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CHRISTIAN MONASTIC LIFE IN INDIA

There are three problems which face anyone who wishes to establish any form of Christian monastic life in India. The first is the problem of adaptation to the pattern of monastic life which already exists in India. India has a good claim to be the original home of ascetic and monastic life and to be the source from which the ascetic ideal spread over the rest of the world.[1] There is evidence for the existence of ascetics in the period of the Vedas, that is at least from the beginning of the first millennium before Christ. But the great movement of the ascetic and monastic life began in the sixth century before Christ with the rise of Buddhism and Jainism and the ascetic movement within Hinduism itself which gave birth to the *Upanishads,* the mystical treatises which have been the inspiration of Hindu religion and philosophy ever since. This movement is characterized by renunciation of the world in order to seek for *moksha,* that is liberation from the wheel of time with its inevitable suffering, and the discovery of the absolute, the state of permanent bliss known as *Nirvana.* In the early stages, the movement was rather that of solitary ascetics who sought ascetic discipline *(tapas)* and meditation, and this tradition has remained a permanent feature of Hindu asceticism. But Buddhism soon developed a settled form of monastic life, due originally, it appears, to the need to find refuge during the period of the monsoon, when a wandering life was not possible. From this, regular monasteries with permanent buildings soon developed, and this has remained characteristic of Buddhism ever since. Hinduism does not seem to have adopted this type of monasticism until the time of Sankara (ninth century, A.D.), who established monasteries *(maths)* in the four corners of India. From

1. Cf. G. Ghurye, *Indian Sadhus* (Bombay, 1953) for the history of asceticism in India.

that time till the present day, regular monasteries have existed all over India, observing the normal conditions of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and a settled rule of life. But alongside these, there has always been the looser type of ascetic life in *āshrams,* consisting of groups of devotees gathered round a master and living as one community, but not observing strict rules and not bound by poverty, chastity, or obedience. Today there are many thousands of monasteries and *āshrams* all over India, many of which, following the impulse given by Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, devote themselves to works of charity and education. Thus there is a regular pattern of monastic life of great antiquity in India common to at least three different religions, namely, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, and showing signs of renewed vigour and vitality at the present time. It is into this pattern that any form of Christian monasticism has to learn to fit itself.

The second problem which arises from this in part is, what form of Christian monastic tradition should be followed. The Latin Church has spread all over India in the last few centuries but it has shown little capacity to adapt itself to the traditions and customs of the Indian people, and one may question whether, with its western habits of life and thought, it is capable of doing so. On the other hand, the Syrian Church has been in existence in India since at least the fourth century and has shown considerable capacity for adaptation to Indian customs though, in modern times, it has been very much influenced by the Latin Church, unfortunately. Yet it remains, by far, the strongest body of Christians in India and the chief source of vocations both for priesthood and religious life throughout the country. It is therefore in this essentially oriental form of Christianity, with its long acclimatization in India, that one may reasonably hope to see the development of an Indian monasticism based not so much on the Western rule of life as on the great Eastern tradition of the deserts of Egypt and Syria, which is so much nearer to Hindu and Buddhist tradition and was, in fact, almost certainly influenced by them.

This third problem is the relation of monastic life to the living standards of India. Monastic life in India has always been associated with extreme poverty. In this respect, as in so many others, it is nearer to the tradition of the Fathers of the Desert than to Benedictine monasticism. At the same time the living conditions of the majority of people in India today, in spite of the immense economic development which has taken place in the

last fifteen years, remain extremely low and for the most part scarcely above bare subsistence. How is a monastery to relate itself to these conditions? What should be the standard or life of the monk in relation both to the poor of India and to the normal standard of the Hindu *Sannyasi?* These are the questions which have to be answered in any serious effort to establish monastic life.

Syrian Monasticism

St. Benedict himself in the last chapter of the Rule sends his monks to the "holy Catholic Fathers" to serve as a model for the monastic life, and names specifically the *Institutes* and *Conferences* of Cassian, the *Lives of the Fathers* and the *Rule* of St. Basil. It is obvious that in any renewal of the monastic life today a return must be made in some sense to these original sources of the monastic ideal. The Fathers of the Desert, with St. Antony at their head, remain the primary source of monastic spirituality after the Gospel itself. But the Fathers of the Desert consist, for most of us, of the Egyptian Fathers; comparatively little is known of the no less eminent Fathers of Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia. It is only in recent times that a comprehensive study of this ancient Syrian monasticism has been undertaken and its extraordinary interest has become apparent.[2] It is true that at first sight this Syrian monasticism gives the impression of an extreme asceticism which goes beyond even that of the Egyptian fathers. In fact, it has been shown that there was a considerable influence of Manichaeanism on the early Syrian Church and, what is of particular interest to us in India, that this extreme asceticism almost certainly had its source in India, where Mani contacted both Buddhist and Hindu monks.

There is therefore an unexpected link with India, coming through Persia in the early Syrian Church, but it is not actually in this ascetic tradition that the main interest of syrian monasticism lies. It is rather in the variety which this Syrian monasticism exemplified, combining the extremes of eremitism (including, of course, the famous "pillar saints" like St. Simon Stylites) with various forms of coenobitism, and allowing room for an astonishing apostolic activity, of which St. Ephrem himself gives us a good example. In spite of its extreme asceticism,

2. Cf. A. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient* (Louvain, 1958).

there is in the Syrian Church an evangelical tradition which takes one back very close to the Gospel itself. One never loses the sense that the Syrian Church grew up on the very soil of the Gospel and in all its life and thought kept very close to the biblical tradition. The real basis of Syrian spirituality is not asceticism but the much more deeply biblical concept of "repentance". Repentance, accompanied by "tears of compunction", is for the Syrian Church the very basis of monasticism and of Christian life. They spoke of it as a "second baptism". The liturgy of the Church as a whole, and especially the liturgy for the clothing of a monk (it should be noted that in the Syrian Church a monk is "clothed" with the grace of the monastic state; he does not make vows), is penetrated throughout with this idea. This seems to me of great significance. While for the Buddhist it is the "sorrow" of this world, and for the Hindu the illusory nature of reality which is the starting point for renunciation of the world, for the Christian it is the awareness of sin: not merely of sins, but of the fundamental barrier of original sin which separates man from God, which can only be removed by repentance.

The other pole of Syrian spirituality is "perpetual prayer." Repentance with its baptism of tears leads to "purity of heart," and with this comes the descent of the Holy Spirit and the consequent state of "perpetual prayer." This prayer is clearly not merely a verbal prayer, like the Hindu *japa* (though this may, of course, be used), nor is it a perpetual "thought" of God; it is a genuine mystical prayer, a conformity of the soul in its depth with the divine image, an indwelling of God in the soul which has become transformed into his likeness. It is at this point, it seems to me, that the Christian tradition of prayer and spiritual life comes closest to the Buddhist and the Hindu, and it is therefore at this point that the "meeting" of these different traditions has to take place. A good example of the Syrian mystical tradition is to be found in the work of Simon of Taibutheh, an East Syrian monk of the seventh century, who was clearly, deeply influenced by Dionysius the Areopagite (himself a Syrian monk, though he wrote in Greek). The following passage gives a good idea of this mystical, doctrine.

> Immediately after the mind has been illuminated and risen upwards, it becomes conscious of the rays of impassibility, and desires all the more earnestly to be drawn towards a divine light which has no image and towards a divine know-

> ledge which transcends all intelligence. Divine grace will then dwell in that impassibility and the mind will be conscious of the sublime and endless mysteries which are poured out by the Father and the Source of all lights, which shine mercifully on us in the likeness of his hidden goodness; and the mind will be impressed by them, as much as it can bear, with the image of the glory of goodness in the measure of the eagerness of its desire and of its growth in the spiritual exercise. It will then avow immediately that it understands that everything is vanity when compared with one thing—the Highest Divinity.[3]

This is a good example of the mystical doctrine of the Syrian Church which draws deeply on the tradition of Neo-Platonism, which came down through Dionysius; at the same time it is deeply rooted in the tradition of the Bible. In the great master of the Syrian Church, St. Isaac of Niniveh (seventh century), whose works are quoted extensively in the *Philokalia* and are therefore easily accessible, this Biblical basis is especially evident. His spiritual doctrine is really founded on the Beatitudes: "blessed are those who mourn" (the foundation of repentance), "blessed are the pure in heart," and most strikingly, "blessed are the merciful," of which he says: "Do you wish to commune with God in your mind? Then strive to be merciful." It is interesting to note that there was a very considerable contact between these Syrian monks and the Sufi mystics of their time. Isaac himself seems to have had a definite influence on Sufi mysticism, while some centuries later we find that Bar Hebraeus who has been called, with some exaggeration, the 'St. Thomas of the Syrian Church,' seems to have modelled his mystical treatise, *The Book of the Dove,* on a work of Al Ghazali.[4]

Thus the Syrian Church provides us with an example of an oriental Christian tradition, quite distinct from the Latin and the Greek which grew up on the soil of Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia, and preserved an authentic Semitic character. At the same time, it was able to enter into contact with Greek thought (both philosophy and theology), and later with Islamic mysticism, and

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3. Simon of Taibutheh in *Woodbrooke Studies,* ed. A. Mingana (Cambridge, 1934), VII, 15.

4. Cf. *Mystic Treatises of Isaac of Niniveh,* ed. A. Wensinck (Amsterdam, 1923) and Bar Hebraeus, *The Book of the Dove* (Leyden, 1919).

to build up its own way of spiritual and monastic life. When we remember that this Church, in the course of the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, spread all over Asia to China on the one hand and to India on the other, and showed a remarkable power of adaptation to oriental culture, it is difficult to deny its importance in any movement towards the adaptation of the Church to the culture of the East. Yet it remains true that the Syrian Church belongs essentially to the Middle East; its culture is Semitic, not Indian or Chinese. It can therefore be no more than a bridge making it possible to establish a link with an authentically Indian or Chinese Christianity. The value of such a bridge should not be underestimated. We need to found our monastic tradition in India on an authentically Christian basis and we have found that the Syrian tradition provides us with this basis. It may be mentioned that in the Eastern Churches a monastery does not necessarily follow, any particular rule. Each monastery has its own *typikon,* containing the guiding principles of monastic life, and these may be drawn from different rules. While we have based our life, as has been said, on the Rule of St. Benedict, we feel drawn to make use of other rules also, such as the Rule of Abraham of Kaskar, the founder of the great Izla monastery near Nisibis in Mesopotamia, of which it was said that it became for monks what Athens had been for philosophers. Abraham himself was known as "the Great," and was called the "head and master of all the monks in the region of the East".[5]

The vaule of the Syrian Church for monastic life is that it gives it a foundation which is both biblical and oriental. The Syrian liturgy is a marvellous example of an oriental liturgy which is rooted in the language and thought of the Bible. It appears to have sprung from the same soil which gave birth to the Bible itself. Yet it is the Bible with a difference. In the Syrian liturgy the great biblical themes, both of the Old and the New Testaments, have been meditated in the light of a developed theology. The West Syrian liturgy, in particular, with its Monophysite background, is dominated by the thought of the deity of Christ. Contrary to the use of other Churches, it habitually addresses prayer to Christ as God. it is this that gives it its distinctive character. This can be seen in the position occupied by the feast of the Epiphany. The feast of Christmas with its emphasis on the huma-

5. Cf. A Vööbus, *Syrian and Arabic Documents* (Stockholm, 1960).

nity of Christ is completely overshadowed by the Epiphany, which is the commemoration of the manifestation of the divine nature. Again, it is significant that the feast of the Purification is not a feast of our Lady but a solemn festival of our Lord's entry into the Temple as its Lord. One may say that the mystery of Christ is presented in the Syrian liturgy with extraordinary power, and that this leads to a deeply contemplative understanding of the Bible and the Church.

Hindu Tradition

Having insured in this way the basis of a Christian formation through the Bible and the liturgy, we are now able to approach the problem of the contact with Hindu tradition which must remain the ultimate goal in India. At present, very few Indian Catholics are ready to receive a formation in Hindu doctrine and spirituality. We have to reckon with centuries of ignorance and prejudice, in which Hinduism was regarded as "idolatry" and "superstition" and all contact with it was deliberately avoided. We are only now beginning to make a serious study of Hindu doctrine and any attempt to integrate Hindu spirituality into our Christian and monastic life can only be a work of time and will need considerable preparation. Yet one may perhaps suggest the lines along which such a work may proceed. It is not, of course, a merely theoretical study. Since the very essence of Hindu doctrine is its mystical character, it is only by the attempt to experience its inner meaning that we can hope to reach any real understanding.

All Hindu doctrine rests on the intuition, which was reached in the earliest *Upanishads*, of the *Brahman* as the principle of all being in its identity with the *Atman* or Self as the principle of all knowing. It is this which we have to grasp intuitively, if we are to have any understanding of Hindu doctrine and be able to relate it to Christian doctrine and experience. However, it is by no means easy to grasp this intuition. It is so vast and all-embracing and is expressed in such a variety of terms that one may easily become confused and imagine, as some have done, that it is in fact self-contradictory. That the *Brahman* is Being itself there can be no doubt, but it is being, not as apprehended by the reason, but by a direct intuition. Thus it is said: "He (the Self) cannot be reached by speech, by mind or by the eye. How

can it be apprehended except by him who says: He is".[6] This Brahman or Self is further said to be not only the source but also the substance of all being. "As the spider comes out with its thread or as small sparks come forth from the fire, thus do all breaths, all worlds, all divinities, all beings come forth from that Self".[7] Yet, lest it should be thought that the *Brahman* is material and therefore to be identified with the world, it is added, it is "*neti, neti,* not this, not that".[8] It is "without sound, without touch, without form, without decay, without taste, eternal, without smell, without beginning, without end, beyond the great, unchangeable.[9] In other words, the *Brahman* or *Atman* is pure Spirit, and this is made more evident when it is said that it "consists of nothing but knowledge".[10] It is the "knower" in all things: "Unseen but seeing, unheard but hearing, unperceived but perceiving, unknown but knowing";[11] as such it cannot properly be known, for who, it is said, can "know the knower?"[12]

Thus the *Brahman* is the principle of all being and of all knowing, but it cannot itself be known by means of reason. Its nature is essentially hidden. "That Self is hidden in all beings and does not shine forth, but it is seen by subtle seers through their sharp and subtle intellect".[13] "The wise who by means of meditation on his Self recognized the Ancient, who is difficult to be seen, who has entered into the dark, who is hidden in the cave, who dwells in the abyss as God, he indeed leaves joy and sorrow behind".[14] Here we encounter the full mystical character of this intuition. It is evident that it is not merely a metaphysical intuition of Being; it is a genuine mystical intuition, an encounter with God in the depths of the being, that is of the Self. This becomes very clear in the later *Upanishads,* like the *Svetasvatara,* where the *Atman* assumes a fully personal character. He is called the "person not larger than a thumb, dwelling within, always

6. *Katha Upanishad,* II, vi, 12.
7. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad,* II, i, 20.
8. *Ibid.,* III, iii, 6.
9. *Katha Upanishad,* I, iii, 15.
10. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad,* II, iv, 13.
11. *Ibid.,* III, viii, 11.
12. *Ibid.,* II, iv, 13.
13. *Katha Upanishad,* I, iii, 12.
14. *Ibid.,* I, ii, 12.

dwelling in the heart of man"[15] and to know him is to attain perfect bliss: "When by means of the real nature of the Self he sees as by a lamp the real nature of Brahman, then having known the unborn, the eternal God, who is beyond all natures, he is freed from all fetters".[16]

What then are we to say of this intuition? It seems to me that we must say that the Hindu has attained to a genuine mystical intuition of the presence of God in nature and in the soul, and at the same time of his transcendence as a person, both of nature and of the soul. It is on our recognition of this mystical intuition that all our understanding of Hindu doctrine depends. Yet this very intuition raises a profound problem within Hinduism itself. From the time of the *Upanishads* themselves there have been two distinct tendencies in Hinduism. The first, which is evident in the *Mandukya Upanishad* and later developed into the *Advaita* doctrine of Sankara in the ninth century, is to interpret this intuition in metaphysical terms as an intuition of pure Being in which all differences disappear. In this view the whole universe of material things and human souls is held to be a "superimposition" on the one, absolute, undifferentiated Being of the *Brahman*. The universe is like the form of a snake which has been mistakenly superimposed on the form of a rope. When it is seen for what it is, the form of the snake disappears and the rope alone remains. Or it is like a dream which has the appearance of reality, but when the sleeper awakes, it is known to have none. Thus in this view there is but one, infinite, eternal, unchanging Being, "without duality," which has the nature of pure consciousness and pure bliss; apart from this everything else is illusion. The aim of life is simply to awake from the present state of dream and to recognize the one Reality, which is expressed in the words, "Thou art That." The Self is the *Brahman* and apart from that there is no being at all.[17]

There is a beautiful simplicity in this doctrine and it cannot be doubted that it has been and continues to be the source of profound mystical experience. In our own day one of the greatest

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15. *Svetasvatara Upanishad,* iii, 13.
16. *Ibid.,* ii, 15.
17. For Sankara's doctrine, cf. the commentary on the *Vedanta Sutras,* ed. G. Thibaut (Oxford, 1890), and the commentary on the *Mandukya Upanishad,* ed. Swami Nikilananda (Ramakrishna Ashram, 1949).

of all Hindu mystics, Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai near Madras, was a pure *advaitin* and lived habitually in the state of a *jivan-mukti*—one who has attained liberation while yet living, and who showed in his life a depth of wisdom and compassion which certainly places him among the saints.[18] But at the same time this doctrine has awakened fierce opposition from early times. For the corollary of this doctrine is not only that the world and the soul have no ultimate reality, but that God himself that is the personal God *(Iswara),* also belongs to the world of *maya.* In the ultimate state both God and the soul disappear in the one, infinite, blissful Being. This doctrine was therefore opposed by the *bhaktas,* the worshippers of the personal God, who believed that the Supreme Being was not impersonal but personal and that the ultimate bliss was not to disappear in the one Brahman but to be united eternally in love with the personal God. The *Bhagavad-Gita* (written perhaps in the third century B.C.) is the classical source for this belief, though as we have seen it is already apparent in the later Upanishads; but it was developed into a philosophical system in opposition to Sankara by Ramanuja, another Brahmin of South India, in the eleventh century.[19]

Ramanuja's system is very attractive to a Christian. We find in it a clear affirmation that the Supreme Being is the personal God, *Iswara,* who is at first identified with Vishnu and later with Krishna. Further, we find in Ramanuja the belief in the *avatara,* the "descent" of God in a human form to deliver the world from "unrighteousness" and the doctrine of "grace" *(anugraha)* by which God in his mercy assists the soul to free itself from the effects of sin and the illusion of this world and to return to a state of blissful union with him. At first sight one is tempted to embrace this doctrine as a form of Christianity before Christ, but a closer study reveals its shortcomings. Ramanuja, like all Indian philosophers, lacked the idea of creation, and therefore he felt obliged to say that the world and souls were "parts" of God; the divine nature, though infinite and eternal and unchanging bliss in itself is yet "modified" by the world and souls. It seems difficult to deny that this system is basically pantheistic. The soul is divine by nature

18. Cf. A. Osborne, *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self Knowledge* (London, 1954).

19. For Ramanuja's doctrine, cf. the commentary on the *Vedanta Sutras,* ed. G. Thibaut (Oxford, 1904).

and grace comes not to deify the soul, as in Christian doctrine, but to assist it to recognize its true divinity. This difficulty was however felt by another philosopher, Madhva, also a Brahmin from South India, who affirmed, in opposition to both Sankara and Ramanuja, that God is eternally separate and different from souls and the world and that the bliss of the soul consists in recognizing its utter dependence on God, not its identity with him.[20]

A Christian Response

The interest for a Christian, it seems to me, in these different systems, is that it shows that there is a conflict within Hinduism itself in regard to the significance of that mystical intuition which has been the inspiration of all its thought. It seems to me that it is the task of the Church in India to bring the light of Christ, of Christian revelation, to bear on this original intuition, to complete the Vedanta, as it were, by introducing a new point of view. In this way we would not be simply introducing a new doctrine, but continuing the work of Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva and the other doctors of the Vedanta. But this means that we have first to enter into the intuition of the *Upanishads,* to understand Hindu doctrine as it were from within, and this is surely the work of a contemplative. No amount of conceptual skill will suffice, no attempt to graft St. Thomas on to the Vedanta will succeed. There must be the discovery within ourselves, in the depths of our own souls, of the Self, the Atman; and what can this be but the discovery of Christ? Thus the study of Hinduism, if it is to bear any fruit, must lead us to a renewal in depth of our own religion, a re-discovery of that mystical presence of Christ in us which lies behind all our theology.

But this discovery will be along the lines indicated by the Hindu tradition. Is it not to a discovery of the presence of Christ in nature and the soul that we are being eventually led? We have to take seriously the great themes of St. Paul in the Epistle to the Colossians: "Yes, in him all things were created both in heaven and on earth... the whole universe has been created in him and for him, and he exists before everything and all things are held together

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20. Cf. B. Sharma, *The Philosophy of Sri Madhvacarya* (Bombay, 1962).

in him";[21] and again in the Epistle to the Ephesians: "He who so went down is no other than he who has gone up high above all the heavens to fill creation with his presence."[22] In the light of these texts can we not find an answer to the problem of the Vedanta, namely, how the world can be real and not illusory and yet exist in God but not as a part of God? In the same way, can we not discover how Christ is our true Self, our Atman, and yet that we do not lose ourselves in him, but live in him as members of his Body? "I live, or rather not I, but Christ lives in me"[23] is the Christian formula, which preserves both the reality of the human soul and its co-inherence in Christ. Finally, when we come to ask what is the relation of the personal God to the ultimate ground of the Godhead, can we not find in the mystery of the Trinity, of the persons who are one in the absolute "non-duality" of the divine nature by their mutual indwelling, an answer to the problem of the relation of the personal God, Iswara, to the absolute Being of the Brahman?

Yoga and Contemplation

Yet we must insist that these answers must not be sought on a merely conceptual level. Hinduism summons us to escape from the conceptualism of our theology into the depths of that contemplative theology, which was that of the Fathers and the monastic theologians. For this purpose, it seems to me, we shall need to make a close study of Yoga, not in its more superficial forms with its methods of physical discipline, but in its deepest and most comprehensive form as a contemplative discipline. We have to study Karma Yoga, the Yoga of action, both ritual action, and social and moral action; Bhakti Yoga, the Yoga of devotion or love, with its conception of total surrender to the divine; and finally, Jnana Yoga, the Yoga of knowledge, the Wisdom which transcends reason and awakens the mind to an intuitive insight and prepares the way for a supernatural wisdom which is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Here again Yoga, like the Vedanta, wants to be taken up into the light of Christ, but we have to be sure that we are prepared to learn all its lessons before we try to in-

21. Col. 1:16-17.
22. Eph. 4:10.
23. Gal. 2:20.

troduce our own Christian values. I may add that I believe that we can find in the great work on Yoga by Sri Aurobindo a means of discovering the full range and depth of Yoga in the light of a profound psychology, which is modern and yet rooted in the deepest insights of ancient India.

A monk in India therefore has to become both a Yogi and a Vedantin, a Christian Yogi and a Christian Vedantin, entering humbly and sincerely into the whole tradition of Yoga and Vedanta with the desire to penetrate its inmost depth, but at the same time bringing to it his own Christian faith so that he may discover Christ in the Vedanta, that is, discover that hidden presence of Christ in Hinduism of which Father Panikkar has written.[24] And this can only be done in a movement of contemplation by which he seeks to discover the hidden presence of Christ in his own Self and to enter more and more deeply into that Centre where Hinduism and Christianity must eventually meet.

The Monastery and the Poor

But this does not answer the problems of our relation to the life of the poor in India. In this matter, it seems to me, we have to try to maintain a sense of proportion. It is not possible to live in the condition of the poorest; this would mean living constantly on the verge of starvation, and only a special grace from God would demand this. But we can keep to a basic simplicity, in food as well as in other things, which will prevent our losing touch with the condition of the poor.

There is another aspect to this problem which was brought home to us in the actual development of our life. In order to support ourselves we decided to start a dairy farm, as this seemed to be the most likely source of livelihood in this hilly region. This turned out to be an extraordinary success. We were able to import some Jersey bulls and cows from England and were able gradually to build up a very good herd. In this we had the co-operation of the government, which set up a veterinary centre in our neighbourhood and made our farm the centre for a scheme of community development. By using our bulls and introducing better methods of feeding and maintenance, the whole standard

24. Cf. R. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London, 1964).

of milk production has been changed. This is an example of the way in which a monastery can be of service in a developing country like India at the present time. We are coming very close to the position of the monasteries in the early middle ages in Europe which became the pioneers in farming and agriculture. We had to deal with some problems of our own making: Our farm becomes a valuable asset both to ourselves and to the neighbourhood. But we did not wish to become landlords and capitalists, nor did we wish to become too involved in the social work connected with the farm. We had to find a way to support ourselves and yet to keep to our simplicity of life, to assist our neighbours and yet not lose our contemplative way of life.

Conclusion

We did not pretend that we had answered all these problems, but we hoped that we were feeling our way towards a life which is rooted in the traditional pattern of life in India, linking us on the one hand to the ancient Syrian Church and, on the other, to the ancient tradition of *sannyasa* in India; at the same time enabling us to live a contemplative life in the modern world; helping us to be of service to our neighbours but seeking first the kingdom of God, that is, seeking to bear witness to Christ in India as the Saviour who can bring to fulfilment the inner meaning of Yoga and Vedanta and give to modern India the balance and harmony which it needs, thus giving to this world and its problems their proper place and value, and yet always leading beyond them to that consummation in which their real meaning and value is to be found.