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REPORTS

Interfaith dialogue on "The Social Visions of Basava and Jesus" organized by The Basava Samithi, The United Theological College, The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society at The United Theological College, Bangalore, India, October 1992

THE EGALITARIAN AND justice-oriented social teachings set forth by Basava and other Saranas of the twelfth century provide a significant resource in our common quest for a just and humane society. Indeed, the Virasaivite or Lingayat tradition of the followers of Basava is a major socio-economic and political force in the Indian state of Karnataka. The Lingayat-Christian Interfaith Dialogue was organized mainly with the expectation that the interaction and exchange of views and concerns would not only be mutually enriching and challenging, but would also give significant impetus to our common struggle for the kind of society expressed in the social visions of Basava and Jesus. Presentations and responses were made by Lingayats and Christians dealing with the social visions of Jesus and Basava, and different aspects of their respective faiths and historical traditions. The basic intention was to quicken and strengthen members of both communities in their struggle for peace and justice.

This was by no means the first interaction of the followers of Basava and Jesus. Indeed, N.C. Sargent, in his study *The Lingayats: The Vira-Saiva Religion* (Bangalore, 1963), observes that "Christianity in Karnataka has drawn on the storehouse of Vira-Saiva literature and devotion. This debt should be more clearly defined and acknowledged" (p.28). While exploration of, and mutual learning from, different egalitarian religious resources are crucial, there is also need for introspective enquiry into the extent to which Lingayats and Christians appropriate the visions of their founders in the contemporary values and structures of their own respective communities. For example, to what extent and how do the hierarchical and unjust values of caste operate within each of the communities? Subsequent dialogues are planned.

David C. Scott
Bangalore

Abhishiktananda Society's Retreat-Seminar: Śakti and Pneuma. The second Retreat-Seminar organized by the Abhishiktananda Society, Bangalore, 2-7 December 1993

ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE participants from various Hindu and Christian backgrounds participated and contributed, each in their own way, to making this meeting a rich experience and authentic sharing.

Mahaswamiji Dr Shivamurthy Shiva-charya, who hosted our meeting, gave a warm welcome address on the context of Hindu-Christian dialogue, which was

followed by an introduction to the topic by the President of the Abhishiktananda Society (Bettina Bäumer) on the points of convergence and divergence of these two "concepts". Dr D.P. Pattanayak presented a comprehensive paper on "Śakti in Popular Perception", tracing the history of the Śakti cult in India. The New Testament conception of Pneuma or the Holy Spirit

was presented by Sr Sara Grant (St John) and Fr Lucien Legrand (St Paul), Fr Leonard Fernando spoke on Pnuma in the Fathers of the Church, and Fr Sebastian Painadath on the Spirit in Meister Eckhart.

Apart from textual and historical studies, the artistic and iconographical aspects were also presented (illustrated with slides); thus Dr R. Nagaswamy gave an exhaustive survey of the symbolism and iconography of Śakti, supported by archaeological findings and literary sources; and Jyoti Sahi spoke on the iconography of the Holy Spirit, starting from the Old Testament symbolism and giving examples from medieval illuminations and icons, especially of the Pentecost event. This was complemented from another popular tradition by a paper by Dr Cornelia Vogelsanger on the Black Madonna in Christian Europe, from an anthropologist's point of view.

In relation to the living embodiment of Śakti in Hinduism, Dr Bithika Mukerji presented the example of Sri Ma Anandamayi ("The Manifestation of Śakti as sādhana in the Life of Sri Mā Anandamayi").

The Kashmir Śaiva conception of Śakti was presented by Bettina Bäumer and Pandit Jankinath Kaul (read by Swami Nityananda Giri *in absentia*), which gave the metaphysical background as well as the mysticism of the Kuṇḍalinī.

Fr David Fleming presented the paper by Prof. C.-A. Keller on "The Perception of Energy in Hinduism and Christianity" (*in absentia*) which attempts a direct comparison.

At the centre of the seminar was a presentation of a selection of Swami Abhishiktananda's writings on the subject of Spirit and Śakti, prepared by Odette Baumer, James Stuart, Fr G. Gispert-Sauch and B. Bäumer. In fact, it was his experience and synthesis which inspired the topic of the seminar.

Apart from the papers and discussions, there were times of shared silent meditation, recitation and bhajans related to the topic of the seminar, as well as pūjā and liturgy. In commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of Swami Abhishiktananda's death a public lecture on him was delivered by Swami Nityananda Giri on 5 December, followed by a screening of the film "Swamiji - an interior journey".

The exchange was open and enriching, and certain unexpected insights emerged, crossing over the apparent barriers of religions. It is planned to bring out the papers in book form as a contribution to inter-religious studies.

Bettina Bäumer
Varanasi

The Contemporary Christian Contribution to Indian Philosophy. Report of the seminar held at Madras, jointly organized by the Satya Nilayam Research Institute, Madras, and the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, Delhi. 1-3 March 1994

INDIAN PHILOSOPHY DOES not necessarily mean only Hindu philosophy. It includes, among other things, also the contributions of Christian, Muslim and tribal communities. This symposium focused on Christian thinkers.

Fourteen Christian thinkers were invited to present papers and an equal number of

Hindu scholars were asked to respond to them. It was the first time, as admitted by its Chairman, that the ICPR sponsored such a program of Hindu-Christian dialogue at the University level, and it intends to continue such a dialogue from different points of view. Prof. K. Satchidananda Murty delivered the keynote address and

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Prof. M.M. Thomas presided over the inaugural function.

The contribution itself was grouped under three headings: a) Christian publications on the traditional Hindu systems of philosophy; b) Christian reflections on interfaith dialogue, Indian Christian theology, hermeneutics, acculturation and so on; and c) the Christian contribution in

terms of social concerns. What is significant in this symposium is the openness and freedom with which this Hindu-Christian dialogue could take place specifically on the Christian contribution to Indian philosophy.

Anand Amaladass, S.J.
Madras

The Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom

THE INTER FAITH Network for the United Kingdom and its affiliated organizations marked 1993 - the International Year of Interreligious Understanding and Co-operation - with the publication of a code of conduct for encouraging and strengthening interfaith relationships.

Members of the Network have also produced a consultative document on Mission, Dialogue and Interreligious Encounter which examines the nature of "mission" and "dialogue" in the context of a religiously plural society. The 15-page document includes the "code of conduct".

In another project, the Inter Faith Network has joined with The University of

Derby's Religious Resource and Research Centre to compile a multi-faith directory of religions in the U.K. The directory, containing some 4000 entries, covers Baha'is, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs and Zoroastrians.

The Directory may be ordered from Multi-Faith Directory, Religious Resource and Research Centre, University of Derby, Mickleover DE3 5GX. Mailing address of The Inter Faith Network for the U.K. is 5-7 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9SS, U.K.

Shirley Embra
Victoria

The Parliament of the World's Religions

FROM 28 AUGUST to 5 September 1993 more than 6000 people gathered in Chicago, Illinois, to celebrate the centennial of the World's Parliament of Religions held in that city one hundred years before.

Between the opening session, introduced by Dr Diana Eck, with a stirring keynote address by Robert Muller, former Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, and the closing remarks of the Dalai Lama, the days were filled with a dizzying array of some 750 wide-ranging program choices. They were in the form of lectures,

symposia, panel discussions, workshops, plenary sessions and cultural performances. Special meetings paid tribute to Swami Vivekananda as the first monk from India to bring the message of Vedanta to the West, and to the late Dom Bede Griffiths, "Visionary Guide and Universal Saint".

Regardless of the topic, two underlying themes were repeatedly given urgent voice: the need to protect humanity's home, the Earth, and the need for us to live together peacefully amid growing religious and cultural diversity.

While these themes usually raised more questions and problems than answers, the sessions on Pluralism attempted to identify key issues involved. Participants heard from Raimundo Panikkar, who spoke on religious identity, Archbishop Samuel Ruis Garcia of Chiapas, Mexico, who reflected on the nature of religious conflict, and Sayyed Hossein Nasr whose topic was "Religion, Particularity, Universality and Globality". The subject for the concluding panel of distinguished scholars was "Our Religions in a Religiously Plural World".

Prior to the Parliament, the planning Council commissioned a "global ethic" document which was to have been proclaimed on the last day. The document, drafted by Hans Kung, who engaged in two years of consultation among more than two hundred scholars and theologians, was approved by the Board of Trustees after some modification. However, when it came time to endorse it at the Parliament, some Assembly members had problems with the wording, chiefly on philosophical and theological grounds. As a result, the members were invited to sign their affirmation in their own names. The document, entitled "Toward a Global Ethic, an Initial Declaration", was read at a large

outdoor public gathering on the final night of the Parliament.

Although this Parliament was indeed historic, the steady effort, often unheralded, to promote interreligious dialogue and collaboration that led up to it should not be overlooked. A selection of reports and declaration excerpts from many such interfaith activities, including the February 1993 New Delhi Congress of the Interreligious Federation for World Peace which inaugurated the centenary celebration of the 1893 Chicago Parliament, is contained in *A SourceBook for the Community of Religions* available from The SourceBook Project, 1039 Calvin SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506 U.S.A. The SourceBook was compiled especially for the Parliament and covers many of the issues and concerns that were raised.

Most of the proceedings of the Parliament are on audiotape and listed in a catalogue. For information contact Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, P.O.Box 1630, Chicago IL 60690-1630, U.S.A. Tel. 312-629-2990; Fax 312-269-2991.

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