



## Bulletin of the Abhishiktananda Society

No. 22

December 2001

Editor: Bettina Bäumer

Let me be enraged and yet  
Compassionate toward the world.  
And thus in the madness of devotion  
May I laugh and weep and chant  
Śiva, thunderously.

Utpaladeva, Śivastotrāvālī 16.7

A person dies of the experience of the infinite (*ananta*)  
beyond the beyond – Brahman.  
Dead, dead, in becoming Brahman, the All,

Brahman *sarvam*.

Yes that is true,

Being absorbed in this Source!

The Lord has said to me: *Today* I beget you.

O this Purusha of glory (*tejomayah*),

Before the creation of the worlds,

In their creation

The golden embryo

all!

This Purusha in the golden embryo

who is born unborn (*a-ja*),

who comes in every birth.

Oh! But it is myself!

Golden-coloured beyond the womb (*hiranmaya para garbha*)

Oh! when he reveals himself,

when the sun explodes,

the end of the world,

then *I am*.

Abhishiktananda, Ascent to the Depth of the Heart. The  
Spiritual Diary, p. 349, 11<sup>th</sup> May, 1972.

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### Editorial

The events of 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 and after have not only created violent reactions, but also an awakening of consciousness the world over, to the urgency of a complete transformation. The transformation needed has to start from our own lives and lead to a change in the dominant values of a self-destructive society. A spiritual transformation has to be the basis for a social, political, economic change. We cannot continue as if nothing has happened. We have to heal the wounds of polarization, the wounds of

suppression, of separation. Religious identities have played an important role in all these discussions, attitudes and events, and it has become more obvious than ever that interreligious dialogue and a deep meeting of people belonging to different religions and cultural worlds are essential for overcoming the existing tensions which are always in the danger of leading to explosions.

The contemplative is not insensitive to the pains and tensions of the world, but he or she can throw a more detached light on them and heal them by his or her very presence.

The present issue of SETU also focuses on the theme of death in the context of the meditation of the Upanishads, which was a constant theme for Abhishiktananda.

**Bettina Bäumer**

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### Īśa, Divine Light

by **H. N. Cakravarty**

*Editor's Note: Pandit H.N. Chakravarty is an eminent scholar of Tantra and Kashmir Shaivism in Varanasi. He has participated in several interreligious seminars organized by the Abhishiktananda Society.*

This whole universe, all that lives

And moves on earth, is enveloped by the Lord.

Therefore, find joy in abandoning the transient.

Do not hanker for another man's lot.

When he performs all actions with integrity,  
a man may desire to live a hundred years.

For you also there is no other way.  
A man's deeds do not cling to him.

Īśa Upaniṣad 1-2 (transl. R. Panikkar, The Vedic Experience)

The final section of Śukla Yajurveda Saṃhitā is known as Īśopaniṣad or Īśā. Yajñavalkya received the white *yajus* from Āditya and revealed them for the good of all. All of the verses are replete with and refulgent with the brilliant concept of the Sun, Āditya. They are bright, therefore white and naturally unmingled with foreign elements.

The entire Upaniṣad consists of eighteen verses containing some salient terms like unqualified *tat*, qualified *Īśa*, *Puruṣa* and *Ātman*. The term Brahman is absent here, which simply implies negation of this (*idam*) and all (*sarvam*). The perfect view is seeing everything illuminated by the light: *vas*. The world permeated by this light should be enjoyed without the greedy approach of acquiring and consuming it for one's own sake. It should be enjoyed after it has been offered to the Lord, conceiving that it does not belong to the offerer but to the Lord. When the object is offered sincerely, it reaches the Divine. With this selfless spirit whatever is offered comes back to the offerer as a residue of an oblation (*yajñāśiṣṭa*) in the form of nectar. The offerer receives it back as a *prasāda* conveying His grace. This reminds us of the Christian eucharist.

The supreme ideal presented in the Upaniṣad is to remain active in various kinds of actions. When perfect satisfaction has dawned after offering the delightful object to the Divine and it has been gracefully accepted, it comes back as a pleasant gift to be enjoyed fully by the person who knows the secret of offering.

This requires the purity of one's sight. This sight is always associated with enjoyment and action. Enjoyment is the expression of delight and action of desire. The threefold innate

nature of all is knowledge, bliss and action, which makes a person a perfect man, *nara*, and impels one to reach the divine. The joy of man, *nāra*, is to remain active without attachment, and always to remain so for hundred years.

The Upaniṣad denies none but accepts everything, bringing all into the wide embrace of the Divine, to permeate every entity with its light and then to enjoy it without attachment.

The upsurge of pulsation of the vital energy, *prāṇa*, is here known as *mātariśvā*, the mother energy of the universe. She is the source of the waters flowing in seven streams (bearing the names like *bhūh*, *bhuvaḥ*, *svah*, *mahaḥ*, *janah*, *tapas*, and *saryam*). She is *jagatī*, the world, symbolizing *aditi*, the mother of the gods who are playing and dallying with light. The two, *Īśa*, the Lord, and *jagatī*, the supreme consciousness and the great Energy express themselves in the form of the universe. In the beginning the One expresses itself as two and finally as many. It reminds one of the well-known verses cited by revered Abhinavagupta in his commentary called *vivarāna* on Parātrīśikā: "What is one has become two, and the twofold has become many."

Here *Īśa*, and *jagatī* symbolize supreme consciousness and the great Energy (*mahāśakti*), and their union gives birth to the world of multitude.

This universe, the immanent divine, is expressed as universal vibration (*spanda*). As *spanda* vibration it shines as all throbbing in the heart, in the flames of fire, leaves and branches of the tree, in each individual in will, knowledge and action. This stir or vibration is known as *ejana* synonymous with *spanda*. But while vibrative, it is at the same time *anejat*, *aspanda*, non-vibrative, an eternal presence which in the Upaniṣad is hinted at with the terms *tad ejati tannajati*, that moves, that moves not — that is not remote — that abides in the core of the heart of all.

The present text speaks of the immanence of the Divine. Seeing and conceiving it as shining in all as the very Self of everything outside and then seeing everything as the Self within – this is the state of immanence as preached by the Upaniṣad. It denies none but accepts everything as made of the non-ending light of the Self. It occurs only when the opening of the eyesight for seeing oneness everywhere smashes the barrier of limitation.

When the right view blooms forth the *yogin* sees the world as the body of the Divine filled with the non-dual identity of consciousness. Then one becomes free from all fear.

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### A Meditation on Death: The last three verses of Īśa Upaniṣad

by Bettina Bäumer

The face of Truth is covered over

By a golden vessel. Uncover it, O Lord,

That I who love the truth may see.

O Lord, sole Seer, Controller, Sun,

Son of the Father of beings, shine forth.

Concentrate your splendour that I may behold

Your most glorious form. He who is yonder –

The Man yonder – I myself am He!

Go, my breath, to the immortal wind,

Then may this body end in ashes!

Remember, o my mind, the deeds of the past,

Remember the deeds, remember the deeds!

Īśa 15-17 (transl. R. Panikkar, The Vedic Experience)

Death is a universal theme in all traditions of mankind, but modern western civilization has suppressed it and hidden it under a cover of medical technology. However, a renewed interest can be found in a conscious reflection on death, taking the help of spiritual traditions such as Tibetan Buddhism. In India, one of the earliest texts preparing man to die and leading him to the state transcending death is the Īśa Upaniṣad, which is even today recited at the occasion of death.

The last four verses of the Īśa Upaniṣad have been variously called a prayer of a dying person. The last verse (18) being a *mantra* from the Ṛgveda (1.189.1), I shall limit my meditation to the three verses (15-17) which contain in a nutshell the ultimate prayers of the dying as well as of the living. The link with death is established through verse 14 immediately preceding:

The man who understands both the impermanent and the permanent

holding the two in tension together,

by the impermanent passes over death

and by the permanent attains immortal life.

(*vināśena mṛtyuṃ ūrvā saṃbhūtyāmṛtam aśnute.*)

Generally only verses 15 and 16 are attributed to the dying person, and 17 appears to be the reflection and invocation of the living, the survivors or relatives.

What is striking is the strong invocation of Pṛṣṇan in these two *mantras*. Strangely, Pṛṣṇan, a Vedic deity, disappears in the Upaniṣads after these powerful verses which occur in the parallel passages of Bṛhadāraṇyaka 5.15 and Īśa.

Verse 15 starts with the statement that the face of truth is covered with a golden vessel: *hiraṇmayena pātreṇa satyasya apihitam mukham*. The “golden vessel” has invariably been interpreted as

the sun which covers the ultimate, the Real: *satyam*. In the same verse there are two levels of *satya*: the ultimate truth or Reality which lies beyond, and with which the dying person has to identify him/herself. This is only possible if the person is already dedicated to the ultimate truth and reality, if he/she is *satyadharmā*. The final obstacle to see the Real is the sun itself, and the divinity invoked to remove this obstacle is Pūṣan. He is addressed very personally: *tvam pūṣan apāvṛṇu*, showing a kind of familiarity, even intimacy with this divinity. Not by chance the following *mantra* starts with an invocation of Pūṣan.

Before continuing an exegesis of the *mantras*, we should throw some light on this Vedic deity, and discover why he is foremost in being invoked in the process of dying. We shall see that the many-faceted and yet unitary figure of Pūṣan holds the key to the understanding of *mantras* 15-16 of the Īśa.

One important aspect of Pūṣan's nature which opens up the meaning of these mantras is his relation to the sun, to Sūrya, and hence to light and illumination. The three aspects of the sun are: "Sūrya, the sun in manifestation, Pūṣan, the glowing innermost essence of this manifestation, and Savitṛ, the impeller". (St. Kramrisch, p.160). Pūṣan is always called the radiant or glowing one (*āghṛṇī*) in the Veda, and he is the personification of the glowing substance of the sun, impelled by Savitṛ. That there is a difference between the manifest sun, Sūrya, and its innermost glowing nature, becomes clear in verse 15 because the manifestation, even of light, becomes an obstacle hiding the ultimate essence, the inner light and truth. Pūṣan, having gone beyond to the higher realms of light, is the true and fitting mediator at the moment of death or illumination.

The connection with light is also related to vision (*dīṇī*), and Pūṣan is the all-seeing deity (cf. RV III.62.9). It is therefore only fitting that he is invoked for a clear vision. This implies also a removal of obstacles (*tvam pūṣannapāvṛṇu....dṛṣṭave*), another of his

important functions. He removes obstacles of all kinds, and foremost he is a guide and forerunner on all paths, a pathfinder:

Shorten our path, O Pūṣan, remove all stumbling blocks,  
Deliverer. Be at hand to guide. (RV I.4.1)

He shows the way and smoothens the paths not only in this world, but also in the way to the beyond, guiding the souls of the departed to the world of the Fathers.

Death has been considered as a journey in practically all religious traditions. Pūṣan is the guide on the path and he was even born on the pathway:

On distant pathways is the birth place of Pūṣan,  
remote from heaven, remote from earth.

To the two abodes that are dear to his heart,  
He comes, then departs, knowing each path.

He knows and traverses each heavenly realm.

May he guide us in ways that are wholly secure!

Undertaking our welfare, shielding from all harm —  
may he who knows lead the way with vigilance!

Atharvaveda VII.91-2 (tr. R. Panikkar)

The symbolism used in the Īśa does not speak directly of a journey, but it is implied, and the very invocation of Pūṣan is a reminder of his role of perfect guide and charioteer (Rgveda VI.55.2; VI.56.2-3), as the protector and guardian on the final journey. He is therefore not only a remover of dangers and obstacles, but a liberator (*vimocana*) (Rgveda I.42.1; VIII.4.15-16) He delivers also from sin (Atharvaveda VI.112.3), an important aspect at the moment of death.

Stella Kramrisch summarizes some of the important functions of Pūṣan thus: "All the while Pūṣan glows in the ardor of his nature, a steady guide who, on his way, never loses any of his heard, finds hidden treasure and nourishes and ripens all" (p. 161). And

again: "The glowing one moves undiminished on his paths. He illumines and liberates. He guides, finds and gives". (p. 175).

His role in leading the souls to their final abode is further described in the R̥gveda: "May none be injured, may none be destroyed in the pit, rather arrive with them unharmed" (RV VI.54.7). Pūṣan is also the Lord of the threshold. In the Gṛhyasūtras Pūṣan is associated with crossing the threshold of a house (ŚS 2.14.9, Vedic Mythology p. 36), he is invoked when starting on a journey, and one calls on him when one has lost the way (AGS 3.7.8-9, *ibid.*).

Death is a journey and a threshold, and both need special protection as moments of transition and passages from one condition to another.

The only epithet that is used for Pūṣan in the Īśa is *ekarṣi*, "the one (sole) seer", which has been applied to the sun, but it has also a mystical meaning. He is the one seer who has the unitary and single vision. In both verses, 15 and 16, Pūṣan is invoked for a clear and total vision (*dhi*, cf. Goṇḍa, *The Vision of the Vedic Poets*, p. 86f.). "The guardian of the pathways (Pūṣan) is (in RV VI.49.8) implored to bring every *dhi* to fulfillment" (p.87).

After calling upon Pūṣan as the *ekarṣi*, a term that occurs only rarely in the Upaniṣads (cf. Muṇḍaka III.2.10, Olivelle, p. 453), verse 16 then invokes Yama and Sūrya. *Prājāpatya*, son of Prajāpati, can refer to either of these deities, since they are created by Prajāpati. The invocation of these deities together seems like a more powerful outburst of the person on the point of death. After the collection of vocatives, the *mantra* contains an intense prayer and an exclamation.

The prayer consists of the four words: "Spread out your rays and collect your glory" (*vyūha ras̥mīn samūha tejah*). It is as if the dying person is blinded by the light, and as in the previous verse, the light of the sun and the transcendent light are two levels of the

same light-filled reality. Death is an encounter with light, as almost all spiritual traditions confirm, but a light that can be unbearable. The first part of the prayer may be a continuation of the prayer to Pūṣan in verse 15, namely to uncover the face of the Real which is hidden by the sun. *Vyūha ras̥mīn*: "spreading out" or opening up the rays, so that the dying person can see what lies beyond. The vision of the dying has to be unified in the ultimate light which is not the multiplicity of the rays which illumine the external world. This process of unification is expressed by the second half: *samūha tejah*, "collect, gather, draw in your brilliance". Pūṣan is the deity who gathers the light in the glowing, radiant energy which is the essence of the sun, as we have seen. The dying person has to identify him/herself with this glory, radiance and energy (*tejas*) which lies beyond all the visible forms of light (*jyotiṣām jyoti* in the Bhagavadgītā 13.17). The two movements expressed in this prayer could be said to relate to the overcoming of multiplicity and the unification of the effulgent glory which is the essence of light.

Hume says in a note on this passage: "At best the passage is of obscure mystical significance." (p. 364) Though he is right that the phrase has a mystical significance, I would like to add that mystical experience is not necessarily obscure, or only for those who have not had it. On the contrary, it is the clearest way of perceiving reality. The last *mantras* of the Īśa dealing with the ultimate experience, whether death or mystical insight, indicate it in a brief and condensed language which make it difficult to interpret.

The second half of verse 16 is no longer a prayer, but a mystical exclamation: from imperative it moves to direct present tense: *paśyāmi, asmi*. It is again addressed to a 'thou' (*tvam* of verse 15): *te*. Who is addressed here, since the verse starts with the invocation of three divinities: Pūṣan, Yama and Sūrya? It appears that it is actually Pūṣan who is meant, and Yama and Sūrya are his

aspects in this context (there are sufficient references in the R̥gveda on the close relation between Pūṣan, Yama and Sūrya). The mystical exclamation consists of two phases:

*yatte rūpaṃ kalyāṇatamaṃ tattie paśyāmi*

is the first. It is a vision of the supremely beautiful and auspicious divine form. *Kalyāṇa* is much more than beautiful, it is that which bestows goodness and salvation. This vision is the result of the concentrated glory (*samūha tejas*), and yet there is a jump, a gap between the two halves of the verse. It is in this gap that the mystical experience happens. A similar gap can be found in the famous *mantra* of the Taittirīya:

Whence words recoil, together with the mind,  
without having attained it –

whoever knows this bliss of Brahman has no fear.

Taittirīya 2.4.1

The actual experience happens in this gap where words fail and language becomes powerless. Only afterwards an exclamation follows as the effect. The vision expressed by *paśyāmi* (I see) is of a divine 'thou' who is not an individual deity, but a concentration of that divine light.

The first part is a divine vision which still has an object, a form, but the second part is an identification:

*yo' sāvāsau puruṣaḥ so 'ham asmi*

He who is that divine Person beyond, I am He!

We are reminded of a parallel mantra of the Śvetāśvatara:

I have known that mighty Person, golden like the sun,  
beyond all darkness. By knowing him  
a man transcends death;  
there is no other path for reaching the goal.

3.8

In both cases it is a moment of vision-and-identification with the glorious, resplendent Divine Person, beyond darkness and death. Both *mantras* describe the very experience by which death is transcended. "Knowing" in the Upaniṣads is always a becoming: *ya evaṃ veda sa eva bhavati* is the frequent phrase. The transcendence of the *puruṣa* is expressed in Īśa 16 by repeating: *asau asau*, 'beyond, beyond'.

*So 'ham asmi*: "I am he" is the culmination of this process of vision-and-identification, a culmination which may occur at the moment of death or enlightenment. *So 'ham* has become the famous *hamṣa-mantra* in many spiritual schools, but here it is at its origin. The identification with the true and ultimate 'I', *aham*, is the condition for transcending death. At the origin it is the self-awareness of the *ātman*, as in Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad:

In the beginning this world was just a single self (*ātman*) shaped like a man. He looked around and saw nothing but himself. The first thing he said was, "Here I am!" and from that the name "I" came into being. Therefore, even today when you call someone, he first says, "It's I", and then states whatever other name he may have. That first being received the name "man" (*puruṣa*), because ahead (*pūrva*) of all this he burnt up (*uṣ*) all evils.

I.4.1 (tr. P. Olivelle)

But in the Īśa and its parallel in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka it is the final identification with the *aham*, with the divine *puruṣa*; in terms of Kashmir Śaivism we could say it is the act of recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) of one's real nature (*aham-svarūpa*): *so 'ham asmi*.

The first expression of vision is addressed to a 'thou': *te rūpam*, and the second is in the third person: *saḥ*. As there seems to be a mix-up between Pūṣan, Yama, Sūrya and Puruṣa, there seems to be a mix-up of the personal pronouns: first, second and third

person. This apparent mix-up can only be understood in mystical experience.

The Upaniṣadic *mantra* being extremely brief, we may take the help of Abhinavagupta for its exegesis. I am referring to a passage in his Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa where he analyses the interrelatedness of the three grammatical persons. We cannot go here into the details of his grammatical, philosophical and mystical argumentation, but the conclusion is this: the three persons are not separate, but interrelated, and there is an order of ascension from the third (*idam, sah*), to the second (*tvam*) and ultimately they merge in the first person (*aham*). (PTV Jaideva Singh, pp. 70 ff. Engl. transl., p. 25 ff. of Sanskrit text).

In the light of Abhinavagupta's analysis of language, the *mantra* of the Īśā is a perfect example of the interrelatedness of the three persons and of the final merging of the second and third persons in the first: *so 'ham asmi*.

Since the *mantra* is traditionally associated with the moment of dying, we find a similar situation in the eschatological description of the Kauṣṭhikī Upaniṣad: There the journey of the soul to the Brahma-world is described in more mythological terms. After passing through several stages and stations, the soul reaches the throne of Brahman who asks: "Who are you?" (Kauṣ. I.5). The soul first gives its identity with the body, but then goes on to give its real identity: "What you are, this I am" (*yastrvam asi so 'ham asmi*, I.6). He is further questioned by Brahman: "Who am I?" to which he answers: "the Real (truth, *satyam*). This can be linked with Īśā 15 where it is *satyam* which has to be uncovered, revealed, for the final vision to become possible.

This last part of verse 16 is the culmination of the prayer of the dying person, the attainment or recognition of his identity with the divine *puruṣa*, the light beyond the sun, and beyond darkness.

What remains is the last *mantra* (verse 17), leaving aside the quotation from Ṛgveda in verse 18:

*vāyuranīlam amṛtamathedaṃ bhasmāntam śarīram*

Let the breath enter the immortal wind,  
Let the body end in ashes.

The breath of the dying person goes to wind which is the immortal element in man. While his *prāṇa-vāyu* remains immortal, the body ends in ashes. We need not go into the various conceptions in the Upaniṣads relating to the immortal and mortal elements of man, but at this stage the immortal element is breath. This phrase is like a general statement about death, it is neither put in the mouth of the dying person nor of the living who accompany the dying. The last line of verse 17 is addressed by the survivors, relatives and friends, to the dying or dead person:

*om krato smara kṛtaṃ smara krato smara kṛtaṃ smara*

Remember, my mind, the deeds, remember...

The repetition indicates the end – the end of life and also the end of the Upaniṣad. The key to the understanding of this phrase is the term *kratu*, which has been translated by 'purpose' (Hume) or 'mind' (Olivelle), but which has a multiplicity of meanings: intention, resolution, purpose, desire, will, intelligence, understanding, inspiration, enlightenment and also sacrificial rite.

What is the human faculty that has the capacity to remember the past deeds at the moment of death? What remains at that moment is only an intuitive insight, pure intentionality and desire for liberation from all bondage. But the key to the meaning of *kratu* is found in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad in the teaching of Śāṅḍilya on death (3.14) which speaks of man as *kratumaya*:



Now, then, man is undoubtedly made of resolve. What a man becomes on departing from here after death is in accordance with his resolve in this world. So he should make this resolve:

... 'This self (*āīman*) of mine that lies deep within my heart, it contains all actions, all desires, all smells, and all tastes; it has captured this whole world; it neither speaks nor pays any heed. It is *Brahman*. On departing from here after death, I will become that.' A man who has this resolve is never beset at all with doubts.

(transl. P. Olivelle)

The *kratu* which is described in this passage is much more than a resolve, an intention or desire, it is an all-embracing meditation on life-and-death, a kind of insight compressed in a total understanding of life. This *kratu* is the condition for becoming one with that total Reality of Brahman at the time of death (3.14.4).

Thus the admonition to the dying or dead to remember his deeds also refers to an instantaneous insight into the whole life at the moment of death, a re-collection, and by that very act of recollection the effect of the past deeds is overcome. *Smṛti* is also more than memory, it is a kind of meditative recollection, an act of awareness. The whole act which is conjured up in this urge to remember one's past deeds is not an act of the mind or reflective memory, it lies much deeper, at the very threshold between life and death.

I may now attempt an interpretation of the three *mantras* together in relation to death. The ultimate Reality or truth is hidden from our view, and that very veil may be our past actions which prevent us from seeing. To remove this obstacle we need the assistance and grace of the Divine, who is a personification of the light

transcending all other lights, such as the light of the sun. *Pūṣan* is here the guide on this path and liberator, and he is rightly invoked in the two *mantras* attributed to the dying as the mediator par excellence.

At the moment of death, a realization of one's true being has to take place, and this is the discovery of one's identity with the Divine Person (*puruṣa*), whose vision is most glorious, beautiful and saving (*kalyāṇatāman*). It is a vision leading to identification. Once this ultimate experience takes place, what remains of a person is the body which returns to the earth element in the form of ashes, and his breath, which merges in the universal and immortal wind. What remains is also his *karma* which can be burnt up in the very act of recollecting it, since the true identity is already discovered:

*yo ' sāvasau puruṣaḥ so 'ham asmi!*

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## REPORTS

### A Course on "Hindu-Christian Dialogue" in Salzburg, Austria

by Ernst Fűrlinger

In which way can one get to know Hinduism in a dominantly catholic country like Austria? Of course there are neo-Hindu groups and a great Yoga-scene etc. like everywhere in the West, but all this represents only a small cut of the complexity of Hinduism, and that too in form of a western adaptation and often reduction. Under these circumstances it is difficult to overcome a diffuse image of Hinduism, and even the crudest and long-termed prejudices about this religion. With this situation in mind the "Bildungshaus St. Virgil", a center of the catholic church for adult education in Salzburg, Austria, which is involved in interreligious dialogue since ten years, organized a one-year-course on "Hindu-Christian Dialogue" from October 2000 till July 2001. In fact it was mainly an introduction to Hinduism – because of this lack of knowledge about Hinduism a true religious dialogue is impossible.

The course was addressed to people working mainly in the fields of education, church a.s.o. to give them a profound base for their dialogical engagement, especially at school. It consisted of nine thematic weekends and a two-week study-tour to Varanasi. We as

organizers were surprised about the great interest in the course – in spite of the high standards, as for instance required reading as preparation for each seminar, and the general dominating interest in Buddhism. Finally only half of the interested people from all over the country could take part, and the course was held with 34 participants.

The course was under the direction of Prof. Dr. Bettina Bäumer, who developed the concept and chose the lecturers. The first part gave basic information about Hinduism (general view of philosophical schools, history, ritual etc.); the study-tour was the opportunity to encounter Hindus – from renowned scholars to simple people -, hindu spirituality in daily life, temples, to join rituals like the Maha Kumbha Mela as well as two concerts and a performance of classical dance. The third part was a reflection and a deepening of the experiences in Varanasi (sacred scriptures; society; art and religion; yoga etc.).

The characteristic method of the course was the integration of different levels of "dialogue", fruit of Dr. Bettina Bäumer experience with religious dialogue for more then 30 years: Academic lectures and discussions, sharing of rituals (*communicatio in sacris*), common silent meditation ("dialogue of silence"), encounter with Indian art, music, visit of temples, participation in a pilgrimage, ... all that flowed into each other and inspired an intense "intra-religious dialogue" (R. Panikkar). An especially beautiful and impressive element of this dialogue on the level of aesthetic (and at the same time spiritual) experience was a concert of Mrs. Manju Sundaram, renowned vocalist from Varanasi, and accompanists in the church of the Benedictine monastery "Stift Nonnberg" in Salzburg, founded in the 8<sup>th</sup> century: For the first time in the history of this great monastery hymns to Shiva and Krishna were heard in the church. A dialogue aroused between *Vedic stotras* and *bhajans* with texts from medieval India (Utpaladeva, Kabir) and the sacred

architecture from the European middle ages, between sacred music of India and the echo of the Gregorian chant, which is sung in this monastery since more than 1200 years.

It was an impressive result of this project that especially art, friendship and silence are bridges to the "other" religion, which is slowly experienced not as "other". Another discovery was that a true religious encounter cannot be organized: It happens as a gift, surprise, e.g. in the free time during or around the seminars. I remember one of these moments, when we visited a famous medieval altar in St. Wolfgang near Salzburg together with Dr. R. Nagaswamy, eminent art historian from Chennai: He was overwhelmed by the aesthetical and spiritual quality of this example of Christian sacred art. I saw the altar, my own tradition with new eyes, through his eyes.

In contrast to these succeeding moments of dialogue there was the concluding seminar, planned as explicit theological dialogue under the theme "Mokṣa and Salvation". Maybe it is characteristic that just this meeting with the title "Hindu-Christian Dialogue" was not a dialogue, but a discussion or debate. The positions of F. Michael Amaladoss SJ (Indian liberation theology) from Chennai and Swami Nityananda Giri (Advaita Vedanta, with openness to Christian mysticism) from Thapovanam remained standing side by side. The question of the Hindu was left open: Can it be sufficient for a Christian just to believe in his own salvation by Christ? Has salvation not to be a concrete experience, to be felt in this lifetime and not only expected after death? And also the inquiry of the Christian: What does "mokṣa" mean in the context of poverty and unjust structures?

What started as an academic exercise got more and more an existential dimension, at least for some participants, and in different ways: a growing respect for the richness of this religion; a clearer, maybe more critical view of our own culture; wider and deeper perspectives of one's own religion, and more than that: a

widening of the dimensions of God; a quest for one's own inner, spiritual experience. Each participant has personally to answer the question how far we came nearer to the necessary next step of a dialogical dialogue between Hindu and Christian seekers of the Absolute. Raimon Panikkar has defined this next step as transformation of one's own religion in direction of the mystical heart of every historical religion, instead of a simple comparison of two religions. This ideal has been realized by Swami Abhishiktanda in an exemplary way, who set the standard for our experiment in dialogue.

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### Global Dialogue

*The "Global Dialogue" Project was started in 1997 by Andrey Bykov (Russia). The final text of the Global Dialogue manifesto, entitled "The Bell of Zug", was written and signed at a meeting in Kandersteg near Zug (Switzerland) held from 25 to 31 July, 2001. Among the participants of this international gathering have been Prof. Raimon Panikkar, Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche, Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, Prof. Michael Windey SJ, Prof. Chandra Muzaffar (Malaysia), Bishop Simon Barrington (UK), Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (India), Prof. Bettina Bäumer and others. A follow up conference was held in London from 17 to 21 September 2001. We publish here the full text of the manifesto.*

*For further information, please contact: Nuclear Disarmament Forum AG, Baarerstraße 8, CH-6301 Zug (Switzerland), Tel. +41 41 729 40 00; Fax: +41 41 729 40 01; e-mail: zuginfo@globaldialogue.org*

### **The Bell of Zug**

We are a group of concerned people of varied backgrounds, beliefs and traditions from across the world. We recognize that the global market with its huge inequalities and its intense competitiveness is fragmenting human beings within themselves, breaking the bonds of family and community and dividing the whole of human society through greed and arrogance. Increasing human injustice has brought many of the world's people to starvation and poverty.

The natural order is being torn apart and the delicate interdependence of all its parts destroyed. Widespread violence, the development of ever more powerful weapons, ecological disturbance and global warming have become a threat carrying with them the possibility of a world war, as also of the extinction of Mother Earth. We have lost sight of the wholeness and interconnectedness for which we are made. If we do not act immediately we may soon reach a point of no return. The time has come to sound a bell and to summon all people of good will. Each one of us has to decide whether to let this disintegration continue or take a stand now.

We invite all who will to join with our global dialogue: that is through meeting together and communicating with each other across the world to exchange insights, share initiatives, and to commit ourselves to come to the aid of each other, the human family and the whole creation.

We believe that this dialogue will restore community, inspire compassionate thought, action and trust, and will re-establish wholeness. But this dialogue has to be rooted in the spirit. We need to fill the spiritual vacuum which we are witnessing in our world. The divine love welling up within us and amongst us can

drive out fear and mistrust. To love all, including your enemy, is the essence of spirituality.

We commit ourselves to rediscover a new relationship within ourselves, with each other and with all in the universe.

As the first object of this dialogue we strongly urge all necessary steps be taken to start the elimination of accumulated nuclear weapons and that the production of highly enriched uranium and separated plutonium be stopped.

But there are many other goals which will soon come into focus as we develop a growing trust and love across the globe. We must be the change that we want to see in the world. And in this work the role of young people is primary.

Conscious of our universal responsibility, we commit ourselves to this task.

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### **REVIEWS OF BOOKS AND THESES**

**Edward T. Ulrich, Swami Abhishiktananda's Interreligious Hermeneutics of the Upanishads** (Doctoral Thesis, The Catholic University of America, Washington D.C., 2001)

Dr. Edward T. Ulrich has kindly sent to the Abhishiktananda Society an authorized facsimile of his dissertation for a doctoral degree in Religion and Religious Education, accepted in 2001 by The Catholic University of America in Washington D.C. Awaiting publication, the thesis is available in facsimile from the UMI Dissertation Services (Bell & Howell Information and Learning, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346,

USA), UMI Number 3004195. The copy sent to us can be consulted in the Abhishiktananda Archives of the Society at present preserved in the Library of Vidyajyoti, 23 Raj Nivas Marg, Delhi 110054. The thesis has 248 pages, inclusive of a select bibliography of seven pages. The Director of the thesis was Dr. Michael F. Stoeber, and the readers Dr. William Cenknier and Dr. James A. Wiseman.

In his abstract the author says: "Abhishiktananda presented his mature interreligious hermeneutic of the Upanishads in *Hindu-Christian Meeting Point*, first published in French in 1966. There he argued that, prepared by one's Christian background, one should read the Upanishads in a contemplative manner, receptive to the spiritual themes therein. Subsequently, having entered into the ideals of the Upanishads, this newly gained perspective should be theologically integrated into Christianity. This recommended pattern of interaction emerged from Abhishiktananda's personal journey in India, reflecting his life and activities since his arrival in India in 1948. At the end of the 1960s, Abhishiktananda shifted the Christian-Hindu integration from an intellectual to an existential one. After many attempts at theological synthesis, he came to feel that no theological speculation can escape its original context to span separate religions. In his final years he espoused an existential integration which allows the spiritual themes of Catholicism and the Upanishads to interact deep within one's person, without attempting to intellectually resolve the resulting tensions."

I find three main merits in this research work. The first is that it focuses on the influences of Swamiji's theology of his encounter with Ramana Maharshi and his disciples in Arunachala, of Dr. Dinsaw Mehta and Swami Gnanananda, and of his own readings and discussions with others. The second is that the author follows the various stages of development of the theology and spirituality of the Swami from the time of his arrival in India

to his concluding years. It takes account of a very interesting theological journey and its stages. Third is that it pays special attention to the theme of reading the Scriptures across religious and cultural frontiers. In these days when we rediscover intertextuality within the Bible itself, it will be of interest to see how the laws of intertextual reading can be applied to and is enriched by inter-scriptural reading. This was one of the insights of Swamiji.

While thanking Dr. Ulrich for the gift of this thesis, I congratulate him for the degree obtained and for his new position as Assistant Professor at the University of St. Paul, Minnesota. (His address is 7601 Aldrich Ave. So., Richfield, MN 55423, USA).

G. Gispert-Sauch, S.J.

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**Christian Hackbarth-Johnson, Interreligiöse Existenz. Spirituelle Erfahrung und Identität bei Henri Le Saux (O.S.B.)/ Swami Abhishiktananda (Doctoral Thesis, University of Munich, 2001)**

This theological dissertation was submitted at the Protestant Faculty, University of Munich (Germany) in September 2001 and was kindly sent to the Society. The guide was Prof. Dr. Michael von Brück, Institute for Religious Studies of the same Faculty, an expert especially in Tibetan Buddhism and Buddhist-Christian Dialogue. The main part (Chapter 2-11, pp. 56-471) is a presentation of the life and work of Swami Abhishiktananda, beginning with his childhood and influence of his family until his death. It is a comprehensive description of Abhishiktananda's intellectual-spiritual development, mainly in form of a commenting presentation and summary of his texts beginning

compensate for the lack of a really penetrating systematic reflection on Swamiji's "trans-religious experience" (486) on the basis of earlier and present theological studies, which would be a contribution to a contemporary hermeneutics of interreligious understanding.

Ernst Furlinger

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**Sonia Calza, La contemplazione via privilegiata at dialogo cristiano-induista. Sulle orme di J. Monchanin, H. Le Saux, R. Panikkar e B. Griffiths, PAOLINE Editoriale Libri, Milano 2001; pp. 371, € 19.63, ISBN 88-315-2251-5.**

Distribution: Diffusione San Paolo s.t.l., Corso Regina Margherita, 2, 10153 Torino, Italy

The Abhishiktananda Society has received with gratitude a copy of the Italian book by Sonia Calza on contemplation as the ideal way for a Christian-Hindu dialogue. This book is no. 71 of the series *Cammini nello Spirito - Spiritualita*.

It studies four leaders in the ways of spirituality and dialogue: Jules Monchanin, Henri Le Saux, Raimon Panikkar and Bede Griffiths, in this order. It is divided into four main parts according to the mystics studied and offers not only information but a solid analysis of the life and thought of each of them. The concluding chapter 17 makes some reflections on paths opened by these four *acharyas*, all characterized by contemplation and commitment, and the hopes they offer for the future.

Part II, pp. 83-159, is entitled "Henri Le Saux, the Hermit with a Luminous Smile". It covers chapter 5 to 8 of the book. Like in the other parts the opening chapter offers a biographical sketch of the man, his life as a monk in Brittany, in South India, in the Himalayas, and his final days. Chapter 6 is entitled "Total

with "An Indian Benedictine Ashram" (with J. Monchanin, 1951). A short chapter (13 pages) describes briefly the outlines of the influence and reception of his work in Europe and India. Chapter 1 (pp. 1-54) tries to clarify the basic concepts, which are applied in this study: "identity", "spirituality" and "spiritual experience".

This structure and the arrangement of the themes shows already the strong and weak points of this dissertation. It claims to be a "theological-philosophical contribution" to the relevance of a pluralistic theology of religions (p. 2), but does not fulfill this task. Quite on the contrary the author represents finally a surprisingly ambivalent and vague position towards the "pluralistic hypothesis": For him it is "only one 'theoria' more", which is "not better than other theories or theologies" (492). The explicitly theoretical parts are more cursory than systematical. For example in a part with the title "Identity as psychological and philosophical problem in modernity" (Chapter 1) a reference to the contemporary philosophical discussion of "identity" is completely missing.

The strong point of the work is its very detailed description of the stations of Abhishiktananda's development. The author's meticulousity is really impressive. His study could be the basis of a biography, which is considering also M.M. Davy's book "Henri Le Saux/ Swami Abhishiktananda" (Paris 1981) still a desideratum. Precious for the reader are many quotations from (partly) unpublished texts in French like "Guhāntara: au sein du fond" (1952-54) and from important texts which are still not translated like "Intériorité et révélation" (1982) (N.B. The English translation by James Stuart is almost ready for publication.). Very useful is also the rich appendix, which includes e.g. a list of all books in the archive of Abhishiktananda, a commented overview of all works and a detailed bibliography. All this demonstrates that the author has done an enormous and hard work, including also researches in France and India. However, all this cannot

Immersion". It begins with an overview of the contents of the Spiritual Diary (*Ascent to the Depths of the Heart*), explaining the nature of this document and the way some authors have approached it. It then explains how Swamiji entered the Hindu world with the heart, so to say, by submitting himself to the influence of Ramana Maharshi and becoming a disciple of Swami Gnanananda Giri in South India. Two specific characteristics of the spiritual path undertaken by Swamiji are developed, his reflection on Ramana Maharshi's constant question, "Who am I?" and his "total immersion" in the world of Hinduism, specially in the way of non-duality.

Chapter 7 is entitled "Under the Sign of the Paradox", and deals with the theology that emerges from this way of spirituality. It starts by studying the relation between mysticism and theology to then present the connection between silence and word in the life of Swamiji. This leads to a careful analysis of the two loves of Abhishiktananda, Christianity and Hinduism (this terminology may fit the very early stages of his journey: later he would rather speak of Christ and *advaita*). This theme is broken up into three sub-themes: 1. the one way, *advaita*, 2. the spiritual anguish of a double belonging and 3. the burden of remaining within the Church structures. The last section of this chapter deals with the relations of Abhishiktananda with J. Monchanin and Marc Chaduc. The author also makes a short excursus into his influence on others, especially Sr. Sara Grant and Thomas Merton. She ends this chapter by showing that Swamiji could not be *only* a Christian or *only* an *advaitin*, but rather had to make his own person the meeting point of both traditions. "The Spirit granted him a new spiritual vision, led him to an experience of unity which goes beyond but does not cancel out either of the two traditions. The Spirit enabled him to discover their point of convergence where the deepest intuition of each tradition, *advaitin* and Trinitarian, captures the nature of the Real" (p. 143).

The title of chapter 8, the last of this study of Abhishiktananda, is "The Experience of 'I Am'." Calza offers us a sketch of the Christ of Abhishiktananda who is not only a guru, but the depth of the existential experience of 'I Am', developing the meaning of this expression from its background in the Gospel of John and the writings of Swamiji. She sums up the last stage of the *advaital* Trinity experience. In poetic language she leads us an understanding of the "Awakening", the metaphor often used by Swamiji at the end of his life, or the "discovery of the Grail", to end up in the luminosity of his smile as he finally passed over to the Further Shore. She also insists on the deep humanity of this spiritual man, shown in his sensitivity to the needs and the service of others, even in his last hours.

The book will arouse the interest of mystics and theologians in the spiritual journey of Swamiji. It will require a deeper study, surely, but it is obvious that she takes the path of Abhishiktananda with utmost seriousness. Much can be expected of this young scholar born in Treviso in 1973 and deeply interested in interreligious dialogue in depth. She has visited India to study interreligious dialogue here. I found in a couple of places evidences of a lack of deeper familiarity with the Indian tradition. In the "Glossario", Arjuna is said to be the Charioteer of Krishna in the Bhagavadgita. It is, of course, the other way round. The diacritical marks are generally well used, but not in *nāma-japa*, *śikṣā*... and on p. 150, note 13, *-maya* is mistaken for *māyā*.

G. Gisbert-Sauch, S.J.

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**James Arraj, Christianity in the Crucible of East-West Dialogue. A Critical Look at Catholic Participation, and God, Zen and the Intuition of Being (Inner Explorations Vol. IV)**  
Chiloquin 2001. 345 pp., \$ 18.00, ISBN 0-914073-03-6.

This volume includes in fact two books: the first edition of "Christianity in the Crucible of East-West Dialogue" and the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of "God, Zen and the Intuition of Being", which first appeared in 1998. In the table of contents the whole appears as one book in nine chapters. The book is Volume IV of a series in seven parts with the title "Inner Explorations", which deals with topics like the future of Christian Mysticism (Vol.I), Jacques Maritain (Vol. II), dialogue between Christianity and C.G. Jung, "Treasures of Simple Living" (Vol.VII) and "The Theological Vision of One of the World's Great Theologians: Emile Mersch" (Vol.I), who contributed essentially to the theological "ressourcement" movement in the thirties, author of "Le corps mystique du Christ" (Louvain 1933) which later influenced *Lumen Gentium*. This medley and mixture of the series seems rather surprising, and it typifies also the present volume. It wants to be "A Pilgrimage Through East-West Dialogue" (title of part I), but it is more precisely a running through a too wide spectrum of themes like Buddhist-Christian Dialogue, Hindu-Christian Dialogue, Religious Pluralism, Islamic Metaphysics, St. Thomas and Enlightenment a.s.o. In the course of this almost breathless excursion there is no time for carefulness – f.i. the extensive theme "The Current State of the Hindu-Christian Dialogue in India" is discussed in 15 lines, saying that there are very few Hindus really interested in dialogue. It would be slightly exaggerated to say that this subject is treated exhaustively. It is nothing new that such a type of book, which is ingeniously and omnisciently going far back risks to fail, and this book makes no exception.

The author has a mission which is already declared on the first page of the text with desirable clearness: a criticism of those "estranged" Catholics, who "end up trying to enrich Christianity by reinterpreting it in Buddhist or Hindu categories, and by doing so, impoverish it". In Chapter 2 (Hindu-Christian Dialogue),

which focuses especially on Swami Abhishiktananda, besides B. Bäumer, S. Grant, A. de Mello, B. Griffiths and W. Teasdale the author even chooses stronger expressions. This selection of people which seems again a bit arbitrary represents for him examples for the "tendencies on the part of Christians to refashion Christianity in the light of the Eastern forms of meditation they are practicing" (17) – a refashion which is for him finally a destruction of Christianity (cf. 71).

I will focus here only on the passage about Abhishiktananda (pp. 69-73). It offers not a critical analysis and theological or philosophical arguments, but only a stringing together of many quotations, given as documents and proof for the general suspicion that Abhishiktananda has taken "the valid idea that the divine reality transcends our thoughts and feelings, but unduly extends it under the influence of *advaita* so that it becomes a principle that can only be destructive of Christianity". (71) In his eye then "Christianity (...) recedes away." (72) Even the name Abhishiktananda seems for him to be a proof for this suspicion: "It is perhaps indicative of the course that his life in India took that he is usually referred to by his Hindu name, while this is not the case with Jules Monchanin or (...) Bede Griffiths." (69) For others this is precisely an indication how deeply he has entered into the spirit of India. "Christianity is transformed into Hindu categories" (...) "in a way which appears incompatible with Christian faith." (77) Abhishiktananda is maybe the main defendant of the book because he "obscure(s) Christianity's distinctive nature" (229) and is "replacing traditional Christian understanding with some sort of non-duality" (117). This judgment is exclusively based on one book of Abhishiktananda that is his Diary – and the author excuses himself saying that he is looking at him "very briefly considering the hundreds of pages that Abhishiktananda's letters and journals cover" (71). Another



example is that he judges the thought of Bettina Bäumer on the basis of two short articles without knowing her books.

One is waiting for a discussion of the reasons for this incompatibility between Christianity and non-dualistic experience which seems self-evident for our present author, so that he gives an argument for it only at the end of this chapter, in a few humble sentences: "Christianity is fundamentally and intrinsically personal." (90) At this point the reader has ceased to expect a systematic theological discussion of the concept of "person". Arraj seems to ignore the theological and philosophical discussion of "person" in Trinitarian theology, and its relation to the non-dualistic experience of God especially in the context of the dialogue with Eastern traditions, which is going on since decades. One would desperately go through the text with wrong expectations as long as one does not realize its special characteristics. It is like a pamphlet, pretending to be a serious study, seeing the whole subject from an a priori point of view which is not discussed but only documented briefly. It looks like ideological literature which presents a theological "Weltanschauung", not theology. It is as strong in emotional judgments and assumptions as it is weak in sober argumentation.

However, this book is interesting because this outdated black-and-white picture of both, Hinduism ("impersonal absolute") and Christianity ("I-Thou relationship") which is well known from fundamentalist discourses is made by someone who seems to be involved in interreligious dialogue (at least in form of publications *about* dialogue, e.g. a video on "Christian Prayer and Kundalini"). But concerning the substance and structure of his theological thinking he is stuck in a neo-scholastic theology dating from the thirties and fifties. His main source is Jacques Maritain while important thinkers of Hindu-Christian dialogue like R. Panikkar, F. Clooney, J. Robinson, F. D'Sa a.o. do not exist for him, and even the systematic theological reflections of

Swami Abhishiktananda which he has expressed in books like "Saccidānanda. A Christian Approach to Advaitic Experience" (1974) are unknown to him (see bibliography!).

This book is also interesting because it is representative for a kind of diffuse and unreflected fear of Christians to lose their identity in the face of a true encounter with Eastern traditions. At the same time the book is an example for the use of the concept of "(Christian) identity" and its ideological function, which seems to be the hidden, but central *mythos* of the book.

The self-introduction of the author throws some light on the background of this writer, who has a doctorate in theology specializing in Christian spirituality from the Gregorian University in Rome and who lives with his wife and children "deep in a forest far from paved roads and power lines near Crater Lake, Oregon." At least an excuse.

Ernst Füllinger

## NEWS AND PUBLICATIONS

**Video on the interreligious seminar on: *Śūnya-Pūrṇa-Plerōma*, Void and Fullness in the Buddhist, Hindu and Christian Traditions**

The Interreligious Retreat Seminar on *Śūnya-Pūrṇa-Plerōma* (Samath, December 1999) organized by the Abhishiktananda Society is now documented on video. It includes the final speech of His Holiness The Dalai Lama on main aspects of interreligious dialogue and the subject of the seminar in full length, a part of the introduction by Raimon Panikkar and the final panel discussion (Alois Haas, Raimon Panikkar, Ven.

Samdhong Rinpoche, Swami Nityananda Giri, Nirmala Deshpande, Bettina Bäumer).

VHS, 1,40 hours, prize: Rs 900,-- (India), US \$ 35,-- (foreign countries)

*Order address:* Secretary, Abhishiktananda Society

c/o Vidyajyoti College, 23 Raj Niwas Marg., Delhi -110 054;

Tel. +11/ 2947 609; Fax: 2943556 or 2943478;

e-mail: [vcoldel@del3.vsnl.net.in](mailto:vcoldel@del3.vsnl.net.in)

*Payment:* by cheque in advance in the name of **Abhishiktananda Society**, Delhi

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The **papers of the Sarnath Seminar** (see above) are in the final stage of editing and are expected to come out in 2002. The volume is going to be a significant contribution to interreligious dialogue. (The publisher will most probably be D.K. Printworld in New Delhi.)

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We are very grateful to **Odette and Werner Baumer** who have handed over all the original documents of Swami Abhishiktananda and who have arranged their transport to Delhi. These documents are now preserved in the Archives at Vidyajyoti Library and are accessible to scholars who ask permission from the Secretary.

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Bettina Bäumer gave a one-day seminar to the Swiss group of **DIM (Monastic Interreligious Dialogue)** at the Cistercian Abbey at Fribourg in July. Their earlier dialogue was more with

Buddhism and Islam, and after the Upanishads the topic chosen was Kashmir Shaivism and the possible and important dialogue with Christian spirituality. Fr J.-B. Simon-Vermot is the leader of the French-speaking group.

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The journal of *Voies de l'Orient*, Brussels, has published the lecture by Bettina Bäumer, "**Sivaite et chrétienne? Une expérience entre deux traditions religieuses**" (janvier-fevrier-mars 2002, no 82) which deals with the experience of Swami Abhishiktananda as well as her own experience. *Address: Voies de l'Orient, Rue du Midi 69, 1000 Bruxelles (Belgium), Tel. +32 2 511 79 60, Fax: +32 2 511 14 38; e-mail: [info@voiesorient.be](mailto:info@voiesorient.be)*

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#### **Swami Jivanmuktananda**

After the death-samadhi of Swami Krishnananda, Swami Jivanmuktananda has been appointed as the new General Secretary of Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh. Swami Jivanmuktananda (with his civil name Nirmal Tripathi) was a close spiritual friend of Swami Abhishiktananda and Swami Ajatananda, and he took care of Swami Abhishiktananda after his heart attack. We congratulate him for this new task and wish him grace for fulfilling this responsibility.

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#### **Advaita Vedanta and Christian Faith**

We would like to bring to your attention an academic article, which includes reflections about Swami Abhishiktananda's significance for the attempts in 20<sup>th</sup> century to build a bridge

between Advaitic and Christian experience. This article is written by Bradley Malkovsky, Assistant Professor of Comparative Theology at the Catholic "University of Notre Dame" (Indiana/USA) and new editor of the "Hindu-Christian Studies Bulletin". His article, entitled "Advaita Vedanta and Christian Faith" was published in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 36 (Summer - Fall 1999) pp. 397-422, edited by Professor Leonard Swidler, head of the Institute for Interreligious, Intercultural Dialogue (IID), Temple University, Philadelphia (USA).  
*Order address: Journal of Ecumenical Studies, Temple University (022-38), 1114 W. Berks St., Philadelphia, PA 19122-6090, USA; e-mail: dialogue@ym.temple.edu*

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### Sannyasa Diksha

As a Christian monk, Serge Descy (Belgium) had derived a great inspiration from the life of Swami Abhishiktananda and his disciple, Swami Ajatananda (Mare Chaduc), for the last 20 years. He took part in the first Interreligious Seminar (Rajpur, 1990) organized by the Abhishiktananda Society, and was appointed recently a member of the Executive Committee of the Society. Giving up his lecturing in Religious Studies in 1993, he took up the life of a hermit and went to live in the hills near Jerusalem. In 1997, he moved from there to the Himalayan foothills and settled in a kutiya (hermitage) near Rishikesh (Uttaranchal). On Dec 25, 2001, he took Sannyasa Diksha according to the old Indian monastic tradition, and was received in the Udasin Panth. He is now known as Swami Atmananda and though he is enjoined to a life of contemplation, he will carry on as before his collaboration with the Abhishiktananda Society.

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**Jules Monchanin (1895-1957) as seen from East and West. Acts of the Colloquium held in Lyon-Fleurie, France and in Shantivanam-Tannirpalli, India (April-July 1995), Vol. II: Shantivanam-Tannirpalli Saccidananda Ashram/ISPCK, Delhi 2001. 153 pp., price Rs. 120.00 or \$ 12.00 (ISBN 81-7214-635-3). Distribution: Saccidananda Ashram, Shantivanam, Tannirpalli P.O., Kullithalai, Karur Dist., Tamil Nadu 639 107.**

We want to bring to your attention the publication of the second volume of the Colloquium on the occasion of the birth centenary of Father Jules Monchanin in 1995. It was organized by Centre André Latreille (Université Lumière Lyon 2), Institut d'Histoire du Christianisme and Université Catholique de Lyon. This second session was held at the Ashram of Shantivanam in India. The Acts were published in French in 1997 in one volume. The English version includes more material, e.g. quotations from his writings, because most of his texts are available only in French and little known in India. This second session brought together scholars, friends and disciples of Monchanin, Benedictine and Trappist monastics, and ashramites. It includes scholarly papers e.g. of S. Painadath SJ on "The Spiritual Encounter of East and West", T. Matus on "Monchanin and Yoga", and "The Complementarity of a Pluralistic Approach to Hinduism by Monchanin, Abhishiktananda and Griffiths" by E. Vatrakuzhy. Importance was also given to personal witnesses in India who knew Monchanin personally like Francis Acharya OCSO, G. Gispert-Sauch SJ or Richard De Smet SJ and witnesses who knew him from his writings. Other papers touch upon the theme of ashram life (e.g. M. Jeyeraj SJ: "The Ideal of Christian Ashrams in India"; Sr. I. Misquitta OSB: "An Ashram Under the Rule of Saint Benedict"). The introductory part includes an article on the spiritual path of Jules Monchanin by Odette Baumer-Despeigne. Fr Michael Amaladoss SJ in his introduction expressed the hope

that the English publication of the papers of this Colloquium "will be the starting point for considering Monchanin's historical importance in the development of an Indian theology" (p.8).

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Abhishiktananda Society, Registered Office: 7 Court Lane,  
Delhi - 110054.  
Address of the Editor: Dr. Bettina Bäumer, B 1/159 Assi Ghat,  
Varanasi - 221 005.

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Printed by Mahavir Press, Varanasi, Tel. 0542-276214.