

EDITORIAL

Religion and language are two fundamental dimensions of man, two profound directions of his being, two essential expressions of his inner directedness and existential embodiment. Quest is at the heart of both. As the quest gets stifled, religion starts dying. While religion is an attitude welling up from the very core of his being, language is the articulation of the quest of the being. Language, said Martin Heidegger, is the "house of being." Both religion and language are embedded in the very being of man. The Greeks defined him *Zoon logon echon* - 'the living being that has the word'; contemporary existentialist philosophers will say that he is a speaking word; a word spoken, a word having and giving a wealth of meanings and values.

Though religion and language pertain to the essence of man, both have an unimaginable variety of attitudes and articulations. They take different forms in tune with the culture and context. Hence we have the plurality of religions and diversity of languages. As there are unimaginable types of activities in man so there are innumerable kinds of languages. Every language has its own rules and logic. We must not apply one single logic of one language to all other languages. Logic and rules of language differ from object to object, from being to being. The logic and meaning of a particular language is to be determined in the precise context of the nature of its object. Precision and incompatibility in language have a lot of implications. Any description implying incompatibility between entities that cannot be incompatible could not be precise. Yet the trouble is that there is no general test for deciding whether a description is or is not precise. Attempts such as Russel's sense-data theory to mark out in general objects which can be precisely described or theories like Neurath's theory of 'protocol sentences' are not generally found acceptable or successful. Languages and their rules are different. Let us accept this first and not ridicule the language we fail to understand, religious or otherwise.

This question of logic and meaning of language becomes all the more complex when we come to religious language. While some categorically rejected the meaning of metaphysical propositions others asserted emphatically the sense and relevance of such propositions. Only an integral understanding of the depth and wealth of human existence can unfold the richness and ramifications of religious language. A positivist and linguistic analysis alone cannot unravel the varieties and values of such a language. Evidently it is too vast a topic. This

number of Journal of Dharma takes up a few important issues from different aspects of religious language.

Prof. John Macquarrie analyzes the multi-dimensionality of language, even within its religious use and argues that a reconciliation is possible among apparently conflicting points of view of theological languages. Analyzing religious language further, he explains the tensions between the dimensions of religious language, such as the valuative and descriptive, confessional and critical, symbolic and conceptual. These and other tensions show us the complexities of religious language, and these tensions, says Macquarrie, are resolved by penetrating into the different dimensions that underlie the language. Dr. Thomas Manninezhath, in his article on *Sphoṭa and Śabdabrahman* discusses further the deeper dimensions of language. While natural languages are subject to both growth and development, language, in the primary sense of *śabda* is 'eternal'. His analysis focusses on the Advaita criticism of the *sphoṭa* and *śabdabrahman*.

In Sankara's *Siren of Sruti*, Dr. Grims discusses the intriguing consequences of religious language. The 'other' underlying religious discourse being remote and foreign, it's approach has to be through perception or mediated concepts or the other being a constitutive Being, the approach has to be immediate and certain. An unqualified Absolute is more logically consistent than a theistic deity, contends. John Grims.

While Prof. Basu presents an interpretation of religious language according to Sri Aurobindo, Dr. Emeka Onwurah discusses the concept of consecration in the traditional religious language of Igbo of Africa, highlighting the tripartite description: transcendental, horizontal and psychological. Vandana Mataji, reflecting on *Word as Vāc and Silence of Joy*, gives a feminine interpretation from an Indian perspective and Dr. Barbara Amodio analyzes the world made of sound, basically from an Indian perspective with reference to Whitehead and Pythagoras.

Religious discourse has always been a stimulating subject for discussion. New approaches and different interpretations appear constantly; and inevitably so. No one has the last word. We must go on searching and articulating. Religion and language will always offer us something new and provocative. I am sure these contributions by well-known scholars will throw some light to the discussion on religious discourse.

Dr. Thomas Aykara CMI
Associate Editor