

ABHISHIKTANANDA SOCIETY

OCCASIONAL BULLETIN NO. 3

(December 1979)

"In my case I waited thirteen years before being able to make an official request to go to India. And during those thirteen years how often the whole thing was again called in question, as soon as a glimmer of hope appeared. Nothing to do but trust and leave all to God. The important thing is not to do such and such a work for God, but to allow him to do through us what he himself wishes to do. The essential preparation for India is the deepening of one's inner life. When anyone puts this question to me -- "How not to forget God in the midst of activity?" my reply is very simple: "How rather to forget him?" We identify the Lord with the *idea* that we have of him, with such and such a practice (prayer, etc.). Is it not enough to know that God, in transcending all things, is also *immanent* in everything? As if one could possibly depart from God!"

(From a letter of Abhishiktananda to a Carmelite nun, 21.4.63.)

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This third issue of the Bulletin brings greetings to all our members from the Executive Committee, which held its Annual Meeting on 10 October 1979.

The previous Bulletin (April 1978) was sent to all those who we knew would be interested to receive it. At present we

have the names of about 150 such friends, but there must be many more who would like to be in touch with the work of the Abhishiktananda Society. The Committee therefore requests all members to help in widening our contacts by sending in names and addresses to the Secretary.

The Committee intends to produce two issues of the Bulletin in 1980, and thereafter four issues annually. This however will depend on the amount of news and other contributions received from members by the Secretary. Please do keep us informed about relevant activities in your part of the world.

One of the concerns of the Society is to encourage the publication in various languages of Swamiji's writings, so that they may be widely available. But this is only a part of our wider purpose, which is to develop and follow up the seminal insights which were given to Abhishiktananda and by which he lived. We do not intend merely to look back to him. As he used to say to his friends: "We have taken the first steps and begun the climb; others, standing on our shoulders, will go on to the summit." He indeed envisaged a process that might be measured not in decades but in centuries.

With this in mind, the Committee has decided to hold a study week/seminar in two years' time, January-February 1982. Its object will be to discern the meaning for our time of certain great themes of spirituality (e.g. *moksha*, *dharma*, renunciation, *sadhana*). A sub-committee convened by Shri Ram Swarup (C-3, Maharani Bagh, New Delhi 110 065) is beginning the preparatory work, and would welcome any suggestions. Wide participation will be sought, for which funding will be essential, and the Committee appeals to members for any help they may be able to give.

The 'new look' of this issue is due to the kindness of a Committee member, who has undertaken the responsibility for printing and despatching the copies.

J. D. M. Stuart (Secretary)

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NEWS

1. PUBLICATIONS

In French

H. Le Saux/Swami Abhishiktananda. *Les yeux de lumière: Ecrits spirituels présentés par André Gozier et Joseph Lemarié*. Le Centurion, Paris, 1979. *Contents*: six reprinted articles and one hitherto unpublished; extracts from letters to Fr Lemarié and others; extracts from the Diary.

H. Le Saux/Swami Abhishiktananda. *Souvenirs d'Arunachala: récit d'un ermite chrétien en terre hindoue*. Epi, Paris, 1978. Abhishiktananda's account of his experiences at Arunachala between 1949 and 1956.

Henri Le Saux/Swami Abhishiktananda. *Initiation à la spiritualité des Upanishads: Vers l'autre rive*. Sisteron, Présence, 1979. *Contents*: three unpublished essays leading up to the two essays on the Upanishads and on Sannyasa, published as *The Further Shore* (Delhi, 1975); introductions by Mme M-M. Davy and Mme O. Baumer-Despeigne.

In German

Henri Le Saux/Swami Abhishiktananda. *Das Feuer der Weisheit*. O. W. Barth Vg, 1979. The translation of *Gnanananda* (English title, *Guru and Disciple*) introduced by Dr Bettina Bäumer. (*To appear early in 1980*)

H. Le Saux. *Der Weg zum anderen Ufer*. Eugen Diederichs Vg, Köln, W. Germany. The translation of *Initiation à la spiritualité des Upanishads* by Dr B. Bäumer.

H. Le Saux. *Die Gegenwart Gottes erfahren: Beten im Geist des Hinduismus*. Matthias-Grünewald Vg. The translation of *Eveil à soi—éveil à Dieu* (English, *Prayer*) by Dr B. Bäumer. *In English*.

Abhishiktananda. *The Secret of Arunachala*. I.S.P.C.K., Delhi, 1979.

In Catalan

H. Le Saux. (Catalan title?) *The Further Shore*. Editorial Claret, Barcelona, Spain, 1979.

In Italian

'Preghiera e silenzio' (Prayer and Silence), an article translated by Don Arrigo Chiergatti (Bologna), published in *Jesus-Caritas*, January 1978.

2. NOTES

France

The three important French publications listed above have been well received, to judge from the reviews of which extracts are given in the next section.

Fr J. Lemarié, one of the editors of *Les yeux*, was a very old friend of Abhishiktananda and corresponded with him throughout his 25 years in India.

Souvenirs and *Initiation* are the fruit of collaboration between Mme Odette Baumer and Mme M-M. Davy. Mme Davy (who is well known for her writing and speaking on spirituality) was first in contact with Swamiji when she handled the publication of *Gnanananda* (Présence, 1971). She spoke about him on the occasions when these two books were released in Paris, and is currently engaged in writing her own book about him.

Switzerland

Mme Odette Baumer (Corresponding Member and Secretary for Europe: Bannhalde 25, CH-8500 Frauenfeld, Switzerland) is responsible for a great deal of the work of the Society. Thanks to what she has already done on Swamiji's Diary (Journal), there is good hope that it will appear within two years; and this may well be a major publishing event. The home of Odette and her husband at Frauenfeld draws friends of Abhishiktananda from all over the world, including more than one research student who have been helped to understand Swamiji better.

Austria and West Germany

Dr Bettina Bäumer (Corresponding Member: address from April to November, Herbeckstr. 128, A-1180 Wien, Austria) has been involved in all three of the German publications mentioned above. For two successive years she has spoken about Abhishiktananda at the Meditationszentrum at Tholey (Saar, West Germany), and is to address a gathering at Frauenfeld in

May 1980. As she now divides the year between Vienna and Varanasi, she links up our work in India and Europe.

Italy

The Centro Le Saux, organized by Associate Member Catarina Conio, Via Bergamini n. 8, 20123 Milano, seeks to foster inter-religious understanding through its programmes, in which other members of the Society sometimes take part. Its publication 'N'fuziario' often contains news-items from India, reviews of Swamiji's books, etc.

In Rome one of our members, Fr E. Vattakuzhy, recently obtained a doctorate on a thesis called 'Indian Christian Sannyasa in the vision and experience of Swami Abhishiktananda', which he plans to publish.

Israel

Mary and Murray Rogers and Heather Sandeman have welcomed other members to the Jyotiniketan Ashram in Jerusalem, which is a centre for inter-faith reflection and reconciliation and of prayer for the peace of the Holy City.

Japan

Dr. Minoru Kasai (Associate Member) visited India again for a research project in 1978. He hopes to arrange for Japanese versions of *Prayer* and *The Further Shore*.

Canada

In Montreal the Centre Monchanin (4917 St Urbain, Montreal, Quebec; director Robert Vachon, Associate Member of our Society) is devoted to exploring the frontiers of cross-cultural understanding. The *Revue Monchanin* is published 3-4 times annually, and is enlightening on the cosmic faith of the Amerindian tribes. It also draws inspiration from the East and from India, and our Chairman, Prof. Raimundo Panikkar is a frequent contributor.

U.S.A.

We have a group of friends at Santa Barbara (Calif.) where Professor Panikkar teaches at the University of California. At the Jesuit School of Theology, Fr O'Hanlon is making a collection of Abhishiktananda texts, and recently conducted a seminar on him at the General Theological Union. Another Member, Mrs Hoppers, has plans for producing U.S. editions of

Swamiji's books, of which so far only *Prayer* (Westminster) has been published in the U.S.A.

In the Mid-West several Benedictine houses are interested in Abhishiktananda, as is the U.S. branch of A.I.M. (Aide inter-monastères), for whom Professor Panikkar is to conduct a retreat in 1980.

India

I.S.P.C.K. has just published *The Secret of Arunachala* (Post Box 1585, Kashmir Gate, Delhi 110 006). The *Memoir of Abhishiktananda*. (Sr. Sara Grant of C.P.S. Ashram, Pune and James Stuart) is approaching completion. Thanks to the rich provision of Swamiji's own letters, the story can be told almost entirely in his own words. Another book containing a selection of his unpublished essays on theological subjects is being prepared with an introduction by Fr. Jacques Dupuis of Vidyajyoti, Delhi.

It is pleasant also to record that when the Tapovanam Ashram (Tirukoilur, Tamilnadu) produced *Sadguru Gnanananda*, they borrowed extensively from Swamiji's book and dedicated their book to him: "We have drawn deep inspiration from his book on Swami Gnanananda entitled 'Guru and Disciple' and we are sure that the haunting beauty and power of its exposition would captivate the readers' hearts as it has ours. To the hallowed memory of Swami Abhishiktananda, who could recapture the transcendent beauty of the spirit, and hold aloft the radiance of self-realization to light up the path of spiritual seekers, this book is dedicated with a profound gratitude and reverence."

3. EXTRACTS FROM REVIEWS

Les yeux de lumière, reviewed by I.M. Dalmais in *Bulletin de l'A.I.M.*, No. 26, 1979.

"Fr. Henri Le Saux... died at Indore in 1973. His strong personality, his intense and original spiritual experience, have left a deep mark on the Church of the 20th century.

After Lebbe for China, de Nobili and Monchanin for India, Peyriguère for Morocco... Henri Le Saux heard an inner call, purely monastic, to India: Come! He followed the summons

which led him to the *Further Shore*... Among Christians he is, in the words of Fr. Monchanin on his death-bed, the one who has most deeply penetrated the mystery of India.

He who became Swami Abhishiktananda has left numerous unpublished writings, from which this book has drawn some particularly rich and weighty extracts; articles, studies, letters. Real spiritual writings. Born of an experience of the mystery, patiently and enthusiastically accepted, they make a deep inner appeal to the mind and heart...

Henri Le Saux belongs among the forerunners and pioneers of contemporary spirituality, in which the great religious traditions mutually question each other. He has opened up new paths for the Church. He has 'seen' the Christ of India. The Christian mystery, explored in depth at the heart of Hinduism, is revealed in a new fulness. 'India leads the Christian to discover the pearl hidden in the depth of her heart,' wrote Swami Abhishiktananda. *Souvenirs d'Arunachala*, reviewed by I.M. Dalmais in *Axes*, Vol. XI/1, Oct.-Nov. 1978 and *Bulletin de l'A.I.M.*, No. 26, 1979.

"Soon after coming to India... Fr. Le Saux, desiring to have the 'darshana' (sight) of the great Hindu saint Ramana Maharshi, went in Jan. 1949 to Tiruvannamalai at the foot of the holy mountain of Arunachala... In the course of the years following Ramana Maharshi's death (1950), he returned at intervals to stay for longer or shorter periods in the vicinity, periods which were marked for him by a rich experience, both human and spiritual. Soon after the last of his visits, in 1956, he wrote the present text...

A first chapter recalls his meeting with the Maharshi; the others, in the form of accounts, refreshingly immediate or poetically evocative, echo the author's encounters and experiences in the course of his visits. Such a book cannot be summarized; one must read it, allow oneself to be introduced by the author to the deep things of India, to her rich spiritual traditions, and to the echoes which they cause to sound in the Christian heart. Other texts, either already published, or ones which one hopes will soon appear, including extracts from the extensive correspondence maintained by Fr. Le Saux, will enable one to follow him throughout the spiritual pilgrimage which came to a climax in July 1973,

and of which the times when he stayed by Arunachala... constitute the decisive stages."

Souvenirs d'Arunachala, reviewed by I.M.D. in I.C.I., No. 533, Dec. 1978.

"...The account of a spiritual experience... immersed in the very heart of the spiritual India from whose depths issue pilgrims and ascetics thirsting for the Absolute, in pursuit of that secret which can only find expression in silence. An account that is full of good stories, since the author's mischievous eye is not taken in by self-deception or make-believe; an attentive listening to the mystery which the Christian monk discerns in the light of Christ." *Initiation à la spiritualité des Upanishads*, reviewed by M.

Maupfliter in *La vie spirituelle*, September, 1979.

"Here, following closely upon *Souvenirs d'Arunachala* (Epi, 1978), are four studies, later in date and still more illuminating about the adventure lived by H. Le Saux, since they bring us to the threshold of his departure from this world..."

We feel that the texts here presented: the Introduction to the early Upanishads, the study of Sannyasa, or Hindu monasticism, are the most important works of H. Le Saux that have so far appeared. They are great works of general spirituality, of Christian monastic mysticism. They should provoke new reflections on monasticism among Christians and should also provide monks and nuns who question themselves about Hindu monasticism with new lights and invaluable practical resources for their meditation, for their approach to God and Jesus Christ. They raise important and serious questions, no doubt, but this is part — and not the least part — of their value.

...Let us hope that the publication of the writings of H. Le Saux will continue to the end at the same tempo, and that the editors (who sometimes have to clear up obscurities) will do to us the favour — and to one of the great Christian witnesses of our time the courtesy — of not withholding a single line."