

Our age has been witnessing of late the resurgence of a great meditation movement, a movement which daily seems to take new forms, gather fresh momentum, and extend its appeal to men and women in all walks of life. What exactly is meditation? Is it a reasoning process, a technique of concentration, a state of altered consciousness unleashing previously untapped energy and potential? Is it just a contemplation of God as the Absolute, or is it a total understanding of the mystery of Self? What do meditators mean by goals described as "ecstasy", absorptivè *samādhi*, intuitive wisdom (*prajñā*), or the sudden brilliance of *satori*: Enlightenment?

Last Fall in America, two seminars studied these important questions. For the national meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Dr. Harry Buck of Wilson College organized a discussion entitled "The Human Experience of Meditation"; his panelists included one Christian theologian, two historians of religion specializing in Asian spirituality, and two clinical psychologists; this panel emphasized a phenomenological approach to the experience of meditation. For the Mid-Atlantic Association of Asian Studies meeting, Dr. Kenneth W. Morgan of Colgate University organized a discussion of this same topic from a cross-cultural perspective; his panel included Philosophers, Indologists, and Sino-logists. *The Journal of DHARMA* is pleased to present in this number a few selected papers from these seminars along with some other relevant studies on the topic.

We begin the discussion with a paper by Dr. Daniel Goleman, the well-known psychologist and the Editor of the review, *Psychology Today*. Goleman views meditation as a process of mental re-training geared at the "universal transformation of being". Drawing inspiration from the Buddhist *Visuddhimmagga*, Goleman points out two salient features of all meditations: Concentration which is defined as "one-pointedness of mind" and insight which is understood as a journey of the mind through this world to higher awareness without abandoning it. Though the observations of the cognitive psychology allude to the same principles, Goleman readily accepts the limitations of western psychology which has no provision of framework to describe a sage who "has renounced his ego-centred personality" through meditation and is thus beyond all systems.

Seen from a different angle meditation is nothing but "the mind's journey into God". This is the core of Franciscan meditation. Dr. Ewert Cousins in his analytical study of Franciscan meditation shows how one can profitably embark on a treasure hunt in order to retrieve the spiritual wisdom buried in texts long out of print and in the monastic traditions of the West. He concentrates on the writings of Bonaventure which he calls a *summa* of the Medieval Christian mysticism and the major strands of Christian meditation. In the concluding part of his study, Cousins makes an interesting suggestion to correlate the types of meditation in Bonaventure and the levels of psyche that have been explored in contemporary research.

Yoga is India's unique contribution to meditation; its influence, however, is far-reaching especially in our age. Viewing Sāmkhyā metaphysics as the key to understanding Yogic asceticism, Dr. Frank Podgorski of Seton Hall University details four steps on the Sāmkhyā-Yogic journey to liberating *samādhi*. Psyche, Ego, and even the most subtle form of matter must be abandoned by the Yogi. Finally, *samādhi* is expressed in terms of epistemological transvaluation; a "consciousness" totally liberated and totally freed from all dependence on mind, psyche, and ego is suggested as the radical goal of the Yogi. This goal is known as "consciousness in total isolation" (*puruṣa in kaivalya*).

Still other paths of meditation are discussed at the cross-cultural seminar. Dr. John B. Chethimattam, professor at both Fordham University and Dharmaram College, analyses the meditation involved in the Middle Path of the Buddha and the Advaita Vedānta technique of Saṃkāra. Both these classic approaches aim at a mental discrimination to overcome man's tendency to objectify God and the Absolute as "something out there"; both rather seek the realization of "one's own individual emptiness" while yet pointing to "the fulness of the absolute ground of all being".

China has developed her own approach to the complex field of meditation and self-realization. The complementary dimensions of meditation and ritual in a Chinese setting are studied by Anne Ch'ien of Columbia University. Her focus is on the Neo-Confucian notion of "self-cultivation". The inter-relatedness of "meditation as mind-cultivation" and "action as ritual" is seen as essential if a man is to transform himself into a "living sage".

Invocation technique has often been associated with the practice of meditation. Great religions such as Buddhism, Chri-

stianity and Hinduism have developed methods of meditation with the technique of invocation. Our study of the experience of meditation would be incomplete without some commentary on this particular technique of meditation. Therefore, in our survey section, we present three types of meditation representing three great religions, all of which heavily depend on the technique of invocation.

“*Nien-fo*”, or “invocation of the name of the Buddha”, has long been a popular religious practice in China and Japan; generally, it is associated with Pure Land Buddhism. At first, any linkage between this practice and the enigmatic Ch’an techniques seems remote. However, as Dr. Chun fang Yü of Rutgers University makes a historical survey, the complementary nature and joint practice of Ch’an “*koans*” and Pure Land “*nien-fo*” are observed as actually having been practised by the Chinese monks.

Originated in Egypt of early Christianity and developed further in Greece, the Hesychast method of prayer and meditation has received wide acceptance especially among the Oriental Christians. Dr. Aertthayil of the Dharmaram College in his historico-theological survey of the topic, shows how the invocation of the name of Jesus, known as “Jesus Prayer”, has been associated with the Hesychast form of meditation.

In Hinduism meditation is often known as *upāsana*. Swami Bhajanānanda of the Bangalore Ramakrishna Ashram in his comparative study of Hindu *Upāsana* and Christian meditation treats three kinds of *upāsana*: *pratikopāsana*, *nāmopāsana* and *abamgrahopāsana*. *Nāmopāsana*, as it uses invocation technique, is the Indian counterpart of the Oriental Hesychasm and Buddhist *Koan*. Bhajanānanda also draws our attention to several Christian parallels as he treats the type of Hindu *upāsanas*.

Theological speculations on meditation can be strengthened as well as corrected by the results of mind-research and psychological lab-experimentations. Taking this fact into consideration we conclude this number of the *Journal of Dharma* with an interesting discussion on the importance of meditation. The team of the forum includes Dr. Jean Houston of the Centre for Mind Research, New York, who leads the discussion and Ewert Cousins, a theologian and Dr. Daniel Goleman a psychologist. On the basis of her laboratory research Dr. Houston thinks that mankind is apparently on the verge of an ontological and psychological break-

through. Man is beginning to reconstitute his psyche especially in its inner and even in its external dimensions. Assessing the *Sāmkhya-yoga* path as an extraordinary path of *via negativa* and Bonaventure's technique as an excellent *via positiva*, she points to the complementary nature of both. Re-affirming Dr. Goleman's thesis of the psychological universality of being, Dr. Houston concludes by lauding the positive transforming values that can be acquired through meditation. For this conclusion she depends heavily on her laboratory research with the human psyche.

It is the hope of the *Journal of DHARMA* that this number will contribute to the clarification of our understanding of the multiple paths of meditation; it is also our hope that this clarification will be a prelude to spiritual growth and even to what Dr. Goleman terms "the very transformation of being".

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