

EDITORIAL

Amidst the prevailing prophecies of gloom characteristic of our day, a vague and still unclear sense of hope is struggling to express itself. Ten years ago, the journey of Thomas Merton dramatized this most effectively to the West. If only East and West can meet in depth at the spiritual level, perhaps that well-prophesized clash over limited materiality may yet be avoided; perhaps the mutual enrichment of spiritual sharing may overflow into a more profound realization of the sacredness of life and a deeper understanding of human brotherhood.

But Thomas Merton is not the only sign of this hope. Within the past two years alone, monks from East and West have gathered at Petersham, England; philosophers and mystics at Calgary, Canada; academics and holy men at Boston University, U.S.A.; and scholars and searchers at Bede Griffith's ashram in south India—all seeking to understand more fully the spiritual depths of man. And yet these were but the heirs to the Bangkok Conference of Asian Monastics (1968), the Bangalore Monastic Meeting (1973), the Mount Saviour, New York Symposium (1974) as well as the International Meeting of Monks and Scholars in Italy. Still these assemblies were possible only because pioneers like Monchanin, Abhishiktananda, Oshida, Enomiya LaSalle, Sunder Singh, and others had personally testified by their lives to the richness found in living deeply the multiple spiritual traditions of mankind. Even the Vatican Secretariat, Cardinal Pignedoli, in 1974 issued a call for such mutual searching and cross-fertilization. The Summit of World Religions of the United Nations echoed this very same cause in 1975.

A lesson has already begun to emerge from these introductory conversations. To speak effectively, one must begin by probing one's own roots or foundations and simply reporting what is found there. This, however, is but the starting-point; total honesty and precise clarification are pre-requisites if ever dialogue is to begin. Further, lived personal experience has begun to appear as the hallmark of effective communication. It is from this perspective that *Journal of DHARMA* has invited reflection on the universal phenomenon of mysticism. As is obvious, all of our authors have Western backgrounds. Consequently, most of our articles fall under the category of reflection on Western roots and foundations, although this is not entirely true. The East, of course, is renowned for the richness of its mystical tra-

ditions. Hence a similar probing of a variety of Eastern mystical traditions will form the core of a future issue of *Journal of DHARMA*.

The present issue, however, begins with a Western theological reflection. Donald Gray of Manhattan College has focussed on an expanding of "consciousness" which he detects as beginning to emerge from the Christian community. A new and more comprehensive awareness and understanding of the traditional notions of God, Trinity, Jesus Christ, and especially salvation invites to a richer appreciation of the mystery of humankind. This "New Consciousness, New Life" is a mystical vision, according to Professor Gray.

Yet, mysticism is not necessarily so esoteric; it is also intertwined with the details of everyday living. Friendship and a friend may be a great help and assistance for daily living; a friend may even introduce us to our "meta-self." From a 12th century European monastery, Aelred of Rievaulx written *On Spiritual Friendship*, a classic treatment which sees a friend as one who leads to a divine self-discovery. Katherine Henn of Drew University has studied the works of Aelred and finds his mysticism viable for our day.

Discipline, precise forms of meditation, and a focussed control of imagination and will are characteristics of the spiritual journey first experienced and then taught by Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th century. All these, however, are but preliminaries to a "Mysticism of Action," the goal of the *Spiritual Exercises*, argues Robert Schmitt, currently Director of Jesuit Novices in California.

In death, Thomas Merton has become the symbol and model for a new Western openness to the spirituality of the East. Yet this was but the logic of his life-story. Sketching Merton's spiritual odyssey, Katherine Byrne of Darlington Seminary, sees Merton as "a man who turned away from nothing, no one, no faith, for all proved pathways to Reality."

Turning to a Hindu scriptural text, the *Bhāgavata Purāna*, Anand Nayak of the Sorbonne University describes a rich variety of *bhakti* prayer-forms. *Kathāśravaṇa* (hearing the stories), *satsaṅga* (community), *stuti* (praise), and *dhyāna* (meditation) are detailed as the principal prayer-forms which contain the possibility of introducing the worshipper to a "cosmic yet personal experience of transcendence."

Even today, almost five centuries after his death, the name and the incarnational spirit of Caitanya are still revered in Bengal. Caitanya's biography and personal experience are an integral part of his creative mysticism. Vaiṣṇava theology, Caitanya's theory and experience, his new understanding of incarnation especially as expressed in the intense longings of both Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, are all studied by Gerald Carney of Boston College.

Although only indirectly related to our theme of mysticism, Daniel Sheridan of Duquesne University has authored a stimulating article on the state of Indian scholarship. His "India: From Philosophical Analysis to Theological Evaluation" appears in our survey section; it should provoke some response from our readers.

Spiritual search seems the inescapable task of Every Man. By presenting a variety of widely separated approaches to mysticism, our authors and *Journal of DHARMA* hope that we have given brief glimpses of the wondrous breadth of possibilities which lie within man's spiritual realm.

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