

## EDITORIAL

Theistic or monistic, pantheistic or panentheistic, only in some sort of a superhuman experience, the religious man finds his own fulfilment. Whenever the finite encounters the inexhaustibility of the Infinite, it opens up new avenues of religious experience, giving birth to different types of mysticism, all of which, in spite of their distinctive notes, tend to be the expressions of a great converging experience of humanity. Our world of time is so tiny, and the need for transcendence is so great, that from the beginning of history we find men who sought the meaning of their life in transcendence. Whatever be its form, mysticism presupposes man's openness to the other and is based on his inner communication with what he is not, be it defined in positive or negative terms. It is dialogal by nature, which may be a dialogue between **jivatman** and **paramatman**, between man and God, between the finite consciousness and the Infinite consciousness or between the two poles of his own very being characterized by becoming. Implied, therefore, in every type of mysticism, is man's basic call to the beyond and the boundless, uttered in the innermost depth of his being which bears the divine reflection as its very constitutive base.

This primeval communication of the divine uttered from the beginning of creation, ever remains in nature as a vibrating force passing through every bit of earthly existence, be it **cit** or **acit**, matter or spirit. The mystics read this. Thus in the twinkling of the stars as well as in the fluttering of the lilies they see the divine face hiding beneath or the divine foot passing by. Every type of movement, every form of existence become immensely meaningful before the mystics, concealingly revealing the cosmic dimension of divine love, stealthily held in the dim light of the particular.

In this number, the Journal of Dharma tries to shed light on this phenomenon of man's religious experience which is often termed as mystical. Dr. Arabinda Basu, Director of the Aurobindo Research Academy at Pondicherry, opens the discussion with his article on "Spiritual Experience and Integral Realization." He starts with the penetrating question, "Why should there be such a variety of religious experience?" Every experience may have its own self-validity. But the genuine experience, Basu maintains, will certainly change a man, alter his consciousness, and give him a new world-view and a new sense of values. Basu

pursues this thought very logically based on the teachings of Sri Aurobindo Gosh whose admirer and faithful follower he is.

Dr. Kurian T. Kadankavil of Dharmaram College, approaches the problem from the point of view of the Absolute whom he considers the common ground of mysticism, even if one particular type does not express its experience in terms of the Absolute. Analysing the positive content implied in the negative expressions of different mystics such as Buddhist, Vedantist and Christian, Kadankavil concludes that it is in the religio-philosophical expressions of the experience that the Absolute altogether ceases to be an absolute. "Only the Absolute of the mystical experience, 'unphilosophized' and 'unreligionized', can preserve its own character as the common ground and perennial source of inspiration for mysticism."

Often Scriptures play an important role in the awakening of authentic religious experience in man. This is true of all religions. Dr. Jung Young Lee of the University of North Dakota examines this problem in the context of acquiring Zen-enlightenment through the study of Buddhist *sutras*. A careful distinction is made between the intellectual process of understanding reality and the actual possession of it in enlightenment-experience. The enlightenment is the goal; the understanding may be the tool.

It seems that the mental structure of man, without prejudice to Divine operations, is something to be taken into account in a study of mystical experience because mind, rather than the senses, is the locus for deeper personal experience. Dr. Robert Avens of Iona College, U.S.A., following the footsteps of C.G. Jung, finds a richer resource in the unconscious levels of human mind for religious experience. All those who can have a healthy dialogue between the divinely imprinted unconscious and the conscious do practise religion, says Avens. In reality religion derives not only from head and heart, but also from the dialogal psychic structure.

As a continuation and conclusion of this studies on religious experience often at variance with one another, we include in the survey section of this number two articles on the encounter of religions in India. Dr. Thomas Mampra's survey of the encounter between Hinduism and Christianity is actually a historico-theological appraisal of the meeting of these two religions right from the beginning of Christianity up to the contemporary period. Special emphasis is laid on the first encounter of Hinduism with the indigenous Christians of the first century in India, on the

western missionaries who tried to indigenise Christianity at least externally and on the contemporary Hindu and Christian leaders who wanted to work out a deeper synthesis of both.

Following the same line of thought, but as resulting from his own direct experience, Dr. Albert Nambiarampil of the Dialogue Centre, Banaras, analyses the present situation of inter-religious dialogue in India. Himself an organizer of as well as a participant in many inter-religious dialogues and living-together all over India, the insights of Nambiarampil are particularly important insofar as they are the converging testimonies of his own as well as of the other participants of these religious encounters.

With this number of the Journal of Dharma we are introducing a new feature under the title "Discussion Forum." We shall be happy to see that our readers communicate to us their reactions to and remarks about the studies published in this Journal. Mr. Katz's "Response to Ramachandra Rao" is a criticism of Rao's article published in our previous number, (Journal of Dharma, Vol. 1, Nos. 1 & 2, pp. 137-151). This criticism is followed by a "Response to Katz" by Rao himself. We sincerely hope that our readers will find this forum interesting.

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