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## Book Review: "A Report on Transnational and National Cultural Processes"

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What remains unclear are Thangaraj's expectations regarding the character of Christian mission *after* it has been transformed through interreligious exchange. Will not eschatological mutuality require Christians to rethink matters of fundamental theology? If Christian thinking about God will be transformed through dialogue, can

that theological shift lead to further, more exhaustive reconfigurations of Christian mission? Thangaraj leaves us eager to hear more about the implications of his creative and ground-breaking theological work.

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***Meeting Rivers: A Report on Transnational and National Cultural Processes.*** Lennart Svensson (Ed.). Lund: Lund University Press, 1997, 149 pp.

**THIS EDITED VOLUME** is the fifth in the *Lund Studies in Education Series*. The interest of the authors of the eight chapters in this volume is in cultural flows on two levels: the transnational flows between northern Europe and India, and flows between regions or cultures within India. While this is the purported theme of the volume, they address elements of culture from their own expertise and interests. In doing so the authors recognize that cultural flows do not move in one direction only, but that there is a mutuality of influence with elements of different cultures influencing each other. Thus the title of the study, *Meeting Rivers*, a metaphor meant to capture the ideas of flow and mutual influence.

The authors recognize that culture is a complex phenomenon, defying easy definition. The emphasis in the chapters is, therefore, not on the flow of culture as a whole, but on specific cultural elements, in this case, language, education, and religion. In his contribution on "Global and Intercultural Relations", D. P. Pattanayak uses the interaction between English and Indian languages to argue for a healthy or fruitful transnationalism. He sees the key to unity as the recognition of different entities, not homogenization, as some would have it.

Giving recognition to different identities, respecting the differing is the only way to ensure national cohesion in a multilingual pluricultural country. It is neither uniformization nor homogenization, but structural incorporation of elements which leads to harmonious

relation among them" (28).

Jennifer Bayer supports Pattanayak's view in her article on "Language and Culture in India". Her emphasis is on complementarity between the use of English and regional languages. She argues that the interaction is enriching for those who specialize in both their own regional languages and English, but not enriching for those who specialize in English alone.

Birgit Rodhe in her contribution on "Indian Policies on Education" attempts both an overview of educational policies since independence as well as a brief commentary on the current situation in India. The basis for her treatment is the directive principle of the Constitution, which holds out the elusive goal of education for all children till the age of fourteen. The author points out that this goal has proved to be an elusive one and asks why. She argues that it is not so much poverty or lack of resources, but belief systems that continue to support discrimination against the poor or lower classes in education. She suggests that the goal of universal education for children can only be met through a creative mix of traditional and modern pedagogy, and more varied schools which would include aspects of the modern, private, and indigenous systems.

Two chapters deal with religion, Birgit and Sten Rodhe's treatment of "The Lingayats of Karnataka" and Sten Rodhe's chapter on "The Encounter of Christianity and Hinduism". The treatment of the Lingayats is presented as an example of

cultural flow within India. The Rodhes provide an account of the history of the Lingayat movement in Karnataka, the beliefs and codes of conduct within the Lingayat movement, the relationship of the movement to the majority Hindu culture, the fortunes of the early egalitarian impulses of the movement, and the current emphasis on education among Lingayats in Karnataka. Overall, the treatment has more to do with education than with religion. On the other hand the focus of Sten Rodhe's chapter on the encounter between Hinduism and Christianity, featuring the development of Shantivanam under Jules Monchanin and his successors, investigates the business of inculturation in the area of religion. Through the brief discussion we get a glimpse of the dream of inclusivism in Jules Monchanin, the synthesis attempted by Henri Le Saux, and the complementarity preferred by Bede Griffiths.

If one expects in the various chapters of this volume a thoroughgoing analysis of the

complexity of culture, approaches to cultural analysis, and issues such as inculturation and culture flows, the reader is bound to be disappointed. Other than acknowledging the complexity of culture and offering two brief definitions of culture, the editor and authors offer little by way of theoretical analysis. On the other hand, there are useful, albeit undeveloped suggestions that are pertinent to interreligious dialogue in general and Hindu-Christian dialogue in particular. For example, it seems to me that Pattanayak's definition of true transnationalism, and Bayer's comments on complementarity are relevant to the discussion of the place of religious minorities in India. Such proposals added to the insights on the attempt at inculturation of Shantivanam provided by Sten Rodhe provide useful material for further thought in the area of Hindu-Christian Studies.

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***Hindu Wisdom for all God's Children.*** Francis X. Clooney, SJ. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998, xiv + 144 pp.

**THERE IS SOMETHING** very strange about an American-born Indian, trained by non-Indian American indologists, reviewing a book by an American-born American indologist about Hinduism for a Christian audience! It should not be surprising, though, when we remember who the author of the book is: Francis Clooney. Clooney is among a small group of scholars who have succeeded in crossing over many boundaries (some artificial and some real) between Hindu and Christian, between scholar of religion and religious scholar, and between the philosophical and the theological. His ability to do so is clearly evident in his *Hindu Wisdom for all God's Children*, yet another one of Clooney's successful experiments in comparative theology.

It is also not surprising that Clooney follows the trajectory that he established in his *Theology after Vedanta* and his *Seeing*

*through Texts*. The methodology that Clooney employs in these books is reminiscent of oral commentaries that are a large part of the pedagogical environment of many *mathas* in India today and in the past. To this end, Clooney closely examined portions of Hindu texts and commented on them when needed. In his *Hindu Wisdom*, then, he does the same. He thus walks his reader through a variety of texts and teaches the reader to approach them "as a lover, to caress, lick, smell, and savor the words on the page, and to return to them ever and again" by means of helpful comments and interpretative strategies.<sup>1</sup> Clooney asks his readers to learn to become, at least for the time being, virtuoso religious readers in training – to open themselves up to the religious wisdom of South Asia – of Hinduism, and for the Christians to use this wisdom to increase their own abilities to