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III

HINDU UPASANA VIS-A-VIS CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

Upāsana in Hinduism is the objective method of meditation in which importance is given to various objects of meditation. Etymologically *upāsana* means "sitting near" (*upa*=near, *āsana* =seat), that is, approaching an object mentally. The mind is focused on a mental image. The original purpose of such meditations was to train the mind for the practice of *vichāra*[1], the direct subjective method of self-enquiry. Patanjali studied the epistemological and psychological aspects of objective concentration in greater detail than anybody has ever done, and codified his researches into a science of concentration. His method is to take the aspirant step by step, first through some preliminary disciplines, and then through a series of objective meditations, until he finally realizes his own true Self. His ideas are now indissolubly connected with every type of *sādhana* in vogue in Hinduism.

Upāsanas are of several types. The higher ones are called *vidyas*. Sankara points out that the lower kinds of concentration do not deserve the name of *vidya* (which etymologically means "Knowledge")[2]. In the Upanishads we find described serveral types

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1. *Vichāra* is one of the highways of meditation. It is also called *nididhyāsana*. *Vichāra* is a kind of inner seeking of penetration into the subject, and the word is usually translated as "self-enquiry". It is the attempt of the lower self to seek its own roots, and in that process, finds itself going higher and higher undergoing progressive expansion. Evidently it is a difficult technique meant only for advanced aspirants. Indeed, for centuries its practice had been restricted mostly to monks. The credit for reviving and popularizing this ancient method in modern times goes to Sri Ramana Maharshi, the Sage of Arunachala, whose influence in the West is surprisingly considerable.
2. *Commentary on Brahma Sutras* III. 4.52.

of *vidyas*. In the *Samhita* and *Brāhmana* parts of the Vedas we find mentioned certain meditations which may not deserve the name *vidya*. During the Vedic period the emphasis was mostly on sacrificial rites *(yajña)*. But in the *Brāhmana* portion of the Vedas we find a few meditations connected with these rituals. The sacrifice was regarded as most important and in itself sufficient to produce the desired results. The meditation that was carried on along with it was only an auxiliary part of it and had no independent existence. This kind of meditation was called *angāvabaddha*,[3] meaning "connected to the parts" (of the sacrifice). The meditations prescribed in the *Aranyakas* also may be taken to belong to this class even though the rituals connected with them are not performed. Evidently, they represent the transitional state from external rituals to internal meditations *(upāsana* proper) and were conducted with a view to training the mind to grasp the higher truths. The famous meditation in the *Asva brahmana* of *Brihadarānyaka Upanishad* connected with the horse-sacrifice may be regarded as of this kind. Here the sacrificial horse is to be meditated on as the Cosmic Being *(Prajāpati)*, with its head standing for dawn, the eyes for the sun, the vital force for air, and so on.[4] Since vedic sacrifices have almost vanished, this kind of meditation is no longer in vogue.

Upāsanas in modern times are generally classified into three types: (1) *pratika upāsana*, (2) *nāma upāsana*, (3) *ahamgraha upāsana*. The first two may be practised along with rituals, but they are usually independent of rituals. All are mental disciplines. In *pratikopāsana* the *sādhaka* meditates on a visual symbol of God. All the religions of the world use symbols to enable their followers to remember God and build up a common fellowship under one particular creed. The peculiarity of Hinduism is that it uses symbols as a means to transcend them and directly experience the Divinity that they represent. Moreover, Hinduism offers a great variety of symbols for the purpose of meditation.[5] The Upanishads mention the sky, the sun, the air, mind etc., which

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3. Nalini Kanta Brahma, *Philosophy of Hindu sādhana*, p. 70; also see Swami Vimalānanda's *Introduction to Chandogyopanishad* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1965) p. lix.

4. *Brih.* 1.1.1

5. *cf.* Swami Yatīswarānanda: "A Glimpse into Hindu Religious Symbology", *The Cultural Heritage of India* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1965) Vol. IV p. 433.

were used as symbols. Depending upon the type of emphasis *pratikopāsana* in the Upanishads was of two types: *sampad* and *adhyāsa*. In *sampad upāsana,* a symbol of a lower order is taken up and on it is superimposed a higher attribute or quality. The attribute is more important than the symbol.[6] In *adhyāsa upāsana,* the symbol predominates the meditative field. For instance, in the *Chandogya* meditation (III. 19) "The sun is Brahman, this is the instruction", the sun with its dazzling splendour is more important than the unknown principle superimposed on it.[7]

Pratikopāsana in modern Hinduism

Though some of these Upanishadic symbols are still being used by a few qualified aspirants here and there, anthropomorphic symbols have almost completely replaced the ancient impersonal symbols. With the rise of the popularity of idol worship, meditations too got centred on the images of various gods and goddesses. This type of meditation is called *pratikōpāsana,* and is at present the most popular form of meditation. Even the extreme non-dualist may take to it. In his case the purpose of meditation is to train the mind in concentration, the deity being taken only as an aid to this visual aid *(drishti saukaryam).*

With the popularization of *Puranas* and *Tantras* another purpose became more prominent, and this was *devata samprāpti,* direct vision of the Deity. This is the type of meditation followed by the dualists of the schools of *bhakti.* Here the purpose of meditation is not mere concentration of mind but a living communion with the Deity meditated on. Just as Christians believe in angels and saints as still living and guiding the destinies of human beings, the Hindus believe in various gods and goddesses. For them these divinities are all real beings living in pure subtle bodies. Through purity of mind, love and concentration, one attains the grace of the particular deity and obtains his or her vision. According to one school, some of the gods and goddesses are human beings raised to the status of divinities by their past meritorious deeds. This puts them on a level with the Catholic saints.[8]

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6. Swami Gambhirananda: "Upanishadic Meditation", *The Cultural Heritage of India* Vol. I, pp. 379, 380.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 380.
8. See Vachaspati's gloss on Vyasa's *commentary on Patanjali Yoga Sutras* I.19.

The psychological process involved in attaining the vision of the Deity *(devata)* is, however, not as simple as that. The *Tantras* worked out in elaborate and often bewildering detail a great tradition on this. The scriptural source of this tradition is the famous statement in the *Brihadāranyaka* Upanishad: "Becoming a god one attains to the world of gods."[9] This means, as Dr. Brahma points out: Meditation and worship of the Divine become possible only when a divinity has been earned through prior purificatory processes...Real worship signifies that state of supreme attraction which can exist only between things of very similar nature.[10] This deification of human soul through worship lies at the core of modern forms of *upāsana* which have been strongly influenced by the *Tantras*.

The basis of this *apotheosis* of man is the *yathākratu* principle of *Chandogya Upanishad* which states: "As one's faith is, so does one become".[11] Explaining this, Prof. Hiriyanna says: According to what is known as *yathākratu nyāya* admitted by all Vedantins alike, a person who knows the form of a deity only mediately, can render that knowledge immediate through continued meditation upon it. Such meditation, it is also believed, when persevered in till the end of life, will result in a union of the *upāsaka* with the deity in question.[12]

Could this union with the *devata* be an illusion created by a strong auto-suggestion, as some western critics seem to think? This question takes us to the Hindu theory of cognition originally propounded by Kapila and subsequently accepted with suitable modifications by all the other schools of Hindu philosophy. One of the mistakes of eighteenth century empiricist philosophers was to regard perception as a passive act, like light entering a camera and affecting the photographic plate. It was only much later that Brentano showed that behind every act of seeing there is an "intention". Man does not merely *see* but he *looks*. This idea that perception is an inner act of a living organism, the result of an impulse originating within, and not a mere passive perception of sense-data, was recognized in India more than two thousand years ago.

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9. *Devo bhutva devamapyeti*: *Brih.* Up. 4.1.7.
10. Nalini Kanta Brahma, *Philosophy of Hindu Sadhana*, p. 288.
11. *Chand. Up.* 3. 14. 11.
12. M. Hiriyanna: *Philosophical Studies* Part II (Mysore: Kaivalaya Publishing House, 1972) p. 24.

According to the school of Advaita, in the act of perception the mind *(antahkarana)* flows out through the physical eyes like a tube (called a *vritti)* and meeting the external object takes the form of the object, as it were. Simultaneously, the light of the Self (called *chidābhāsa)* also issues out within the "mental tube" and illumines the object,[13] and we "see" the object. Thus "seeing" is the establishment of a relationship between the soul and the external object, through a psycho-spiritual impulse originating within man. What has been said about external objects applies also to be gods and goddesses who are beings dwelling in the higher psychic planes of the cosmic mind *(mahat).* Since the subtle bodies of devatas are made up of highly refined subtle matter, they cannot be seen by the ordinary external senses and gross mind. Their perception needs a refined supersensuous mind called the *buddhi,* the intuitive faculty in man. First of all, this "divine eye" must be awakened, and for this the ordinary mind *(manas)* must be purified and concentrated on *buddhi.* This is the reason why Hinduism places so much emphasis on purification and concentration of mind. But the inner perception is as real as the outer perception, the difference being only in the degrees of purity and concentration of the mind. The external symbol *(pratika*—usually the form of a devata) with which the *upāsaka* begins his meditation is only an aid to concentration. He visualizes the form in a particular "centre of consciousness" usually corresponding to the heart. As concentration deepens, the centre of consciousness awakens and he perceives the subtle spiritual essence of the *devata* symbolized by the *pratika.* Finally, visualization is replaced by the living presence of the *devata.* All imagination disappears and the *devata* remains there in all his luminous splendour. Thus spiritual experience is not the result of auto-suggestions but the result of divine revelation resulting in a genuine supersensuous cognition. Nor is it granted to all and sundry. Only a very small number of people who undergo years of discipline and purification are blessed with such supernatural visions; the others have to remain satisfied with imaginations and visualizations.

The next question is whether such a vision of a god or a goddess can lead to liberation *(mukti)* or not. All the schools of Hinduism, almost unanimously, hold that the vision or contact of an individual *devata* cannot in itself liberate a man though

13. Dharmaraja Adhvarindra, *Vedanta Paribhasha,* p. 16

it is a help in that direction. Only the direct realization of the Supreme Godhead *(Isvara)* can confer liberation on man. That is why in Hindu worship and meditation every *devata* is regarded as standing for the Supreme Godhead, so that the *sādhaka* may pass on to the attainment of the Supreme Godhead *(Isvara)* after contacting the *devata.* This kind of personal monotheism of the individual worshipper was called "henotheism" by Max Müller. The final realization of Godhead is possible, according to the non-dualist school, only through *nididhyāsana,* and according to the dualist schools, only through Divine Grace. All schools, however, believe that the blessings of a qualified *guru* are a great help in this.

Stages in Pratikopāsana

Upāsana passes through three stages depending upon the degree of mental concentration attained; these are: *dhārana, dhyāna* and *samādhi.* In *dhārana* the mind is struggling hard to concentrate on one particular form. (This corresponds to the "first degree" of St. Theresa, in which the will is fixed on God but reason and imagination wander). In this stage there are several images and words intruding into the field of concentration. The second stage is called *dhyāna* where the distracting images are all shut out and the mind is fixed on one single form, the chosen Image of God. But there is effort, strain, conscious self-direction. In the third stage called *samādhi,* concentration is spontaneous and effortless, the object alone shines in a new interior light (the light of Atman), and the subject appears, as it were, to have merged in to the object.[14]

Samādhi, again, is of several kinds or degrees. The Advaita school recognizes only two types: *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa.* According to the Yoga school of Patanjali, samādhi is of two types: *sabija* and *nirbija;* the second one seems to correspond to the *nirvikalpa* stage of the non-dualist school. *Sabija samādhi* itself consists of four stages—*vitarka, vichāra, ānanda* and *asmita.* The *bhakti* school of Chaitanya holds that *samādhi* has three stages: *prema, bhāva* (ecstasy) and *mahābhāva.*

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14. *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali,* III. 1-3 & 1.43.

An exhaustive study of the various types of *samādhi* and a comparison of these with spiritual experience of Christian mystics is beyond the scope of this article. But one or two important points are to be noted here. In the first place, in Christian *sādhana,* the help of images is taken only up to the degree of meditation or discursive prayer, or at the most up to the stage of affective prayer. In the next stages, called Prayer of Simplicity, the mental images are removed and there remains a "simple intent", a "naked interior gaze".[15] Since this is done with an effort of will, it is also called Acquired Contemplation and corresponds to the *dhyāna* of Hinduism. In both—*dhyāna* and Prayer of Simplicity—the will is fixed and the other two faculties are obedient to the will. The difference between Prayer of Simplicity and *dhyāna* is that in the latter the mind contains the image of a particular god or goddess. Christian spiritual directors have discouraged forming mental picture of God, as is common in Hindu practice, in order to avoid the dangers of auto-suggestive delusions.

The *samādhi* of Hinduism, evidently, corresponds to the infused or Passive contemplation of Christianity. In both, the experience is not because of self-effort but the infusion of divine grace which makes it spontaneous. The differences in spiritual experience during *samādhi* in the two religions may be explained as the result of the cultural variations of the minds of the mystics. The same experience could be expressed through various symbols. St. Thomas Acquinas himself holds the view that the superior mystical knowledge gained through pure intellectual species cannot be understood by the experiencer unless it is converted into phantasmata. This means that imagination is the main cause of differences in spiritual experience and not the experience itself.

The path of *upāsana* is not all that easy to follow, either for the Hindus or for Christians. Both have to face several obstacles. Patanjali and Vedantic teachers enumerate the obstacles involved in *samādhi.* The Christian saints speak of "Dark Nights". According to St. John of the Cross there are two such dark nights. One is the dark night of the sense which comes to one during the early stages of "purgation". The cause of this is the unsatisfied craving

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15. *cf.* Fr. de Besse, *The Science of Prayer* (London: Burns, Oates & Washerbourne, 1925).
Also Fr. Poulain, *Graces of Interior Prayer.*

of the soul for worldly pleasures. St. John of the Cross compares it to the desire of Israelites to eat the flesh-meat and onions of Egypt, even when God had provided them with the heavenly manna.[16] This dark night could be explained from the point of view of the theory of *samskāras*. According to Hindu psychology, every action or thought leaves a mark on the mind called a *samskāra*. These latent impressions later on recrudesce into thought or desires for enjoyment. The second "dark night" is of a higher order and comes only to the advanced mystics.[17]

Nāmopāsana

We now return to meditation in Hinduism called *upāsana*, of which we have discussed only the first type. The second kind of *upāsana* is *nāmopāsana*. Originally, it was an extension of *pratikopāsana*. The difference between the two is that in *nāmopāsana*, sound (a word or a formula) is used as the symbol of God, whereas in *pratikopāsana* a visual form (usually an anthropomorphic image) serves as the symbol. The most well-known sound-symbol is the sacred word *Om*. Several books, especially *Mundakopanishad* and *Māndukyopanishad*, prescribe this word as a symbol to meditate on. One has to concentrate one's mind on the sound and also on its meaning, which in this case means the Supreme Spirit.[18]

Nāmopāsana is of two types. If the words used are few and these are repeated endlessly, then it is called *japa*. If the words are many the *upāsana* is called *stava* or *stuti* (hymnody). The latter is often set to music and sung in chorus, and then it is called *samkirtana* or, to use common term, *bhajan*. Though this sort of congregational singing is very common, each individual practises *japa* privately, usually under the guidance of a teacher *(guru)*. *Japa* steadily gained great popularity during and after the Middle

16. St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, Translated by Mrs. G.C. Graham (London: John M. Watkins, 1922) p. 66; For obstacles that appear during the early stages, see the same author's *Ascent of Mt. Carmel*. (London: Thomas Baker). Compare these obstacles with those mentioned in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* 1. 30,31 and *Vedanta Sara* of Sadananda Ch VI Para 209-213.

17. *Ibid.* p. 113et. seq.

18. See Patanjali Yoga Sutras, 1.27 *Tad japastadartha bhāvanam*. *Mundaka Upanishad* 2.3-6.

Ages in India until now in modern times it is the commonest form of *sādhana* resorted to by millions of pious Hindus. But owing to the influence of the *Tantras,* important changes have taken place in its form and significance. Simple words and names have given place to mystic formulae called *mantras,* discovered by the seers. A *mantra* cannot be repeated by all. One must be "initiated" into it by a qualified *guru.* The purpose of repetition of such *mantras* is not merely to understand the direct meaning denoted by the words but to realize their esoteric significance. Words are not just symbols but are endowed with an intrinsic power to awaken a higher consciousness.

It is here that the Hindu theory of Logos comes into prominence. According to this view, the whole universe—including all the planes from the most gross to the most subtle—is created by the power *(sakti)* of God, which is of the nature of vibrations *(spandana).* The primordial state of this divine vibration is collectively called *nāda-brahman* (the Hindu Logos). Every object, including gods and goddesses, is a manifestation of this primordial vibration. A *mantra* represents the "frequency" or "wave-length" of a particular *devata.* When a *mantra* is repeated by a purified and concentrated mind, the mind attains "resonance" with that *devata* and gets its vision. The *mantra* itself, when rhythmically chanted, has the power of purifying and concentrating the mind. Furthermore, such repetition *(japa)* in due course rouses the latent psychic energy in man (called *Kundalini sakti)* and, with the heightened consciousness thus obtained, he comes in touch with the *devata* he has been seeking.[19]

Ahamgraha Upāsana

The third of the *Upāsanas* is the *ahamgrahopāsana.* Here the object of worship is not different from the subject. All objects are looked upon as manifestations of one Supreme Self of which one's own soul is a part. Discussing this, Dr. Brahma says:

> If in *pratika* worship we have found the tradition from the many to the one, we find in *ahamgraha upāsana,* the transi-

19. See Nalinikanta Brahma, *Philosophy of Hindu Sādhana, op. cit.* pp. 275-291. Also, Swami Vivekananda, *Bhakti Yoga* (Calcutta: The Advaita Ashrama, 1964) pp. 46-50

> tion from the "one-in-many" or the "many-in-one" to the "One-without-any", a transition from the dualism of subject and object to the oneness or identity between the two, viz., the Self and the Brahman.[20]

The most famous examples of *ahamgraha upasana* in the Upanishads are the *Sāndilya vidya* and *Dahara vidya* mentioned in the Chandogyopanishad.[21] Here is an extract from the former:

> He who is permeating the mind, who has *prāna* for his body, whose nature is consciousness, whose resolve is infallible, whose own form is like the ether, whose creation is all that exist... who exists pervading all this... is my Atman dwelling in the heart. He is smaller than a grain of paddy, than a barley corn, than a mustard seed etc., and is greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than heaven, greater than all these worlds.[22]

This is the type of meditation that the school of Advaita practises. However, in modern times instead of the upanishadic meditations, some of the non-dualistic poems of Sankaracharya (like *Prātahsmarāmi stotra* and *nirvāna, sataka)* are more commonly used. The sannyasins meditate on the meaning of the four *mahāvākyas* ("that thou art" etc.) which are formulae meant for this kind of meditation.

An extension of this *ahamgraha upasana* is the *virāt upāsana* in which the immanence of the Divine is meditated on. Though this is a theistic type of meditation, the Advaita school uses it as a meditation on the Self as the all-pervading spirit. The Upanishads contain several passages suitable for this kind of meditation, the best known being the *Antaryāmi Brāhmana:*

> He who dwells in earth but is within it, whom earth does not know, whose body is earth, and who controls earth from within, is the Inner Controller, your own self and immortal.
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> He who dwells in water . . .
> He who dwells in fire . . .
> He who dwells in the sky . . . . .etc.[23]

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20. Nalinikanta Brahma *Philosophy of Hindu Sādhana, op. cit.*, p. 71.
21. *Chand. Up.*, 3.14 & 8.1. respectively.
22. *Ibid.*, 3.14, 2-3.
23. *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad*, 3.7. 1-23. Also see *Katha Upanishad*.

Another example is:

> Know him alone as the self who forms the warp and woof of the sky, the earth, the air, the mind and the *prānas*. Give up all vain talk. This is the bridge to immortality.[24]

The difference between *ahamgraha upāsana* and *nididhyāsana,* which we discussed earlier, is very slight to an untrained mind. But the difference is real as these represent two different approaches to the ultimate Reality, an objective and subjective one. *Nididhyāsana* is an attempt to grasp the Absolute without attributes *(Nirguna Brahman).* Since Reality in this sense cannot be made the object of thought, *nididhyāsana* is not meditation, it is an interior search beginning with one's own limited consciousness and ending in infinite Divine Consciousness.

Japa and Hesychasm

Though the Roman Catholics use the rosary or the chaplet for the "Ave Maria" prayer, the nearest approximation of, *Japa* in Christian tradition is the Hesychastic prayer of the Greek Orthodox Church. The Word *Hesychasm* is said to come from the Greek root *hesychia.* meaning quietness. The technique of this prayer, popularly called the "Jesus Prayer", consists in repeating the words "Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me", continually. The little book *The Way of a Pilgrim*, which has already become a spiritual classic, describes how this prayer is to be conducted:

> 'The continuous interior prayer of Jesus is a constant uninterrupted calling upon the divine name of Jesus with the lips, in the spirit, in the heart; while forming a mental picture of His constant presence, and imploring His grace, during every occupation, at all times, in all places, even during sleep.'[25]

This kind of prayer came into vogue in the Middle East probably in the fourth century. One of the greatest of the early writers was John Climacus (6th century) who wrote: "Let the remembrance of Jesus be present with every breath and then you

24. *Mundaka Upanishad.* 2.5.
25. *The Way of a Pilgrim* (London: S.P.C.K., 1973) p.9

will know the value of hesychia."[26] Another famous, early master was John Chrysostom (4th century). Many of these writers advised spiritual aspirants to connect the Jesus prayer with breathing,[27] which bears a striking resemblance to *prānāyāma* in Hinduism. The Hesychastic method was perfected by St. Simeon, the New Theologian (11th century), and St. Nicephorus the Hesychast (13th century) who included, in addition to control of breath, the method of fixing the eyes on the heart region, (again another parallel to the Hindu method of concentrating on the "lotus of the heart"). When this method was criticized by Barlaam the Calabrian, St. Gregory Palamas (14th century) the Archbishop of Thessalonica, defended it on the ground that the human body sanctified by the sacraments of the Church, is able to participate in the prayer, and this was officially ratified by the Orthodox Church at the Council of St. Sophia in 1351. When one compares the teachings of the Greek masters with those of the great Hindu saints of the Middle Ages, one cannot but notice the great similarity between them. In fact, the Greek Christian tradition bridges the gulf that separates spiritual traditions in the East and the West. It is regrettable that the teachings of the Greek fathers are not so well-known as they should be in the West or in India.

The writings of these holy Greek fathers have been collected in *The Philokalia,* a book which is next only to the Bible in importance in the Greek Orthodox Church. The Greek saints have distinguished between two kinds of Jesus Prayer—one voluntary and the other involuntary. At first one has to repeat the prayer with an effort of the will and fight against forgetfulness. But continual repetition for months together will make the prayer "descend into the heart" and these become "self-acting".[28] This prayer is called 'pure prayer' or "prayer of the heart". Evidently, this stage belongs to the realm of "Infused Prayer" and probably corresponds to the "Prayer of Quiet" of St. Theresa, when the mind becomes still. Mark, the Podvishnik, says: "To pray somehow is within our power, but to pray purely is the gift of Grace".[29] Commenting on St. Paul's famous injunction "Pray without ceasing" (I Thessal. 5. 17), John Chrysostom says:

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26. Quoted in *Writings from the Philokalia,* translated into English by E. Kadloubovsky and G.E.H. Palmer (London: Faber & Faber Ltd. 1951) p. 85.
27. *Ibid.,* p. 194.
28. *The Way of Pilgrim,* op. cit., p. 42
29. Quoted in *The Pilgrim continues the Way* (London: S.P.C.K., 1941), p. 78

> It is possible to pray at all times, in all circumstances, and in every place, and easy to rise from frequent *vocal prayer to prayer of the mind,* and from that to *the prayer of the heart,* which opens up the Kingdom of God within us (italics ours).[30]

Conclusion

What is common to Hindu and Christian (Roman and Greek) spiritual traditions is the great importance given to the *Heart.* By this is meant not the anatomical heart, not even the "seat of emotions" but the spiritual heart. According to the Upanishads, the heart corresponds to the *buddhi* or *vijñānamayakosha* and is the locus of the Self.[31] It is also referred to as the "locus of the heart", "the space in the middle" or the "cave". Sankara says: "Therefore, the self is the light within *buddhi* located in the heart".[32] In his celebrated Canticle (on which he wrote two commentaries *The Ascent of Mt. Carmel* and *The Dark Night of the Soul)* St. John of the Cross speaks about the "Light" in the heart:

> In that happy night,
> In secret, seen of none,
> Seeing nought myself,
> Without other lights or guide
> Save that which in my heart was burning.[33]

The Greek fathers call the heart the "bridal chamber" where the soul meets its Divine Spouse. Says Theoleptus, a great 14th century Greek saint:

> Believe me, I tell you the truth: if every work you do is inseparably connected with prayer, it will not rest until it has shown you the bridal chamber and has led you to within filling you with ineffable bliss and joy.[34]

The Psalmist says: "I sleep but my heart waketh".[35] In the

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30. *Ibid.,* p. 83
31. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* 4.3.7; *Kathopanishad,* 2.3.17.
32. *Brih. Up.* 4.3.7. (Commentary)
33. *'The Ascent of Mt. Carmel'* Translated by Dewis (London, Thomas Baker, 1938) p. 2.
34. *Philokalia, op.cit.,* p. 390
35. *'Song of Songs',* V.2.

Hindu tradition meditation and *japa* are all centred on the heart. The *tantras* call it *the anāhata chakra* and its *awakening* through *japa* marks the beginning of spiritual illumination. If anyone sincerely wants to seek the chord connecting Hinduism, Christianity and other religions, he must first search his own spiritual heart where he is sure to find the living channel through which God's grace has been flowing into man, whatever be his religion or race.