

ABHISHIKTANANDA SOCIETY

Brotherhood House, Court Lane, Delhi-110054

OCCASIONAL BULLETEN NO. 4

JUNE 1980

"A real *jnānī* is one who is entirely available to the Spirit and open to his inspiration. Anyone who refuses to do his share of the world's work merely on the excuse that he must ensure peace and quiet for contemplation, has not begun to understand the meaning of *jnāna*. He thereby shows that he has not yet had an inner awakening to the mystery of Self and of Being. For the true *jnānī* differences no longer exist, in the sense of the *dvandva*, or 'pairs of opposites'. Everywhere he meets the mystery of God, the mystery of Self and of Being... and this excludes all possibility of difference, since it is in everything identical to itself.

"When therefore the *jnānī* has to live in the world, his practical activity will be no less intelligent or vigorous than that of his fellows. Whatever he does will be carried out with full awareness and application. His work in the created world will at the same time be as committed and as free as that of God. He will give himself entirely to his work, and yet at the same time he will remain totally free and independent with regard to what he does.

"No doubt the views of the *jnānī* about what man truly needs will vary considerably from that of the technocrat..."

(Abhishiktananda, *Saccidānanda*, ch. 13, pages 152, 153, 155)

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The Study Week

The plan to hold a Study Week in 1982 (mentioned in *Bulletin* No. 3) was taken a stage further at the meeting of the Executive Committee held in Delhi on 15 March last.

The above quotation from *Saccidānanda* and the following message from our President, Professor R. Panikkar, will indicate our approach:

"Contemporary Man is torn apart between the horns of an excruciating dilemma: either you become callous and even cynical in the face of the increasing sufferings of our fellow-beings and human injustices, or you become an activist in one particular area of the human field, which may range from being a guerilla fighter to a rural developer,—to discover at the end that you have not contributed much to human welfare, or only triggered an opposite reaction, or even been coopted by the very system you wanted to overcome.

"Or..., or you fall into despair, or withdraw into a selfish interiority where the societal winds don't blow and human cries are not heard.

"Or...?"

"Or you perhaps begin to surmise that when we overcome those dichotomies in the deepest centre of ourselves and have realized the con-centricity of our being with the being of the world, we begin to contribute effectively to the maintaining of the world (*lakṣaṅgraha*, redemption...), precisely because our minds, and our hands, are free for involvement without entanglement...

"It is neither the attitude: 'Save your soul and don't care about the world', nor 'Help your neighbour and forget about your soul', but rather it is to reach that point—existentially, and not just mentally (as Swamiji constantly reminded us)—where in spite of all possible distinctions no separation is made between your soul and the world, your neighbour and yourself...

"But these again are mere thoughts, if not incarnated in our lives..."

The Study Week will be held in January 1982 somewhere in India, with the hope that there will also be some participants from abroad. To fill out the picture of what is in mind, we quote from a leaflet that is being sent to those who are being invited to take part:

"The Abhishiktananda Society plans to convene a contemplative Study Week... to study in a fraternal, contemplative and intellectual way The Place of Renunciation in the Contemporary World."

"The contemporary world is in turmoil. Modernity proves a failure, and tradition is impotent. The projected Study Week intends, first of all, to learn the meaning and value of renunciation (asceticism, *tyāga, sannyāsa*, etc.) as practised in various religious traditions. It would seek to submit these views to contemporary criticism and to explore the ways open to modern man in this field.

"We propose as a starting-point Abhishiktananda's book *The Further Shore*, in which he explains the classical meaning of *Sannyāsa* in Hinduism. We do not assume that all will agree with his views..."

"The different religious traditions should include at least Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, and possibly Jainism. Representative speakers are asked to provide a scholarly historical, textual and philosophical analysis of the subject. They should however not merely represent their own tradition, but should contribute, from the background of their tradition, to a common effort at reflection on the universal problems related to renunciation today.

"Each day some major aspect of the subject will be introduced by a speaker whose position paper will have been already circulated. Two respondents from traditions other than the speaker's will reply. The main emphasis will be on the ensuing dialogue."

There will also be time for shared prayer and meditation or worship, led by persons belonging to different traditions. The Week is not intended to be primarily academic, but rather 'an experience in living together', a kind of collective retreat, with time for serious reflection on the topic'. Care will be taken to keep a full record of the discussions with a view to publication. We may hope to reach some common findings, but without imposing uniformity upon different views and paths.

"Including speakers and respondents, other participants will be invited up to a total of forty. Those who are interested are asked to contact the Convener of the Preparatory Committee, Shri Sita Ram Goel, 2/18 Ansari Road, New Delhi-110.002.

"Apart from providing hospitality during the Week, the Abhishiktananda Society is not at present in a position to meet any travelling expenses. But contributions are being invited, so that when the time comes, at least some help may be available for travelling also."

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Executive Committee Meeting on 15 March

Associate Members. At this meeting we were fortunate in having with us our two Corresponding Members, Mme Odette Baumer-Despeigne and Dr. Bettina Baumer. If any of our Associate Members should chance to be in India at the time of a Committee Meeting, their presence at the meeting will be most welcome. As far as possible, advance notice of meetings will be given in the *Bulletin*. (The next meeting will not be until 1981.)"

We are grateful to Associate Members who send us news of interesting happenings in their part of the world and who introduce new members to the Society.

Ordinary Members. A certain number of those to whom the *Bulletin* is sent have indicated their wish to be regarded as members of the Society, and some have also sent donations. For the

convenience of others who have not so far responded, we enclose a postcard which may kindly be returned to the Secretary.

Swamiji's Diary. Since the last meeting of the Committee, Dr. B. Baumer and Fr. J. Dupuis have studied and made notes on the selection of extracts prepared by Mme O. Baumer. All this material has now been handed over to our President, who before the end of the year will finalize the selection (a selection is inevitable, because of the huge size of the *Diary*, but indication will be given of what has to be omitted). At the end of 1980 or early in 1981, the selected texts will once more be carefully checked against the original MS in Switzerland. After this, various experts will prepare the necessary notes and glossary, and Professor Panikkar will write introductions to the sections and to the whole. He hopes that the *Diary* will be ready for publication by the end of 1981.

News

'*Abhishiktananda Room*' at Rajpur. The Director of the Retreat and Study Centre at Rajpur (Dehra Dun), the Revd P.D. Sham Rao, has made the room over the garage, where Swamiji spent several months in 1972-73, into a meditation room.

Centro Henri Le Saux at Milan. This meditation and study centre has moved to a new address: Via S. Antonio, 10, 20122 Milano. We hear from Miss C. Conio that she intends to publish a series of *Cahiers (Quaderni)*. The first issue will contain a lecture by Mme Odette Baumer, given last year at the Centro, together with an anthology of Swamiji's writings. In place of the *Notiziario* there will be an 'Occasional Letter'.

An Italian edition of Swamiji's books is planned by E.M.I. of Bologna in collaboration with Don Arrigo Chiergatti, who has already published some of his articles. Incidentally, Don Arrigo visited India with some Italian friends earlier this year.

The German edition of *The Further Shore*, edited by Dr. Bettina Baumer, has been published by Eugen Diederichs. Unfortunately

the publishers, at the last moment and without consultation, cut out chapter 4 from the essay on 'Sannyasa'. We have protested at this betrayal of confidence, and hope that reviewers will warn readers that the text is incomplete.

A new study of Swamiji by Mme Marie-Madeleine Davy is to be (has been?) published by Editions Le Cerf in their series on 'Contemporary Witnesses to the Spirit', under the title *Père Le Saux—Swami Abhishiktananda*.

The Birth-Centenary of Sri Ramana Maharshi is being observed this year. In view of his great influence on Swamiji, who called Arunachala his 'birth-place', two articles were prepared by Mme O. Baumer and James Stuart. One will appear in the July number of *The Mountain Path* (Sri Ramanashram), called 'A Deeply Effective Darshan of Bhagavan', and another has been published by *Vidyavati* (Delhi) under the title "Sri Ramana Maharshi and Abhishiktananda".

Research on Abhishiktananda continues. Mr. Andrew McKearney of Cambridge University recently spent several weeks here in connection with his work on a doctoral thesis. He feels that there is a certain incongruity in Swamiji being studied 'academically', but is convinced that "the relationship between Christianity and Advaita should be of vital importance to the theologian". In a letter he says: "Too often western theologians formulate their models solely with reference to western Christian sources, paying little if any attention to the facts of other religious traditions. However, clearly for the model to be at all meaningful or close to Reality, justice has to be done to all sides, and the experience of Advaita and Christianity are of central importance here. Hence, by reflecting on Abhishiktananda's life and experience the theologian—and for that matter, any other sincere thinker, if he is true to Abhishiktananda—should be able to come a little closer, however 'apophatically' (and so *not* claiming 'I've got it'), to the way things are, to Reality. This in turn shows the importance of the Abhishiktananda Society in making available all the many facets of the Swami's thought and life. However this does not allow us to sit and study Abhishiktananda dispassionately from the comfort of our proverbial 'armchair'. We

are all called to follow him in our own ways, to suffer in some measure the tensions and perplexities he felt, and so to incarnate a little more fully the Self as exemplified in the crucified Lord"

The Word As Revelation: Names of Gods by Ram Swarup, a member of the Executive Committee of our Society, is being published in August this year. The book studies human speech in its relation to man's deeper psyche and religious consciousness. It adds a new dimension to the science of semantics by showing how physical meanings of a word become sensuous meanings, become concepts and ideas, become names of the powers of the psyche, become Names of Gods, depending upon the organ of the mind—*Indriya, Manas, Buddhi*,—which is using that word as also on the level of purity—*Bhumi*—of the organ concerned. Next, by applying this method of unlocking the highest and most secret meanings of words, it adds a new chapter to Vedic Exegesis (*Mīmāṃsā*). Thirdly, refuting that Vedic Gods represent the attempt of the primitive human mind, through Nature's symbols and objects, towards groping for a unitary principle, it asserts that the truths of the Self can be expressed equally well in polytheistic as well as monotheistic terms, and that one God or Many Gods are opposed only on the mental plane while they meet in the unity of the Spirit. Fourthly, it invites us to extend this new approach to promote an understanding of several existing religions and many classical religions of the past—of Egypt, Iran, Greece, Rome. Such a study should help the modern Europeans to have a better understanding of their old Gods as also of the Gods of the Africans and American Indians. Finally, though briefly, the book offers a practical advice. A meditation on the Names and Attributes of Gods has a transforming power not only for the individual but also for his physical, social and cultural environment. As an individual's consciousness is purified and raised by meditation on the Names of Gods, he becomes increasingly aware of the inertias and impurities around himself and is activated towards achieving a spiritually meaningful environment.

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Postcard

Secretary,
Abhishiktananda Society,
Dear Sir,

I wish to become a member of the Abhishiktananda Society
and to continue to receive the *Bulletin*.

*I am sending as a voluntary donation
to the work of the Society.

Name

Address.....

*Donations are not obligatory. Please delete the paragraph if it does
not apply.