ being the fulfillment of Hinduism, the latter being compared to a sort of first and preparatory revelation. At the end of his life, in the dazzling light of his deep Awakening to the Self, all previous theological and christological concepts exploded. In a certain sense, he had moved from interpreting advaita in Christian terms to understanding Christ in the light of his own advaitic experience.

In spite of the fact that the book of Dom André Gozler overlooks the aforesaid serious point, it can be considered as a good introduction to Swami Abhishktananda's spiritual journey and its particular relevance to the present day.

Swami Atmananda

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OBITUARIES

Fr. Shigeto Oshida (1922 – 6 November 2003):
A vivid Remembrance

by Murray Rogers

When I was a boy I remember, even now, playing with quicksilver, that tiny silver ball of mercury which you could never catch; wonderfully full of surprises. I never expected then to meet, even to know a little well, personal quicksilver. That was Shigeto Oshida, a most surprising man fully of delight and wonder.

Put yourself in the shoes of a well known Canadian New Testament scholar, speaking to his students on the Prologue of St. John’s Gospel. Oshida-san, one of them, a Dominican novice himself, already gripped with the depth and wonder of that prologue, listened intently but was terribly disappointed with his teacher’s theological analysis; the teacher saw that sadness in Oshida-san’s eyes. “If what I say disappoints you, what would you say of this passage?” In a flash the reply came, said with the greatest respect for his teacher and with a smile of wonder: “Une fleur dans la lumière du crépuscule”! (“A flower in the glow of sunset”). Silence followed.

Or see him looking out from Cheung Chau Island in Hong Kong, leading a retreat and giving us practical instruction in “the far away look”, so essential if we were truly to see, to be. Life for him was koans, those riddles only solved by leaving behind the rational mind, listening to the sounds when the music has stopped.

I met him first in the late 1960s – one of those marvellous synchronicities – in Japan, in Takamori. Soon that he had founded in the Japanese alps, an ancient form of community life centered in silence, worship and work in the paddy fields. Already he lived on the very edge of illness, with only a small part of one lung to keep him alive. That life on the very edge was a constituent part of the man.

A few years later he answered our invitation to Jyotiniketan with our great wish in mind that he might meet Abhishiktananda, a never to be forgotten encounter for each of them, as well as for ourselves. Swamiji, after some days in the ashram, took Oshida-san and the four of us, on pilgrimage to Hardwar and Rishikesh, places where the visible and invisible worlds so near touch.

Not many years later we found, to our delight, that he was coming to Jerusalem and Bethlehem to spend time, most often in silence, at those holy places so pivotal to the life of Jesus. How can I forget the hours he spent in the Institut Biblique, consulting some of the sages of his Dominican Order, or leading a retreat in Bethlehem when, to our amazement and shock he confiscated the watches of each of us for six days; how could deep listening be practiced – or the Eucharist be celebrated – with a watch on one’s wrist! You never knew quite what to expect and I doubt whether he did either, and the more laughter there was, the more serious the moment became. He said and did things which for westerners and western-trained people would have been play-acting while for Oshida-san himself they were authentic and left an impression which continued on – it still does.

A highlight of highlights happened in the late 1960s, in Takamori within sight of Fuji-san, when Oshida-san invited some 15 or 20 of us to spend a week with him. The letter of invitation asked us to live in silence and listening and simple sharing with men and women from seven or eight countries of east Asia, all of us living on the extremities of our spiritual paths, whether as Zen or Christian nuns, as Zen Master or Buddhist high priest, as friends carrying in their own bodies and hearts the agonies of Hiroshima, as that most impressive and totally unassuming human being, Ham Sok Han, the Korean Gandhi.
No formal speeches were to be made, Oshida-san told us; there
would be no closing statement informing the world of this
gathering; the Spirit's publicity would be more appropriate. How
well I remember a celebration of the Mass almost without words
and in the deepest unbroken silence. More ecumenical still and as
memorable was the sharing in worship, under the leading of an
American Indian Chief, in the Sweat Lodge, that he and his
disciple had built in the Soan garden. Hours spent together
working in the paddy fields and the sharing of simple meals and
many personal conversations, left an unforgettable taste of human
life as it is intended to be, and which in fact it would be if we
dared to follow the sages of east and west whom we claim to
follow. At the heart of this extraordinary event in the Japanese
countryside was the quicksilver man, Shigeto Oshida. What a gift
he was, and continues to be, for countless of us, from east and
west. No wonder that Swami Abhishiktananda once remarked,
"He is my brother; nothing separates us."

April 2004


by Michael Amaladoss, S.J

Jacques Dupuis was born in Belgium in 1923 in a family of
engineers. His father was an engineer. So were his two brothers.
His one sister also married an engineer. This background may
explain his rational, systematic mindset. He studied in a Jesuit
school and joined the Society at the age of 17. After seven years
of formation in Belgium, he volunteered for the mission in
Calcutta, where he arrived in 1949. After three years of teaching
experience and study of Bengali he did his theological studies at
Kurseong and was ordained in 1954. He completed his doctoral
studies in the Gregorian University in Rome with a thesis on
Origen. He taught in St. Mary’s, Kurseong, which was transferred
to Delhi in 1971 and became the Vidyajyoti College of Theology.
He became Assistant Editor of *Vidyajyoti Review of Theological
Reflection* in 1973. He took over as its editor in 1977. He
maintained its high theological standards. In 1984 he was called to
Rome to teach at the Gregorian University. He also was editor of
*Gregorianum*. He retired from teaching in 1998. He died after a
stroke on December 28, 2004. He has authored seven books and
about 230 articles and hundreds of book reviews. The books are:
(1) "L’Esprit de l’homme." Étude sur l’anthropologie religieuse
derOrigène, Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1967; (2) (with J. Neuner)
The Christian Faith in the doctrinal documents of the Catholic
Church, Bangalore: TPI 1973; (3) Jesus Christ and His Spirit:
Theological Approaches, Bangalore, TPI 1977; (4) Jesus Christ at
the Encounter of World Religions, Maryknoll: Orbis Books 1991
(French ed. 1988); (5) Who Do You Say I Am? Introduction to
Christology, Maryknoll: Orbis Books 1994; (6) Towards a
Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism, Maryknoll: Orbis
Confrontation to Dialogue, Maryknoll: Orbis Books 2002. Some
of his books have been translated into many languages and have
had many editions. His mimeographed class notes on Christology,
the Trinity, the Eucharist and Sacraments were rich in biblical,
patriotic and theological information and insight, and were used in
many seminars in India.

Dupuis was a good teacher, a hardworking scholar and a prolific
writer. Largely silent and withdrawn, he had no time for small
talk. For him, theological study, reflection and writing were a full-
time job. Generations of students will remember his clear and
scholarly lectures. He was a respected consultant to many Bishops
and the Conference of Indian Bishops. He continued this service,
even when he was in Rome, on the occasions of the Synods of
Bishops. He was also involved in the research seminars at
NBCLC, Bangalore.
He first became internationally known for the collection of official Church documents *The Christian Faith*, which he had jointly edited with Josef Neuner first in 1973. It has been updated many times. His passage to Rome provided him with a worldwide playing field. He became internationally famous with his book *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, particularly when it was picked up for critical examination by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1998. His final set of lectures in the Gregorian University before his official retirement had to be cancelled, thus ending his academic life on a sour note.

Dupuis was open as a theologian. The sign of openness is the ability to change. His experience of other religious believers in India and his contact with people like Swami Abhishiktananda made him open to other religions. Yet, when he moved over to Rome in 1984 he was not happy with the directions some of the younger Indian and Asian theologians were taking in the area of the theology of religions and Christology. They in turn considered him a conservative. The "systematic" scholar in him may also have felt uncomfortable with the emerging streams of contextual theology. He was however welcomed as a progressive in Rome and was the preferred guide for Indian doctoral students. But by the time he wrote his book on the theology of religions he had changed. He may still have considered some Indian/Asian theologians too progressive. But he had come much closer to them. There could be many reasons for this development and growth. His work assisting in editing the *Diary* of Swami Abhishiktananda must have challenged him in various ways to rethink his positions. He was also keeping pace with the developments in the teachings of John Paul II shown in his invitation to the leaders of other religions to come together to Assisi to pray for peace (1986) and in his encyclical *The Mission of the Redeemer*, in which he acknowledges the presence and action of the Spirit of God in all cultures and religions. Fr Dupuis's own historical and systematic work for his book on the theology of religions must have helped in the clarification of his ideas.

Though Dupuis lived in Rome for the last twenty years of his life, he had been marked by his 36 years in India. He had become a reverse missionary in Europe, becoming the exponent of Indian/Asian reflection in the area of the theology of religions. He had however added his own original contribution to it. Indian/Asian theologians, owing to lack of academic resources, may be strong on insight and short on systematic foundation and support. Dupuis had offered the universal Church a systematic and scholarly exposition and defense of a new theology of religions. He became an object of controversy precisely because he published in Europe in European languages while teaching in the "central" university of the Church. The extensive reaction provoked by his book in Europe was truly amazing. Perhaps it was a sign of the "systematic" effort to offer conservative interpretations of the Second Vatican Council. But it is a credit to his scholarship that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was unable to condemn him, in spite of its long drawn out process, but only warned in a "Notification" that his writings might be misunderstood. No wonder that Fr. Kolvenbach, his Superior General, commended his book "for the seriousness of its methodological research, the richness of the scientific documentation, and the originality of its exploration."

His systematic theology of religions would remain his enduring contribution to world theology. Indian/Asian theologians must be grateful that he had fought their theological battles for them with Rome. Dupuis has enabled them to go further forward. What else could a good teacher want?

*From the Editor:*

The personal, spiritual and theological relationship of Fr Dupuis with Abhishiktananda has been brought out by Fr. G. Gisbert-Säuch in his article "Jacques Dupuis and Swami Abhi-

Wayne Teasdale, 59, peacemaker and spiritual teacher, died on the morning of October 20, 2004. A beloved friend of many and a world-renowned teacher, Wayne served on the board of trustees of the Parliament of the World's Religions and was the coordinator of the Bede Griffiths International Trust. Wayne dedicated himself to helping people discover their true spiritual nature and was a passionate activist who worked throughout his life to create dialogue and mutual understanding among the world's religions. He is the author of many seminal books, most notably: The Mystic Heart: Discovering a Universal Spirituality in the World's Religions and A Monk in the World: Cultivating a Spiritual Life. Wayne was the leader of the Interfaith Call for Freedom of Worship and Human Rights in Tibet and was a member of the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue and helped draft their Universal Declaration on Nonviolence. He was an adjunct professor at DePaul University, Columbia College, and the Catholic Theological Union and lectured throughout the world.

(Courtesy: Sr. Mary Margaret Funk, editor, MID Bulletin)

Sri Sita Ram Goel

We deeply regret the passing of an old friend of Abhishiktananda, Sri Sita Ram Goel, on 3rd December 2003. His son Pradeep Goel sent us the following notice: "My father Sri Sita Ram Goel passed away on the morning of 3rd December 2003. He died in his sleep. His mind remained as sharp and lively as ever till the last moment. There was calm on his face when we saw him in the morning."

Sri Sita Ram Goel was one of the founding members of the Abhishiktananda Society and remained its treasurer for many years. He had studied history and became a publisher and an author. Later he changed his mind and became critical of Abhishiktananda. We thankfully remember his generosity and helpfulness.

NEWS AND PUBLICATIONS

The Interreligious Ashram in Tapovan (Rishikesh), Himalayas

As mentioned in the previous issue of 'Setu' (No 24, December 2003, pp. 40-41), the new Interreligious Ashram, founded with the help of the Abhishiktananda Society, will be a place of science, retreat, and solitude, conducive to deep meditation and prolonged periods of seclusion for monks of different religious denominations. Indeed, the general orientation of the project is interreligious and monastic, with a special emphasis on seclusion, as almost all the members will adopt a semi-ascetical type of life.
The monastic community will be autonomous as it is a tradition in India that the ashrams developed by monks are run by themselves since they only can carry forward with their spiritual work as well as the management of their community in a better manner. The ashram will also provide hospitality for the well-wishers and for seekers who are interested in the monastic way of life.

Since January 2004, a few brahmacaris and sannyasins have been staying in the ashram for periods ranging from 2 weeks to 3 months. This has been a time for discernment and deep reflection due to the specific requirements of eremitical life. Presently, two sannyasins and two brahmacaris would like to join the monastic project and few more candidates are applying for the same.

It has been decided to start the full-fledged life of the ashram in the course of the year 2005 with a small nucleus of two to three monastics. A few more rooms are being built on the 1st floor during this winter. Accordingly, the Blessing of the ashram will be scheduled to take place after the winter 2005.

During the last months, the ashram was honoured as well as encouraged by the visits of several local mahatmas and sannyasins (from Rishikesh and other holy places), as well as monastics of the Theravadin (Buddhist) Tradition.

For any information, please write or email to Swami Atmananda, R.D. Box 145, Rishikesh - 249 204 (Uttarakhand), India, email address: sw_atmananda@rediffmail.com.

The 30th Anniversary of Swami Abhishiktananda’s Mahasamadhi was celebrated on 7th December, 2003, in Delhi (Vidvajyoti College) by the members of the Abhishiktananda Society and a group of friends. The programme included recitation of Santmantras, readings from the Upanisads and from Swamiji’s Diary, silent meditation and sharing of memories by those who have known him. It concluded with a concelebration of the liturgy and a sharing of prasad (blessed food).

The Monastero di Camaldoli in Italy organised a three-day meeting on Swamiji: “Henri Le Saux, Swami Abhishiktananda. Il passaggio all’altra riva”, in which Fr. Jacques Dupuis also spoke on his theological thought.

The president, Bettina Bäumer, delivered a lecture at the “Association Jules Monchanin-Henri Le Saux” in Paris on 19th June; 2004 on “Henri Le Saux/Abhishiktananda: Ermité – pèlerin – prophète”, which was well attended and followed by a lively discussion.

The Bede Griffiths Sangha in U.K. organised a Summer Seminar on Abhishiktananda in Fareham, Hants, from July 16th to 18th, 2004 (see Report by Bernard Kilroy).

Bettina Bäumer visited Oxford in July, 2004, to work with Shirley Du Boulay on her Biography of Abhishiktananda, and to meet Murray Rogers and the Jyotikhana Community. It was a very fruitful meeting with lively memories of Swamiji.

Forthcoming Publications:
The Biography of Abhishiktananda by Shirley Du Boulay (announced in SETU 24 with a chapter as preview) is coming out in 2005 under the title “The Cave of the Heart. The Life of Abhishiktananda” (Orbis Books, New York).

Interiorte du révélation: The English translation by James Stuart is being revised by Swami Atmananda and is expected to come out in 2005 (ISPCK, Delhi).
The German translation by Christian Hackbarth-Johnson is coming out in 2005 as the second volume of a series on intercultural theology from the University of Salzburg, under the following title: *Inner Erfahrung und Offenbarung: Theologische Ansätze. Mit einer Einführung von Jacques Dupuis, hrg. von Bettina Bäumer, Christian Hackbarth-Johnson und Ulrich Winkler, Innsbruck* (Tyrolia) 2005. This translation contains the entire text of *Guhãntara* which was so far published only partially.

**Publications:**


Bettina Bäumer, Swami Abhishiktananda/Henri Le Saux, OSB, Pilgrim and Hermit, in: Monastic Interreligious Dialogue Bulletin, May 2004, No. 72, pp. 18-20. This article also appears on the website of MID.


The thesis by J. Glenn Friesen, "Abhishiktananda's Non-Monistic Advaitic Experience" can be downloaded from the

www: http://www.members.shaw.ca/abhishiktananda/

New Life Members of the Society

Ama Samy Gen-Un-Ken, (Zen Master of Bodhi Zendo, Kodaikanal), Sr. Amala (Secretary, Ashram Aikya, Bangalore), Dr. Gaetano Sabetta (Gurgaon, HA).

New Honorary Members of the Society


**Important notice for subscribers of SETU: Many subscriptions have been received due to the website. Though it is free, we have to ask for contributions/donations towards the charges of printing and postage. New subscribers will receive the present issue, but the following issues will be sent only after receiving a contribution (preferably by cheque/draft in the name of the Abhishiktananda Society, Delhi).

Official website on Swami Abhishiktananda and the Society: www.abhishiktananda.org

The books by Abhishiktananda in English are available at:

ISPCK, Post Box 1585,
1654 Madarsa Road, Kashmiri Gate, Delhi-110006
Tel: 2966323, Fax: 29665490.
The Abhishiktananda Archives of the Society are preserved in the Library of Vidyajyoti College of Theology in Delhi. They are accessible to scholars who ask permission in advance from the Secretary.

Any information concerning books, articles, research theses or seminars which refer to Swami Abhishiktananda will be received with gratitude (to be sent to the Editor, address below).

Abhishiktananda Society, c/o Vidyajyoti College, 23 Raj Niwas Marg, Delhi - 110054;

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