White (shveta) and Black (krishna or kajala) have been considered primary colours (shuddha varna) in all the Shiva texts. These two conspicuous additions to the Indian list are missing in the primary colours as we know them today. We must remember that the light oriented conception of pure colours is essentially a contribution of modern science. The ancient Indian concept has been pigment oriented.

For obtaining white pigments (dhavala) oyster shells, conch shells or white clay are ground and mixed with gum from the neem tree or kapittha. Another recipe is to finely pulverise lime dust (sudha), mix it with the juice of the keravala fruit, grind and levigate it. According to the Kashyapa Shilpa, there are four types of white: shveta, the colour of pearl, shukla, the colour of the conch shell, dhavala, the colour of silver or milk and avadata, that of a star. Even the distinctive shades of white have been enumerated upon, such as, ivory white, foam white, champak white, karni kara white etc. These calcareous pigments, be they from sea shells, egg shells, oyster shells, bones and so on, were used extensively in the West too, since they did not darken on exposure when used in water colours.

Krishna and kajala are the Sanskrit equivalents for Black. The most common source of black has been the household pigment known as ‘lamp-black’ used as a collyrium applied in the eyes, both for medicinal and decorative purposes. It is prepared by placing an earthen pot over an oil wick. The fine black deposits are then collected and used as a pigment. The Kashyapa Shilpa mentions the distinctive characteristics of four shades of black: kala - black of clouds, shama - colour of the forest crow, kala - that of the peacock and krishna - colour of the wing of the black crow.

Today, we have synthetic forms of both black and white pigments. However, some modern white pigments get discoloured when exposed to the atmosphere.

We have so far, covered, in our previous issues, Indian Yellow, Ultramarine, Verdigris, Red Lead and Red Ochre. In this our last issue of the year, we thought it appropriate to deal with the primary colours, White and Black, which are normally considered insignificant. We do hope you enjoyed our ‘Colourscape’.

-Anupam Sah-
Final Year Student of Conservation,
National Museum Institute, New Delhi.
Illustration: Ripin Kalra

The symbol above is taken from an original design laid in terrazzo (mosaic) flooring at The Brotherhood of the Ascended Christ in Delhi. It was designed by Ayesha Jacob and laid over twenty years ago. The basic pastoral form is created by overlapping two axes as practiced by the Greeks and also used in Bengali apsara patterns. The fish is the traditional symbol representing Jesus Christ. The conch or universal symbol of sound beckons the worshipper. The two feet are those of the worshipper, who is inspired by the symbols of Christ and follows The Way.

THE EYE NO. 6. VOL. 1. NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1992
6 MYSTICISM
Father Gispert Sauch, S.J.

10 THE TEMPLE OF ALL GODS
Paolo Quirce

11 BIBLICAL MYSTICISM
T.S. Ananthu

13 CHRISTIAN MYSTICS A BRIEF LOOK
Dr. Gispert Sauch, S.J.

15 THE INWARD GAZE
Gesti Chandra

24 MYTH-DENIAL OF THE FEMININE
Malcolm Baldwin

27 DESIGNING SPACES
Jyoti Sathi

30 THE HOME OF THE ALTAR

32 THE MUSICAL OFFERING OF BACH
Paolo Quirce

38 BLACK AMERICAN SPIRITUALS
Sara Siryker

40 THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF ABHISHEKIT ANANDA
Obote Bonner Despeigne

43 A CHRISTIAN ADVAITIN
Rev. J.D M. Stuart

45 HOMO ECONOMICUS
Krishna Chaitanya

49 INTERVIEW WITH HELENA NORDBERG HODGE
Rukmini Sekhar

53 VASANT THAKAR MEMORIES OF A GURU
Poornima Rat

54 PANCHATANTRA

59 MA’AMING IS MAIMING
Rukmini Sekhar

60 THE DEVELOPMENT SET
Ross Coggins

61 BOOK REVIEW
Dear Editor,

I happened to be visiting Pune in December '92, when there was tension everywhere, violence sparking off violence in many parts of the country and the feeling of communal harmony and mutual trust touching a new low. It was then that I had an unforgettable experience. Hariprasad Chaurasia and Zakir Hussain together, enthralled an audience of nearly ten thousand music lovers assembled at the New English School in the early morning hours of December eleventh, nineteen ninety two. Exactly five days after one of the greatest communal eruptions in this country. The strains of music created by the coming together of two faiths was such a torrentially powerful manifestation of harmony that even a mere utterance of the word religion would have been out of tune. What they both achieved was perhaps longer lasting than many political sadbhavana rallies. I was reminded about the fact that the one time most popular bhajan, 'Mantarpit Hari darshan ko aaj', from the film, 'Balju Bawra' was written, composed and sung by a Muslim.

Subhash Godbole,
Jamalpur Gymkhana,
Jamalpur - 811214.

With futile hands we seek to gain
Our inaccessible desire,
Diviner summits to attain,
With faith that sinks and feet that tire
But nought shall conquer or control
The heaven and hunger of our soul.

Sarojini Naidu.
Mysticism is the highest meeting point of all religions. It seems particularly relevant to talk about it today, in the violent context of clash which reveals in the petty individualism of religions. It seems strange that mysticism, which is at the heart of religion is not even conceded as a remote possibility of uniting all faiths.

We have seen how our politicians, archetypal religious heads and heads of industry and defence enjoy a short period of glory in historical time, mainly because very few of them have been able to touch the soul of man. It is not so with the mystics of history. Humanity turns to them again and again to draw nourishment from their vision and their capacity to feed the hungry soul of man, ever wandering to understand better, the meaning of life.

Christ was such a mystic. In this issue on mysticism in Christianity, we have attempted to understand the power of this towering personality, who inspired so much of humanity, in particular, the mystics. From their intense communication with Christ was born the courage to fight established creed and dogma, even readying themselves to be condemned for heresy.

From the pinnacle of their mystical ecstasy, issued forth excellence. The contribution of Christian mystics towards art, literature, ecological wisdom, philosophy of science and activism in society as well as humanism, needs no reiteration. Their lives, led in utter simplicity, are in themselves examples of the sincerity of their search.

Christianity came to India with St. Thomas who landed on the Malabar coast. Since then, the faith has flourished here, growing from and giving to the land of its adoption. One of the more recent and more profound examples of the perfect merging of the mystical dimensions of Christianity and Hinduism is Henri Le Saux or Swami Abhishiktamanda. Equally powerful is the similarity one sees in the mysticism of the Bible and Indian mystics.

All of us cannot become a Meister Eckhart or Francis of Assisi. Yet, each one of us can experience the mystical provided we remove ourselves from the culture of indulgence and instant gratification and look at the wisdom beyond the veil.
The person and life of Jesus Christ has attracted people from several different faiths. The celebration of Christmas and the symbols of Christianity are widespread. Is only history responsible for this—history including in itself the Christian missionary movement and the impact of Western colonialism acting as a vehicle for Christian culture?

When one looks at the religions of the world and their projections of divine attributes through deities, prophets and saints, we find qualities of joy, transcendence, power and protection. But not the tremendous symbol of suffering and sacrifice that Christ became. Human suffering. A link between man and God—his own transcendent nature.

Though the life of Christ carries the message of the magic of his birth and the miracles during his teachings, the martyrdom, 'Passion' and sacrifice of his trial and crucifixion far outweigh the other aspects. 'Passion' is really the intensity of his mystical communion and leads on to the transcendence of his resurrection. An old traditional song carries this message in its simple, yet dramatic refrain:

- They crucified my Lord, and He never said a mumbling word, not a word, not a word.
- They nailed Him to a tree, and He never said a mumbling word, not a word, not a word.
- They pierced Him at the sides, and He never said a mumbling word, not a word, not a word.
- He bowed His head and died, and He never said a mumbling word, not a word, not a word.

Silence......silence and suffering. Suffering in silence. Silence here is not a sign of weakness, a refusal to participate in protest and confrontation. It is rather a manifestation of the transcendent element that accompanies us through trials. By realising its silent presence and taking recourse to it, the negative experience of suffering in and around all of us can be transmuted to strength used for our own process of evolution.

So can we say that the Christ symbol connotes all this and is, in fact, that element of transmuting strength we can find in our daily lives—in our relationships with people, occupation and activity, in art, in nature, in religion and spirituality and in Christ?

AKHILA GHOSH
MYSTICISM

FATHER GISPERT SAUCH, SJ.

Jesus said:
I am the light that spread over everybody.
I am the Whole
The Whole comes out from Me
And the Whole comes back in Me.
Cut some wood: I am there.
Lift a stone, you will find Me there.

The trite opener of any speaker on mysticism is that mysticism begins with myst and ends with schism. There is some reason for the joke: the mystics have often enough clashed with what we may call the mainstream of religion. Not rarely have they been condemned for causing division and/or schism in the body religious. And the meaning of mysticism is certainly obscure for many people, it is ‘mystic’—it lacks the clarity of formal theology.

The joke is in fact paradoxical, for the language of the mystics often speaks of a new light, a greater clarity that hovers above the level of the conceptual and to which one is introduced by divine assistance and/or the development of special techniques. There is, of course, a discourse of darkness, the famous ‘dark nights,’ within the mystical tradition: but this is either a passing stage or one side of a richer experience that is suffused by a wonderful light. The paradox is sharpened when we remember that mystics always stressed on unity, the oneness of the cosmos, rather than division, so much so that they are suspected of denying distinctions. If there is any point where religions seem to meet it is precisely at the heights of mysticism: in the life of the spirit it is the mountain tops that converge even when there are differences at the base. Schism goes against the thrust of mysticism.

If there is any point where religions seem to meet it is precisely at the heights of mysticism: in the life of the spirit it is the mountain tops that converge even when there are differences at the base. Schism goes against the thrust of mysticism.

Christian theology has developed its own understanding of mysticism, even though there is no complete agreement. Conservative Protestantism is generally distrustful of the mystical tradition: it thinks that it derives more from Greek sources (especially Plato and Plotinus) than from the Bible, and finds that monistic trends in mysticism contradict the Biblical view of God. The Catholic and the Orthodox traditions are more comfortable with mysticism. Herbert Fische defines it as ‘a consciousness of the experience of uncreated grace as revelation and self-communication of the trine God’ (Sacramentum Mundi, 4, 137). This is a heavily theological definition. Sisir Kumar Ghosh in his excellent article in the Encyclopedia Britannica is simpler. ‘The essence of mysticism is the assertion of an intuition that transcends the
temporal categories of understanding” (Macropedia). But he is perhaps too philosophical. The Micropedia calls it “a spiritual quest for hidden truth or wisdom, the goal of which is union with the divine.”

As mentioned earlier, the mystics have often lived in tension with the established religions and seem to go against it. Yet, they are the heart of religion, even if at times they appear as dissenters. A religion can be compared to a flower with at least four main petals, all beautiful in themselves: the first is the petal of a community that is united by a common ideal; then the petal of a creed or the belief system, often expressed in scriptures and other forms of teaching; third, the petal of a code of ethical conduct, which establishes the right norms of human behaviour in the world; finally there is a system of cult, worship, meditation, ceremonies, symbolism, that expresses externally the actual relation to the Beyond. There may be other petals or leaves of secondary importance even if at times quite visible, for instance, religious art and poetry...But at the heart of the flower, at its centre, the meeting point, as it were, is the calyx, out of which all petals emerge and from which they receive life: the mystical element of religion. The calyx is at times hidden, at times quite visible. It appears different from the petals, but it is always the source of their life and of the life of the flower. The bees suck the honey there.

Some have sought the source of the Christian mystic tradition in Greek philosophy. And it is true that the early Christian mystics did often use the language of Plato, Stoicism, and specially Plotinus with his stress on the mysterious and nameless One, above Being, at the center of the Universe. But in reality, the Christian mystics derive more from the experience of Jesus than from any philosophy.

The mystical tradition has spoken of two main types of union of the human with the divine: the bridal and the servant relationship (cf. Nacada Bhakti Sutras: nityodasa, nityakantaka). Union with the Divine is like the love and attitude of the disciple for the master, or like that of the bride for the bridegroom. Jesus’s own relation to God is often explained in the New Testament as that of the Servant of God. But he himself uses preferably a third metaphor which for him articulates a deeper experience of Reality: he is the Son, God is his Father, his Abba, his Bapu. This consciousness of boldly relating to the divine Mystery as Father is central to the Christian mystics.

To the Indian mind, at home in the philosophy of advaita, this expression of Christian mysticism may look banal, if not strange. For a mind immersed in the Biblical tradition with its strong sense of individuality and creaturiness, the affirmation that ‘the Father and I are one,’ recognising duality and yet stressing unity, is astonishing and extremely fertile. Generally, the Christian tradition will speak of union rather than oneness. However mystics do not quibble over words and Eckhart, of the German tradition, will exclaim, ‘The knower and the known are one. God and I, we are one in knowledge. There is no distinction between us!’ In Jesus this strong sense of union with the Father was linked to a deep bhakti and to a sense of being sent by God. His life was the fruit of his mysticism.

The Christian mystic does not in general think he or she can have exactly the same experience as Jesus. She or he will be rather ‘one in the Son’ or ‘in Christ’ as St Paul puts it, or a ‘partner of the divine nature’ in the words of a later Biblical writer.

Mystical Prayer

Mystical theology includes the study of the way the prayer-life of the mystics develops. Not every form of prayer is ‘mystical’. A mental affirmation ‘I and God are one’ does not, of course, make one a mystic. Mysticism is not, strictly speaking, a spiritual achievement. It is a new consciousness that bursts out in the heart of the mystic: they themselves will speak of a gift of the Spirit, of a grace ‘infused’ from Beyond or emerging from the very heart of one’s own existence where the Divine is hidden. At any rate it is as gift in a deeper sense than life itself is a gift. To enter into this consciousness is beyond our naked powers.

The Spanish mystics, especially John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila in the 16th century, speak of the early stages of prayer, like meditation on the life of Jesus or on the qualities of God, as a preparation for mysticism. If one continues in this prayer the moment comes when one cannot think any more and meditation is impossible. One enters into the ‘prayer of quiet’, of remaining in the divine presence: this is the threshold of mystical prayer.

From now onwards one speaks of infused prayer, wherein one feels an ‘active passivity’ in relation to the Divine. The place of one’s union with
God is no longer the mind, but something beyond, the ‘subtle point’, or the ‘summit’, or the ‘inmost depth’, or the ‘centre’ of the soul. These are various metaphors for that level of experience where mental activity is bound and a new consciousness bursts forth. But this experience cannot be expressed. It is love and knowledge, joy and sadness, darkness and light, the darkness of holy ignorance, to use the expression of a fifth-century Syrian monk normally called Pseudo-Dionysius or Denys the Areopagite. At this stage, all light, all feeling of joy springs from the deepest source of the person. But also at this level, St. John of the Cross speaks of the ‘Dark Nights’ the Night of the Sense and the Night of the Spirit.

The first takes place at the threshold of the Ascent, when the ‘prayer of quiet’ begins. The soul and its inner senses find no relish, no consolation or rest, either in the things of this world or in God. It is a stage of aridity. But it is God’s gift, and its fruit is a deep freedom and detachment. The Dark Night of the spirit comes later, when the soul almost reaches the summit, at the entrance of the ‘Transforming Union’ or ‘Spiritual Marriage’ or, in the language also used by St. Teresa, the ‘Seventh Mansion’ of the Castle. In this Dark Night one experiences not only aridity but a lack of joy, a strong inclination to despair, a sense of being forsaken or abandoned, a total inability to pray. And yet St. John of the Cross says:

‘This blessed night, though it darkens the mind, does so only to give light to everything; and though it humbles it and makes it miserable, it does so only to raise it up and set it free; and though it impoverishes it, and empties it of all its natural self and liking, it does so only to enable it to reach forward divinely to the possession and fruition of all things’.

Its outcome is that, in spite of the trial, one experiences a deeper light and a deep sense of security because one’s life is no longer built on one’s own achievement but on the abiding presence and reliability of God himself. God then leads the mystic to the ‘Spiritual Marriage’ characterised by great serenity (the samprasad of the Chhadiya Upanishad), total intimacy and indissoluble bonding.

**Mysticism of Nature**

Not all mystics are so introvert and analytical of their inner experience or so austere in their spirituality. Some of them, especially the English mystics of the 18th and 19th century, stress the relatedness to the cosmos, a new awareness of a communion and even oneness with nature. Nature is not just matter, it is infused with life and with the luminosity of the divine, and so it is experienced as an epiphany, or the outer body of the Infinite Reality. And one is part and parcel of this divine epiphany.

The ecstasy of Tagore in the garden of his home belongs to this type. So does the experience of an Australian mystic as given in a separate box.

**Mysticism of Action**

The Christian mystical life is strongly biased towards an affirmation of the world and of life. This physical and human world that has been fashioned by the love of God is not evil nor is it maya except in so far as it may make us forget the Fullness of being beyond it. Life must be not only protected and defended, but also affirmed and furthered. Human action, as the Gita teaches, is a commitment of the mystic to, and a participation in, the stupendous activity of nature and of history.

Ignatius of Loyola is an outstanding mystic of action. For him mysticism was ‘finding God in all things’, which for him meant not merely to be reminded of God by the things of this world, or even to experience the divine presence in them, but rather to see all things as a divine gift, embodying a stupendous Divine activity which calls for our self-gift and active commitment. Mysticism thus meant for St. Ignatius, entering into the movement of history, becoming sensitive to its directions of positive growth and of negative decay, and freely furthering the movement that leads to greater unity. God is found not so much by withdrawal as by commitment, and all forms of prayer are only a means to find God in all our activity, even if we know that God is always ‘Beyond’. This stress on history and action derives from the central Christian belief in the Incarnation and the life of Jesus Christ.

Teilhard de Chardin, the famous scientist-mystic, was a disciple of Ignatius of Loyola. He distinguishes three kinds of mysticism: the vertical one, stressing the union of God and the
soul; the \textit{horizontal} mysticism of oneness of the individual with the universe; and the \textit{oblique} mysticism of entering the Divine through the 'earth'. He integrated this mysticism into the mysticism of science as evolution in which he was a firm believer. In the evolution of the Universe he saw the imprint of

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{mysticism_diagram.png}
\end{center}

Jesus Christ whom he interpreted as the ultimate Omega point. For him life and history were not only a \textit{noogenesis} (production of mind), but a \textit{Christogenesis}, a birth of Christ. This view permeates all his writings, specially \textit{The Divine Milieu} and \textit{The Phenomenon of Man}. It has often been compared to the mysticism and philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. Happold has described Teilhard's mysticism as 'springing from the inspiration of a universe seen as moved and compensated by God in the totality of its evolution.... This is essentially a new type of mysticism, the result of a profound, life-long, reconciling meditation on religious and scientific truth; and it is of immense relevance and significance for the scientific age such as ours.'

These words were written in 1975. They should not make us forget however that Teilhard's approach to mysticism was not primarily intellectual but experiential, existential and action-oriented (Ursula King). Twenty years later this form of mysticism has taken yet another shape. It comes to expression very powerfully in the work of Pedro Arrupe, the Jesuit Superior General who at times came into conflict with the Vatican. He is not the only example of this tendency: it inspires much of Liberation Theology. It sees

the evolution of the divine action in history not merely as a growth towards an ultimate perfection, but also as a struggle against injustice. This line of mysticism is profoundly inspired by the Liberator God of the Bible. It also draws constantly from a close contact with the suffering peoples of the world.

If in Teilhard's mysticism, science and religion are integrated, in the Liberation mysticism the concrete history of humanity, including its class struggle and the search for equality and the fullness of life, are the place where the Divine is experienced most intensely.

This does not mean that there is no place in the world for contemplative life. Gustavo Gutierrez speaks of drinking from our own wells as a metaphor of the need of the mystic 'activist' to be in contact with the depth of Being. Already Teilhard had used a beautiful simile: 'If we were as perceptive of the invisible light of thunderclouds, lightning and the rays of the sun, pure people would seem to us as active in this world by the very fact of their purity as the snowy summits whose peaks continually absorb for us the destructive currents of the atmosphere' (H. de Lubac, \textit{Catholicisme}).

In fact the mystics have found in their deep experiences enormous resources to influence world history. They offer us models of a richer humanity after which men and women pattern themselves. They inspire ever newer forms of generosity. This is clearly shown nowadays by the influence of a Mother Teresa in her environment - in the Church, in the country, indeed in the world. This was the theme of a famous study by Henri Bergson early this century, \textit{The Two Sources of Morality and Religion}. In fact, although we read with profit the writings of the mystics (when they leave any), mystics influence others less by what they say or write than by what they are.

Mysticism is a source of life. Mystics are needed in this world of ours. As for religions, mysticism ensures that they do not degenerate. It prevents the petal of cult from drying up into ritualism and empty routine; it gives sap to the petal of code so that ethics do not degenerate into legalism; it eases the petal of creed from its tendency to overgrow into unbridled dogmatism and fundamentalism; it helps the community petal from taking on the monstrous shape of communalism. In contact with the mystical core, communities are shining sacraments embracing the whole of humanity and affirming the Oneness of life. Creeds become expressions of the deep joy discovered in Truth; codes inspire a life of love and goodness that transforms the behaviour of people; and cult becomes the celebration of life, in ever richer creativity and beauty.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Illustrations: Ripin Kalra.}
\end{center}
THE TEMPLE OF ALL GODS

TRANSITION FROM 'PAGAN' TO CHRISTIAN

PAOLO QUIRCIO

In Southern Italy, on the Adriatic coast, there is a small convent with a beautiful Romanesque church, called 'St. John in Venus'. This odd match between one of the great saints of the Christian tradition and the so-called 'pagan' goddess of love, Venus, is easily explained, since the site where the church stands was once a Roman temple dedicated to Venus. Building Christian churches on the same location of the demolished 'pagan' temples often using the very same building material, was a very common practice in the early centuries of Christianity. Sometimes, the temple was not destroyed; it only changed its name, like the Pantheon (The Temple Of All Gods) in Rome, which became The Church of All Saints.

It is commonly believed that the transition from the Roman religion to Christianity was swift and smooth. But, as you know, history books are written by victors. So the Roman Church, which was built on the debris of the fallen Empire, and which held a complete monopoly over culture for at least fifteen centuries is rather circumspect about revealing the details of its transformation from religious authority to secular ruling power.

In the beginning, approximately till the 7th-8th centuries, opposition to conversion from 'paganism' to Christianity was rather strong. What could not be obtained by persuasion, therefore, was achieved through absorption.

The religious festivals are good examples. No one knows the exact birthday of Jesus, so it was fixed on the 25th December, two days after the winter solstice, which was the day the Romans used to dedicate to Sol Optimus, a deity very popular from the time of Constantine, who was a devout worshipper himself. Passover was a Jewish holiday in memory of their escape from slavery in Egypt. It became Easter, the celebration of Jesus's death and resurrection. The last days of fun before the rigours of Lent, the Carnival, was derived from the Roman festival, Lupercalia, in honour of the wolf (lupa), which adopted Romulus, the founder of Rome. But the roots of this wolf-cult are even more ancient and dates back to the Etruscans of the 9th century BC. Strangely enough, this festival, at a later time, was mixed with the Bacchus cult, the Roman equivalent of the Dionysian one. It maintained, even in the Christian era, the character of a liberating feast, days where everything was allowed, from induced stupor to free sex. Of course, this heritage of the Greco-Roman religion, tolerated only for a few days a year, contributed in giving the Dionysian cult a lusty, orgiastic connotation, taking away from its deeper and more spiritual significance.

These are but the most evident cases of 'contamination'. The Fathers of the Church, the early founders of the Catholic doctrine, adopted many philosophical concepts and several esoteric symbols from what they used to call in contempt, 'paganism'. For many centuries, Christian philosophers divided themselves into Platonists and Aristotelians and to justify this choice, they even declared Aristotle Christianus Naturaliter or 'naturally Christian' though he was not baptised. Pythagoras's numerology, together with the Jewish Cabala of numbers was widely used by St. Bonaventura and other Christians. Dante's *Divine Comedy* is a wonderful example of its use.

This is because certain concepts are universal and belong to all of mankind. The Scandinavian mythological As gods had long, blond hair and the African tribal gods black. Honestly, I believe they are both right.
BIBLICAL MYSTICISM AND MYSTICISM OF OTHER FAITHS

T.S. ANANTHU

It is this 'Word' or Shabdi that is at the heart of mystic experiences. Referred to as anahad nad, nad-e-asmani, akashvani, shabdi dhun, or Simply nam by the yogis, sau-e-sarman by the Sufis, kalam-e-ilahi by the Muslims, surosha by the Zoroastrians, it refers to that Power which is at the base of all creation, is life itself, manifesting itself in all that is living. And yet, this Power remains a mystery because we are unaware of it even though it exists right within us. The Gospel of St. John conveys it thus:

'In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.' (1:4).

'And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.' (1:5).

This Creative Power, Life, Word or anahad shabdi is 'mysterious' to us because we are caught up in the level of 'you-and-I' consciousness, and therefore excluded from access to higher levels of consciousness where this Word gets manifest. This is explained very beautifully in St. Mathew:

'Take no thought for yourselves treasure upon earth, where moth and rust both corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven... For where your treasure is there will your heart also be.' The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thine whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thine whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink: nor yet for your body what ye shall put on. Is not life more than meat and the body more than raiment? (6:25).
MYSTICISM

Note the similarity with Meccabai:

When the mind is disturbed, multiplicity of things is produced, but when the mind is quietened, the multiplicity of things disappear. It is the development of this ability to still the mind that constitutes the practice of mysticism. Kabir described it:

\[ \text{तन निष्ठा, सत सिंह, श्रवण सिंह,} \\
\text{हुल्ल नीस निष्ठा हौँ।} \\
\text{कह कानी इस फलक को,} \\
\text{कन न पाये कोन।} \]

Christ too referred to this process:

'Be still and know that ye are God'.

The ascetic of Jesus to Godhood by this process is described beautifully in the Bible after his baptism (corresponding to ākasha or initiation in our mystical traditions) by John the Baptist, with the 'Spirit descending from heaven like a dove'. It makes Jesus his abode after which the heavens open up to him, and the 'angels of God' ascend and descend upon the Son of God. This corresponds to the mystic's familiarising himself or herself with the secrets of the forces that emanate from the energy levels of each chakra, a process that made Mirabai declare:

\[ \text{वर्णराण तर गुण गयो है,} \\
\text{किंचर नहीं मोहे तनन की।} \]

From the conventional point of view, all this may seem ridiculous. Yet it is possible for each one of us to attain a higher level of consciousness. There are several references in the Bible which point out this possibility: 'Ye are Gods and all of you are children of the most high' (Psalm 82).

To understand Christ's teachings from the mystical perspective, what is called for is a revolution in our notion of the human potential. The real problem is that our 'scientific, rational' mind does not admit the possibility of our access to higher modes of consciousness. The greatest scientists whom we revere today for their discovery of relativity and quantum theories have also shared these 'ridiculous' notions. Einstein wrote:

'A human being is part of the whole, called by us the "universe", a part limited in time and space.' James Jeans writes:

'As it is with light and electricity, so it may be with life; the phenomena may be individuals carrying on separate existences in space and time, while in the deeper reality beyond time and space we may all be members of one body.' Eminent psychologists, such as Carl Rogers and William James acknowledge the same infinite possibility. Carl Rogers writes:

'Perhaps in the coming generation of younger psychologists, hopefully unencumbered by university prohibitions and resistances, there may be a few who will dare to investigate the possibility that there is a lawful reality which is not open to the five senses.

Many Christians have been able to perceive the mystical teachings of Christ. One of them was E.F. Schumacher. He was a devout Catholic, and his quest took the form of meditational practices aimed at making his vision 'single'. He wrote to his fellow Christians: 'Inner work, or Yoga in its many forms is, not a peculiarity of the East, but the tap root, as it were, of all authentic religions. It has been called the applied psychology of religion' and it must be said that religion without applied psychology is completely worthless.'

T.S. Ananthu is an eminent Gandhian worker, and has been associated with the Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, for several years. He has written extensively on Gandhi and his approach to various aspects of society and life, particularly to environment and farming. Ananthu Ji now lives near Bangalore and works the land, aiming to build a settlement of integrated living.
CHRISTIAN MYSTICS
THROUGH THE AGES
A BRIEF LOOK

DR. GISPERT SAUCH, S.J.

“All at once, as it were, out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being”

Alfred Tennyson.

In the Bible, the mysticism of Jesus has to be inferred from a careful study of the Gospels. The Gospel of St. John is a favourite text of mystics. Christian mystics make use of almost all of the Bible, but the Song of Solomon, also called the Canticle of Canticles, with its theme of bridal love is a favourite text. The letters of St. Paul have many passages where mysticism is quite intense.

2. In the first three centuries we have the evidence of the earliest writers who had a sense of union with Jesus Christ as in St. Ignatius, of the union of the risen Christ and the Cosmos as in St. Irenaeus, of the assimilation of God by faith and knowledge as in Clement of Alexandria and the union of Plato and the Bible and the riddle symbolically, as in Origen.

3. At the end of this period, a movement of withdrawal from the world began to evolve, resulting in what is commonly known as the Desert Fathers, chief of whom were, Pachomius and St. Anthony. Soon monasticism became an important trend, finding a great development in Western Europe (St. Benedict and the Benedictine School, where St. Bernard is especially important) as well as in the eastern part of the Roman empire (St. Basil and Macarius). The great theologians of this early Medieval Period were not only a great source of inspiration but played a key role in delineating mystical doctrine. St. Ambrose stressed the value of celibacy and St. Jerome gave importance to the study of the Scriptures. St. Augustine, a great theologian, spoke of union with the Trinity. The three Cappadocians—Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus and St. Basil were greatly influenced by Greek philosophy. Important in the East are also Dionysius the Areopagite, otherwise known as Pseudo-Dionysius who wrote mystical theology as well as Macarius who leads us on to the next trend.

4. An important school in the East, possibly influenced by Yoga and other forms of Eastern mysticism is the Hesychast tradition that started around the fifth century and continues well into the eighteenth (The Way of The Pilgrim). In this trend continues even later. It develops the so-called Prayer of Jesus based on oral and mental japa (repetition of the Name) at the same time, using the rhythm of breathing to finally empty the mind of thought. Diadochus, Gaza and Sinai are the early names. But St. John Climacus also known as John of the Ladder, with his Ladder of The Divine Ascent proved to be the most influential with his stress on the prayer of simplicity. In the tenth century, Symeon, the new theologian emphasised the luminosity of the divine mystery. From the fourteenth century, Greek-Orthodox spirituality stresses the Hesychast trend with St. Gregory of Sinai, St. Gregory of Palamas and Nicholas Cabasilas as its main advocates. The Russian tradition remembers especially St. Sergii of Radonezh in the fourteenth century and St. Seraphim of Sarov in the eighteenth. We know less about Syrian Christian mysticism, but the names of Aphrahat and Ephrem in the fourth century influenced later traditions, including the Syrio-Malabar Church of India. Evagrius and Jacob of Serug in the sixth century and Isaac of Nineveh are considered great mystics.

5. In the West, several schools or traditions emerge and are better known. The Irish-English school produced St. Columba, St. Patrick, St. Julian of Norwich, Walter Hilton, Richard Rolle, etc. The German and Rhineland mystics came closer to Vedanta philosophy. The best known names are, Meister Eckhart, Tauler, Henri Suso, Ruybroek, Boehme and Hildegard of Bingen. The Italian tradition remembers the poet-mystic, Dante, Catherine of Siena and Catherine of Genoa. And of course, the beginning of the Franciscan tradition with St. Francis, St. Clare, Bonaventure and so on. The Spanish tradition has great founders and reformers: St. Dominic, St. Ignatius Loyola, St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. Finally, in more recent centuries, the French school shot into prominence with Francis Sales and his friend, St. Jeanne de Chantal. Also, St. Vincent de Paul, who was an inspi
of works of charity and St. Terese of Lisieux who developed early this century, 'the little way of spiritual infancy'. And, very much more recently, Teilhard De Chardin, who
developed a science-mysticism. One is aware that many traditions and names may have been missed, including mystical traditions in Protestantism and the modern time. The above brief record
merely illustrates the wealth that mystics in the past have bequeathed us.
(A few better known of the above mystics have been dealt with individually in later pages)

THE FISH

FABIO GATTI

The Fish is a very important Christian symbol. Right from the days that Christ started preaching, his first four disciples, Peter, Andrew, James and John, were fishermen.

It is of great significance to note that the Greek term for fish, ICHTHYYS, contains within itself, the initial letters of the following words: Iesous Christos Theou Hious Soter (Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour). The importance of the fish symbol is accentuated by several references to it in the Bible. The mitre of the Bishop has the shape of a fish head.

The fish symbol is linked closely with aspects related to astrological calculations of the Zodiac cycle. Christ was born in the Piscean Age, represented by the fish. This age is roughly 2020 years in duration. At the end of every such 'age', the sun finds itself in a different zodiacal constellation. Dr. Roberto Assagioli, an authority on esoteric symbols, writes: 'It is interesting to note how the symbolism of religions which flourished in different ages, contains the symbols attributed to the corresponding Zodiac signs'. So, during the cycle of Taurus, we have the cult of Mithra who kills the bull. Similarly, we see the cult of Amon-Ra (the ram-headed deity) among the Egyptians in the Age of Aries. The Arian age is followed by the Piscean Age. Strachan believes that probably, the 'star of Bethlehem' was part of a series of conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation of Pisces. The Age of Aquarius which follows that of Pisces has to do with the awakening of spiritual awareness. The astrological symbol of the fish represents two fishes heading in opposite directions - left and right. In other words, they are opposite yet complimentary. The task of man is to evolve a resolution in the midst of this continous tension.

THE CROSS

The Cross is certainly the most well known Christian symbol. This method of capital execution (crucifixion), used in ancient Rome became the symbol of the Passion and death of Christ. Centuries later, with the exploration of traditional and ancient mysteries, newer and more illumined meanings were attributed to this symbol of death.

The two energies which we call Spirit and Matter, can be represented by the two axes - the vertical and horizontal, which intersect perpendicularly. The vertical axis which is attributed to the Spirit is that golden thread which anchors the conscious to the physical body and along which man, during his evolutionary process, strives to ascend the peaks of universal consciousness.

The horizontal axis is attributed to Matter and represents the level of awareness reached by an individual. The higher the awareness, the higher up the intersection on the vertical axis. From this point of view, the Christian cross is the symbol of an elevated consciousness which is positioned above the heart chakra (anahata chakra).

Along the vertical axis, the energy of the Spirit descends, making a life of sacrifice (like Christ) possible. While on the horizontal axis (the world we live in), the actual work is done. Just as the Lotus flower has its roots in the mud, its stem in the water but its head turned towards the sky, so too, Jesus immersed his feet in the mud of profane life but had his head turned heavenward, as he sacrificed himself on the cross.
When dealing with the subject of Christian mystics, there is one basic problem that needs to be confronted: the fact that, according to the Church, mysticism itself is heretical. In 1198, Pope Innocent III wrote to his bishops: 'The little boat of St. Peter is beaten by many storms and tossed about on the sea. There are now arising, more unrestrainedly and infuriately than ever before, ministers of diabolical error who are ensnaring the souls of the simple. We give you strict command that, by whatever means you can, you destroy all these heresies. The reasons for this startling opposition are, in fact, quite sound. Mysticism, by its very nature, is the impulse to transcend all earthly barriers and achieve union with God. The implication that the empirical world of flesh and nature is fallen or inherently evil and therefore needs to be repudiated as a hindrance in the soul's journey towards God is regarded by the Church as heresy. This is because, implicit in any such idea, is the notion of Duality which is essentially a Manichaean or Gnostic notion, antithetical to Christian theology. Furthermore, the element of prophetism that is celebrated by the Church is also denied by the isolated and hermetic lives that so many mystics lead. The prophets preface all their sayings with, 'Thus spake the Lord' because they are merely mouthpieces of God. For these reasons, many mystics are tried on charges of heresy by their own churches. It is also difficult to sift those who are only theologians from those who are mystics.

The following choice of Christian mystics may seem arbitrary and, at one level, it is. For each mystic mentioned, there are several more that are not. There are also many hundreds who are lesser known, but with as much a place in the history of Christian mysticism. Some omissions like Aquinas, however, can be justified on the grounds that they are on the other side of the thin line that divides the theologian from the mystic. Finally, the emphasis is more on the experiential, human aspect of each mystic rather than on their particular theological contributions to Christianity.
ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO
(354-430 AD)

"Berber" is the name given to the inhabitants of North Africa, principally the nationals of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauretania and to some extent, Libya. The term distinguishes them from Arabs, from whom they differ in language, customs and appearance.

During the Roman period, lasting from about 30 BC to 600 AD, the Berbers in the city became first Latin-speaking Romanised pagans, then Latin-speaking Romanised Christians, among whom was the great mystic, St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo.

Given his birth, it is no wonder that Augustine was deeply influenced both by ancient classical philosophy and the Biblical traditions. His own life, in fact, is a fascinating study in the journey from one extreme to the other.

At the age of fifteen, Augustine moved to Maedaurus and from there to Carthage. At this time he was introduced to and deeply influenced by Manichæanism, the philosophy of a Persian of the 3rd century, who taught that there were two opposing principles, light and darkness, good and evil.

It was also a period of great profitegacy, for Augustine, spent in the company of headstrong men, during which time he fathered a son, Adeodatus, out of wedlock. T.S. Eliot's lines, "To Carthage then I came, burning, burning, burning", give the intensity of the surrender to sensuality.

Augustine's conversion was as dramatic. One day, as he sat in a garden at Milan, he heard a child call out, "read the word!" and upon opening the Bible at random, came across the following passage:

"Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put ye on the Lord, Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof."

Augustine gave up all thoughts of his impending marriage and was baptised on Easter, 387 AD. He records several moments of 'towering mystical exaltation.' The fundamental question he began to ask himself concerned the reality of the created world: What are things? Are they at all? All things created waxed and waned. All creation was engulfed by time...."Thy years fail not. Thy years are one today. How many of our and our forefathers' years have flowed away through thy today? Smoke and wind are we, but Thou art from all eternity unto all eternity."

Neo-Platonism entered deeply into his philosophy and through him, dominated Christian thought throughout the first phase of its development which lasted till Abelard in the 12th century. However, he was not a free thinking Platonist. He was a Christian Platonist, working within the circle of Christian legacy.

Augustine stressed on the supremacy of faith. Faith must precede understanding. "Seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand". This is a profound doctrine.

St. Augustine became a priest at Hippo Regius, Algeria in 391 and by 395 he was Bishop. He died on August 28th, 430, as the Vandals were besieging Hippo. But his writings changed the face of Christian theology and he came to be known as one of the foremost Church Fathers.
HILDEGARD OF BINGEN
(1099-1179)

Known as the “Sybil of the Rhine”, Hildegard, Abbess of Rupertsberg, was one of the most remarkable women of the twelfth century. She belongs to the tradition of the great German (Rhineland) mystics, in company with Eckhart, Suso and Tauler. Born in 1099 and inspired by a holy woman called Jutta, Hildegard took the veil at fifteen and entered the Benedictine monastery. It was at this time that she began to have visions which lasted all her life and which she records. “I have not been able to perceive the form of that brightness, just as I cannot perfectly see the disk of the sun. In that brightness I see sometimes another light, for which the name ‘Living Light’ has been given to me. When and how I see it, I cannot tell. But when I see it, all sadness and pain are lifted from me and then I have the ways of a simple girl and not those of an old woman.”

When Jutta died, Hildegard took over as prioress. After a great deal of opposition, she moved near Bingen. She began to write prolifically—lyrics and anthems, a morality play and a great number of homilies. She invented a language that was a mixture of Low Latin and German. She wrote to kings and popes, bishops and abbots, often upbraiding them for abuses rife in the Church during that period: “Divine justice shall have its hour. The judgements of God are about to be accomplished. The Empire and the Papacy, sunk into impiety, shall crumble away together. But upon their ruins shall appear a new nation. Springtime and peace shall reign over a regenerated world.”

In a sense, Hildegard was far ahead of her time, a feminist, exhorting women to freedom, power, courage and strength. In her writings, she has often been compared to Blake for her use of symbols and images. And also to Dante, the Italian mystic poet. In many of her visions, a prominent feature is a point of light, or a group of such points, which shimmer and move and are most often interpreted as stars or flaming lights. Often the lights give the impression of working, boiling or fermenting that is described by so many visionaries from Ezekiel onwards.

Hildegard died on September 17th, 1179. Although attempts were made to canonise her, they were never successful, but she is honoured as a saint in some parts of the Rhineland.
St. Francis of Assisi

(1181-1226)

Saint Francis (Francesco Bernardone), was born at Assisi in Central Italy. Just before his birth, Europe underwent a great reform, which made the Church and the Papacy rich and corrupt. Disparity of wealth was amazing.

Francis was the son of a wealthy cloth merchant, and so he grew up amidst pleasure and extravagance. He was charming and intelligent. An imprisonment and an illness began to change Francis’s attitude towards things. He began to get increasingly drawn towards the spiritual life. He became a hermit and vowed to lead a life of utter simplicity and poverty. Soon the charisma and devotion of Francis attracted similar minds and a little community of Franciscans began to form.

Francis never conformed to the mundane rituals of the Church. In St. Clare, he found a lifelong friend who was also called to the spiritual way. But women were not encouraged to indulge in any kind of spiritual adventurism. So Francis founded the ‘House of the Poor Ladies’ where St. Clare and her nuns took vows of absolute poverty.

Much against Francis who wanted no formalised order, but at the insistence of Cardinal Ugolini, the Franciscan Order came into existence with very simple monastic rules.

In 1224, exhausted both by illness and opposition to his beliefs, he resigned the official headship of the Order and began a life of travelling and preaching. After a profound mystical experience at Monte Le Verna, he composed his magnificent praise of Creation, the Canticle of Brother Sun.

St. Francis was indeed one of the most remarkable men of medieval Europe. He has been, for many, both within and without the Christian allegiance, the most attractive saint of history. Francis, the gay, impulsive, naive, articulate Italian appears more clearly than any other historical character, to embody the springlike delicacy of primitive Italian art and literature. His poetic masterpiece, the Canticle of Brother Sun is a hymn to the beauty of elemental creation—sun, moon, stars, wind, water and of natural life in birds, animals and flowers:

Be praised my Lord for Sister Water
Who is so useful and humble and chaste.

Be praised my Lord for our sister, Mother Earth,
Who sustains and governs us,
And provides fruits with colourful flowers and leaves.

In fact, many beautiful stories have grown around him to be a part of the local folklore. A lamb presented to him used to join the monks in worship before the altar of Mary. When a hare was presented to him he gently admonished it for getting caught and released it in the forest. Birds earned his greatest affection. According to a beautiful legend, Francis once spoke to the birds: ‘Those that were on the trees flew down to hear him and stood still while Francis made an end of his sermon.’

Such a spirituality finds an appropriate ground in our times especially in the context of eco-theology. The holistic approach of Francis, with regard to the universe could be the starting point in our reflection on the need for maintaining the ecological equilibrium in our cosmos. It is therefore appropriate that Francis is now called the ‘Patron Saint of the Environment’.

St. Francis has been hailed as the ‘only true Christian’ since he had a simple, Christ-like capacity of seeing all creatures and events from their centre and shared intensely in the Passion of Christ. It was he who created the friar, a new type of religious person, differing from both the hermit and the monk who went out to the poor, and to the city dweller, calling the world to simplicity.

He was cared for in his last weeks by his long time friend, St. Clare. He died on October 3rd, 1226, and was canonised by Ugolini (Gregory IX). Two years later, he was interred beneath a magnificent basilica bearing his name.
MEISTER ECKHART
(1260-1328)

The trial of Eckhart Von Hochheim on charges of heresy opened at Cologne in September 1326. In the following year he travelled to Avignon to be examined by a papal commission. In March 1329 a papal bull condemned as either heretical or dangerous, twenty eight "articles" drawn from his works. But to others, he was Meister (Master) Eckhart, the great German mystic.

Born in 1260, he entered the Dominican friary at Erfurt and before 1298 was elected Prior. Although he had held various ecclesiastical posts in Germany, his teachings were regarded as suspect by the Church. Because of this, manuscripts of Eckhart's German works were scattered and his Latin works were largely forgotten after the 15th century.

Eckhart drew inspiration from Thomas Aquinas, Albert Magnus and from Aristotle. He frequently refers to Pseudo Dionysius and other mystics, but his supreme authority was St Augustine. Eckhart has a profound and complex vision of the need to lead a life that was deiformis, 'God-patterned'. He expounds his mystical theory by exploring the imagery of dark and light, as so many mystics have done. He also freely used the imagery of love but with far greater profundity than ever before. The Soul is the Virgin Wife in whom God the Father begets his son. But this dualism suggested by the erotic imagery of union fades away in the final stage. He struggled with language to define this stage, which is more like the Nirvana of the Buddhists or the Nirguna Brahman of the Vedantins. God is the absolute bare unity, the abyss, without a mode and without form, of the silent waste of diversity.

The final stage is one 'where never was seen difference, neither Father, Son nor Holy Ghost, where there is no one at home, yet where the spark of the soul is more at peace than within itself.' This doctrine of a unity between God and Man, a unity so intimate that there would be no need for knowing and praying, no need for ritual or the intervention of the Church and Priest, was a danger to the Church. The Church met the danger by condemning him for heresy. Only an opportune death saved him from being burnt at the stake.

To be lost in the heights of mystical experience is not always possible or necessary; to live a God-oriented life, where love prepares the ground for seeing God's creative thought realised in the Logos, the Son is. Eckhart died in 1328.

JULIAN OF NORWICH
(1342-1418)

Julian of Norwich was one of a number of women who have made their mark on Christian mysticism. Dame Julian, as she was known, belongs to the small band of 14th century English mystics influenced by Richard Rolle and Walter Hilton. Like Teresa of Avila, she describes her own experiences instead of offering a thesis on the theory of mysticism.

The copyist of one of Julian's earlier manuscripts speaks of her as a 'devout woman whose name is Julian... a recluse at Norwich'.

Dame Julian refers to herself as 'a simple creature unlettered' though her writings by no means give the impression that she was uneducated.

Julian was an anchoress and recluse attached to St Julian's church in Norwich. Hermitages or cells contained one room or more, while others had a small garden where vegetables could be cultivated.

Julian's book, her only known work is The Revelation of Divine Love. This largely dealt with her experiences as a result of her severe illness and on the meaning of the visions she had. Like Teresa of Avila, Julian had a keen mind, a fund of commonsense and an attractive style, but does not write as a theologian. Like all mystics, she too finds great difficulty in conveying in ordinary language what she had been 'shown' in her visions. She tells us how on May 8th, 1373, she experienced a series of visions of the Passion of Christ, and in fact, her book has been likened to a prolonged meditation on the subject. After a time of trial and temptation, she comes to a final reassurance in a vision of the indwelling of God. There is an obvious Neo-Platonic influence which can be accounted for perhaps.
from Julian's reading of the *Cloud of Unknowing* and the works of Walter Hilton. What is impressive in Julian's writings is her balanced nature and her sound spiritual sense.

The south-east wall of St. Julian's church in Norwich showed clearly where the anchorite's cell once stood with its window on to the high altar; the wall was destroyed in an air raid in 1942 and the site has been made into a chapel adjacent to the restored main building.

---

**TERESA OF AVILA**

(1515-1582)

Recognised as one of the greatest Christian mystics, Teresa of Avila was born in Avila where she spent most of her sixty seven years. Despite opposition from her father, she entered the Carmelite convent in Avila. During the eighteen years that she spent there, she seems to have had authentic mystical experiences. She felt, more and more, the need to live a life of 'strict observance' and so, with a group of like-minded nuns, she moved to another house, also in Avila. During these years, which she described as her happiest, Teresa wrote the first version of her *Life* and then, *The Way of Perfection*. The rest of her life she devoted to setting up other foundations which saw her travelling a lot, negotiating and working with her hands. She was considered to be the best cook in the order! While she enjoyed the most remarkable and lofty mystical experiences, she always kept her feet on the ground. 'The Lord walks among the saucepans', was a famous saying of hers. In all, she set up 19 establishments, including two for men. Her chief support came from an even greater exponent of mystical theology, John of the Cross.

Thomas A Kempis had a love for theology or philosophy for its own sake, and in this he is very much a part of the tradition established by St. Francis of Assisi, of mystics who were known for their personal asceticism rather than for their theological arguments. 'I would rather feel compunction', he said, 'than be able to produce the most precise definition of it'.

---

The Ecstasy of St. Teresa by Gignaroli
to the famous 'seventh mansion' of Christ, which is the final destination of the soul after its painful yet exhilarating journey seeking mystical union with the divine.

Letters written throughout her life describe her well: the woman, the negotiator, the mother, the friend, remaining a complete human being even in the times of her greatest mystical experiences. She had a wide range of interests and a solid common sense. 'It must be my nature - I could be untrained with a sardine!'

Teresa's mysticism was refreshingly earthy and endears her to people separated from her by centuries. She died on the 4th October, 1582, at Alba, which was also founded by her.
ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS
(1542-1591)

O burning, burning sweet!
O wond’r, welcome blow!
O gentle hand, O touch that soothes and thrills,
Filling with life complete,
Cancelling all I owe:
Love’s sword revives even as it kills.

These passionate, evocative lines are written by a man who entered the priesthood at the age of twenty one.

St. John of the Cross, the great Spanish mystic, was a changed man after he met Teresa of Avila, who was engaged in the task of Carmelite reform. She was able to point out his true vocation which was to help her found two monasteries for Carmelite nuns. He wished to follow the primitive rule, but in 1575, a violent reaction set in against the whole movement for reform and John was imprisoned at Toledo. He was very shabbily treated there, but his spirit remained unbroken. He managed subsequently, to escape to southern Spain. The remaining thirteen years of his life he dedicated to the Order.

John was a brilliant poet and much of his mystical theology is contained in a number of poems. The *Spiritual Canticle* is a long dialogue between the soul, the Bride and her Beloved, clearly inspired by the *Song of Solomon* in the Old Testament. The Bride complains of her Lover’s absence and tells of her longing for him. The *Ascent of Mount Carmel* is a study of the process by which the soul reaches the heights of mystical contemplation. Two other works should also be mentioned - John’s remarkable drawing of Christ crucified and his sketch plan of the ascent of Mount Carmel, which summarises his teaching on the subject of spiritual and mystical progress.

John’s teaching is addressed primarily to the ‘enclosed’, contemplative religious. He says: ‘Strive not after that which is most easy, but after that which is most difficult...not after that which is most pleasant...strive not to desire anything but rather nothing...’ All desire must be purged away in the ‘Night of the Senses’, the name he gave to the struggle of the soul with temptations - moral, psychological and physical. The Night of Senses, which is arid and bare is of ordinary occurrence and the lot of many. These are the beginners. If the seeker wins this arduous struggle, there is something more difficult to face - ‘the Night of the Spirit’ which is for the few. Here, the soul is attacked by all the bonds that are formed between the will, imagination, memory, the intellect and all finite things of the earth. The spirit must, by a superhuman effort, break itself from these bonds and concentrate on the infinite, which it cannot do on its own strength, but only with the help of God.

All this sounds impossible, remote and unattainable. But understanding St. John’s mysticism is not the intellectually demanding and dry affair it seems to be. On the contrary, it is a profound asceticism that he appears to be advocating. Purgation is essentially positive. It is a means to an end.

John’s poetry is filled with a sense of the beauty of creation, which would be impossible in a man stripped of all appreciation of natural reality:

Of flowers and emeralds fine
Gathered when dawn’s dews gleam,
gay garlands we shall twine
Fragrant with your love’s tender breath,
Bound with one hair of mine.

St. John died in 1591 at the age of forty nine.

THE EYE No. 6 Vol. I November-December 1992

21
JACOB BOEHME
(1575-1624)

Boehme was well versed in astronomy, in the writings of the alchemist and philosopher, Paracelsus and the symbolism of the Cabala. He was also influenced by his famous predecessor, Meister Eckhart. Boehme would impart his ideas to whoever would listen. He hoped to inaugurate a general reformation of Christendom and the reunion of Catholics and Protestants. He was bitterly attacked for this, but his writings influenced later philosophers and mystics, including Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in Germany, William Law and William Blake in England.

Boehme tried to understand his world in the light of the new science of the Renaissance and the older mystical traditions. He had therefore, a vision of the world as made in the image of God. Hence, the Holy Trinity was reflected in the heavens: the Sky, the Sun and the light from the Spheres which was the Holy Ghost. Man, too, had three corresponding births: the elemental (or physical), the astral (or rational), and the spiritual, which was the divine essence in every man. To see this essence, man had to surrender self-centeredness.

Geeti Chandra teaches English Literature at St. Stephens College, Delhi.
BEDE GRIFFITHS

Ten kilometres from Tiruchirapalli, in Tamil Nadu, South India, is the Satchidananda Ashram, Shantivanam. This is where Swami Bede resides. The inmates of the ashram are in saffron, the colour of the clothes of sanyasis in India. Here, the aim is to establish a contemplative life on the tradition of Christian monasticism and Hindu sanyasa.

Bede Griffiths was a student at Magdalen College, Oxford. This was 1925—two years before he experienced the presence of a mysterious power in Nature. It was this experience that drew Swami Bede, as he is known, to theology.

He lived twenty years as a Benedictine monk in England. The monastery was peaceful, beautiful, surrounded by nature. During this time he began to read Hindu, Buddhist and Chinese Philosophy. Soon, he wanted desperately to relate Christianity to Eastern religions and his preoccupation with this was instrumental in his arrival to India in 1955.

While the eastern part of the globe was largely preoccupied with ‘mystical developments’, science gripped the Western world. With this science came materialism which dominates the world today. Father Bede’s interest began to veer towards a synthesising of the directions of science and mysticism. He started seeing the vision in ‘new science’ of a closeness to ancient Indian and Chinese thought and this took him deeper into the connections between the opposites in the cosmos. He delved into the region which is a report of his findings and conclusions, the concept of Reality, and the nature of the cosmos.

He was now convinced of the symbolism of science—a symbolic enterprise that makes the cosmos resolve itself towards unity through a web of interconnected relationships. A symbol is a sign by which reality is made present to consciousness. The science of physics, for example, can be explained in terms of mathematics. Mathematics is a system of symbols and numbers are symbols. So it is a symbolic system, which has great value in that we get a symbolic understanding of the universe. But it is still limited. It does not tell us what reality is. He found that psychology, which reality, myth was used as the medium. He says, ‘Poetry and mysticism both derive from a common source, the ground or depth of the soul where the mystery of the being is explained. It is an illusion to think that scientific knowledge is true and poetic language, untrue. Scientific language, above all in its most typical form of Mathematics, is the most abstract language, farthest from concrete reality. Poetry, or the language of symbolism is nearer to reality. But truth can be known only by pure intuition, which is beyond language.’

The Shantivanam Ashram, was founded by two French fathers, the more well-known of the two being Henri Le Saux or Swami Abishiktananda. It is now headed by Swami Bede, who runs the place on Benedictine rules of poverty and simplicity. Apart from great stress on meditation and contemplation, the ashram is involved in social work. In prayer too, the symbols are drawn from Indian traditions and there is an effort to evolve a distinct Indian liturgy. The celebration of the Holy Eucharist is as important there as are the readings from the Vedas and Upanishads.

Father Bede Griffiths has indeed made a long journey to India, 'which taught me to look within'. He is modern in the sense that he is aware and has a point of view on contemporary issues. Yet the methodology of their resolution is a time tested one.

S. Nandarayanan
MYTH
THE DENIAL OF THE FEMININE

MALCOLM BALDWIN

I once had the privilege to swim with a wild dolphin and it was easy to identify intelligence, humour, wisdom, and bodily modes of communication. Here was an animal who seemed to me totally unconscious and at one with his environment, while I was curiously set aside from the natural world. I could only glimpse his reality, and he could understand something of me, but we could not touch each other with language.

However else you care to define the human condition, you cannot escape the dominant fact of human speech. As George Steiner says, essentially we are 'a language animal'. It is our ability, through the power of speech, to record the past and imagine the future (there are seven different ways of expressing the future tense in the English language) which makes us specifically different from the rest of nature.

Anthropologists tell us that the real genius of human evolution is the development of language, and the deepest experience of language is myth. Wonderful stories speak directly to our inner selves about the realities of the human condition. Unlike much of the animal kingdom we are not born with a set of elaborate instincts which ensure our survival, nor are we 'pre-programmed' by the accumulated wisdom of our culture. Each of us has to learn, often the hard way, about the complexities and paradoxes of life. Myth is the storehouse of this knowledge. As language skills develop in early infancy, so we hear about the unseen realities of good and evil, heroes and villains, creation and destruction, our place in the world and the purpose of life. Over the ages, humankind has given shape to these stories, and in turn they give shape to our culture and our everyday lives.

Defining Myth
As I sit here on a winter's evening in the foothills of the Welsh mountains, I am acutely aware that a precise definition of the word myth is not easy to achieve, particularly to distant readers.

...even take your alien friend out to buy a table in the nearest furniture shop, and then all curiosity would be satisfied. However, suppose on leaving the shop the Martian says "While we're in town can we buy some universal prosperity?" Instantly this would plunge you into the realm of myth - universal prosperity is not readily available to our five senses - it exists in another dimension housed by the imagination.

In addition myth has a language all of its own, which can reach inner levels of consciousness in a direct manner. Anyone who has ever visited Cornwall in the west of England will know that it rains a lot. Consequently the grass grows thick and fast, and the land is good for raising dairy cattle. The warm wet climate also creates ideal conditions for an abundance of wildflowers where the bees can work happily all day. So, Cornwall is renowned for its dairy products and honey. However, if one was to say that "Cornwall is a land of milk and honey", then to the Western imagination at least, a new seed of perception has been planted.

Judeo-Christian mythology is deeply immersed in the idea of a land of plenty - a land of milk and honey. Such ideas led the ancient Hebrews from the bondage of slavery in Egypt to the promised land. It was this dream which drove western settlers to open up the...
New World of the Americas with such disastrous consequences for the native inhabitants.

One final point I would like to make on defining myth is its immense power to transform the world. I am always mindful that some two thousand years ago, twelve ordinary working men quite literally changed the course of history with the mythology of a Messiah - one who would intercede between man and God, and save the world. These were the twelve close followers of Jesus who in the most unlikely circumstances founded the new religion of Christianity. One thing you cannot deny is its immense power - as the novelist Victor Hugo once said: 'There is no greater force known to man than an idea whose time has come'.

Myth is the vehicle of such ideas, and we need to be mindful how we use it. In itself myth is amoral, it is neither good nor evil, it simply points to realities which exist beyond the senses. However, we need to be alert to the ways myth can be interpreted for creative or destructive purposes. An example of this is provided by the denial of the feminine in Western culture.

Interpretation of Myth - The denial of the Feminine.

One of the most persistent ideas in mythology is that of a golden age when men and women lived in harmony with the natural world about them. Then some 'sin' or misdemeanour committed by women destroyed this blissful existence. The writer, Ninian Smart points to African mythology where the sky was close to the Earth, so close, that women removed bits to cook in the soup. The Gods became angry and moved out of reach. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, chapter one of the Bible describes how the first man and woman (Adam and Eve) became alienated from the world and their creator. Having brought into being the best of all possible worlds, God befriends Adam and Eve, and gives them dominion over the rest of nature. However, he forbids them to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Tempted by the serpent, Eve tastes the forbidden fruit, and then persuades Adam to eat it. Divine retribution is both swift and terrible. The couple are expelled from their earthly garden of delights, and separated from their creator. Eve is cursed by the jealous male god for her defiance:

Our power of language and the ability to change the world, have alienated us from the cosmos of which we form a part. However in the past the myth of Adam and Eve has received a more literal interpretation leading to appalling consequences for women.

I will increase your labour and your groaning and in labour you shall bear children. You shall be eager for your husband, and he shall be your master.

Such simple stories have multitudes of meanings, but in the age of psychology we have come to realise that this myth is largely about the loss of self consciousness - the mystical reality which (like swimming with a dolphin) simultaneously bonds and separates us from nature. Our power of language and the ability to change the world, have alienated us from the cosmos of which we form a part. However in the past the myth of Adam and Eve has received a more literal interpretation leading to appalling consequences for women.

Western Christianity chose to interpret this myth as the 'sin' of Eve/man causing Adam/man to fall from the grace of God and live in misery and suffering. Moreover there is an unspoken mystical link between Eve the mother of humankind, and the Earth. (I've yet to hear of a culture which refers to 'Father Earth'). So the way in which the myth has been interpreted not only marginalises the feminine, but is a denial of life giving processes. It is no accident we talk about barren land or the rape of virgin rainforests.

It is not easy to locate the precise moment when misogyny (women hatred) took root in Christian culture, but by the 4th century AD the doctrine of original sin (Eve eating the forbidden fruit) was in place. Instead of Eve's temptation being seen as part of the journey to greater awareness and self-consciousness, early Church Fathers
like Tertullian were given to extraordinary outbursts against the female sex:

‘And do you not know that each of you are an Eve? The sentence of God lives on the sex of yours in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devil’s gateway: you are the unsealer of that forbidden tree: you are the first deserter of divine law... you destroyed so easily God’s image, man.’ (The devil is the embodiment of evil, lord of the underworld and fires of hell).

Such examples can be multiplied as formative thinkers in the early church increasingly denied feminine influences. Origen castrated himself to avoid sexual temptation. St. Augustine saw his conversion in terms of a sexual struggle - ‘Lord give me chastity, but not yet!’ So the ‘sin’ of Eve hammered at Western European consciousness, and individual problems became collective neurosis. At the Church Council of Macon in the 6th century, the bishops took a vote to decide whether women had souls. The motion was carried by one vote.

However, it was between the years 1300 and 1650 that Christian zeal turned on the feminine in the unimaginably barbarous assault of witch hunting. I believe that feminine sensibility, and by implication our relationship to nature has never fully recovered. This period of European history is known as the Renaissance. It was a time of massive social and economic upheaval when semi-national monarchies were ousting the religious authority of the Pope in Rome, when merchants were replacing aristocrats, and when scientific and geographical discoveries were challenging the stability of the old world order.

Amidst this turmoil, the spectre of Eve as destroyer of man’s happiness continued to disturb the collective conscious mind. Woman became associated with all that was vile, loathsome and evil and she was to endure centuries of persecution. On the flimsiest of evidence, the Church authorities brought unnumbered thousands to trial. Simply to be accused of ill wishing or turning the neighbour’s milk sour was the equivalent of the death sentence. Estimates vary wildly as to how many were condemned to be hanged or burnt.

The ‘sin’ of Eve hammered at Western European consciousness, and individual problems became collective neurosis. At the Church Council of Macon in the 6th century, the bishops took a vote to decide whether women had souls. The motion was carried by one vote.

-somewhere between one hundred thousand and nine million. What is certain however is that vast reservoirs of feminine sensibility were eradicated and suppressed from Western European consciousness. When in some German cities as many as 600 witches a year were hideously tortured and burnt alive, or in Toulouse in southern France where 400 were burnt in a day, it is hardly surprising that women kept a low profile.

The Legacy Continues

A shameful legacy persists into our time. Women’s rights in Europe are a comparatively recent phenomena, and women still have to fight hard to maintain a semblance of equality. The curse of Eve lives on. The theologian, Karen Armstrong points out that one only has to watch television soap operas to see the endless reworking of the fallen women mythology. She writes about a single episode of an American soap opera known as Dallas: ‘One woman was in prison, another a chronic case in a mental hospital, another deserted by her husband, another cruelly ignored by the man who had just married her.’

Sadly, and for a variety of reasons, similar images of women can be drawn from cultures all around the world. Clearly we need careful appraisal of the myths which shape such a misogynistic world view. For me it is essential that men and women once again share equal status on this tiny planet, it is the first requisite for creating a balanced future.

To deny half nature is not only destructive but absurd. The forbidden fruit which Eve first dared to taste may open our eyes to these truths. At a time in history when the natural resources of this planet are being stretched beyond their limits of recovery, it would be as well for us to understand the mystical connections between the feminine aspects of nature, mother Earth, and our continued survival.

This article is an extract from a paper delivered at The Schumacher College in June 1991.

Malcolm Baldwin is a gifted teacher, writer and a dedicated environmentalist. Born in the U.K., he has a B.Ed degree from the University of Sussex. He has worked in Theatre and as Film Editor mainly for the BBC TV. He has been cameraman and director for several BBC productions. He is deeply committed to organisations such as Green Peace, Friends of the Earth, Environmental Investigation Agency and has produced environmental educational material.

Illustrations: Ripin Katra
DESIGNING SPACES

CHURCH ARCHITECTURE AND WINDOWS

AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

JYOTI SAHI

Over the last five years I have been involved in the making of designs for two churches—one in Sambalpur, Orissa, for the recently established regional theologate, and the other, for the Cathedral in the newly created diocese of Varanasi.

In 1984, a few of us who have been concerned with the relation of art to spirituality, started an ‘art ashram’ in a village not far from Bangalore, where my wife and I have been settled and working for the last twenty years. The purpose of the ashram was to work towards a ‘visual theology’ based on a spirituality of seing. Much of western theology has been very rational and discursive, and religious concepts have been largely framed in terms of verbal expressions. We have felt that in the east, spiritual insights have been expressed not so much in terms of articulated ideas as through ways of seing and imagining. A theology arising out of such a vision (darshana), would perhaps be more holistic, including in it, the intuitive and the feeling dimensions of our sensory perceptions.

We have felt that in the east, spiritual insights have been expressed not so much in terms of articulated ideas as through ways of seing and imagining. A theology arising out of such a vision (darshana), would perhaps be more holistic, including in it, the intuitive and the feeling dimensions of our sensory perceptions.

The stained glass window is essentially a transparent wall and appropriate structural forms were devised in order to make these transparent walls as effective as possible. Because the windows took over more and more wall space, they tended to displace murals and were increasingly used to depict stories and themes from the Bible. But these stained glass windows were not only illustrational. They also contained a deeply mystical purpose. The faith itself was conceived of as a kind of window, through which heavenly light could pour into the heart of the believer, in the process, ‘lighting up’, so to say, various symbols and stories through which the worshipper experiences a light which comes from

 Salisbury Cathedral.
beyond all images.

In contrast, the Indian sense of mystery has derived much of its inner significance from the dark spaces of ancient caves. Thus, the holy of holies of a temple in Indian culture, has tended to be a dark space. The worshipper comes to the temple as a pilgrim from outside. Undoubtedly, as well, the idea has contributed to the understanding of sacred space. The need for shelter from the blazing sun and cross ventilation has been more important than that of light. Here, light has been limited to what is simply needed in order to see, leaving much to the suggestive imagination which prefers the half-light of sundhya in order to find deeper hidden meanings.

Perhaps for this reason the jali or veil has been the preferred covering for open spaces leading into architectural structures. The jali functions not so much as a solid wall as a kind of divider, allowing for the free passage of air whilst limiting visual spaces and physical movement. The jali can be compared to a spider's web. More mystically, it is like a woven veil that covers reality. In this way, the jali is itself a symbol of creation which spans over the ultimate mystery which is described very often as pure space.

Reflecting on these ideas, I have been trying to design jali patterns, which can be used in Indian churches, drawing on the underlying traditions to be found both in Christian and Indian mystical thought. In the jali pattern, spaces themselves become a decorative feature. In 'reading' a jali design, we have to get used to the way of seeing space as a form in itself—the line which delineates this space is the only 'material' element. Therefore, this does require a conscious way of looking.

Church as Manda. St. Mary's Cathedral, Varanasi. Illustration: Jyoti Sohi.

The windows around the church are not so much for the purpose of enclosing people within the church as for allowing people who are outside the church to have a glimpse into the church. The windows are ways of experiencing from the outside, the inner space.

The windows, in a way, represent creation. In our journey towards the centre, we look through the spaces of creation.

Recently, I have been working on windows for the Cathedral in Varanasi. I have always been fascinated by the city of Varanasi. This ancient sacred
city seems to contain within it the mystery of the whole of creation - in a way, it is like the microcosm of the whole universe. The symbol of the sacred city by the holy river is archetypal, i.e., this symbol can be found in cultures all over the world.

There are great many cities built on the banks of rivers - Rome on the River Tiber, London on the River Thames, though nobody has really visualised them as holy rivers. But the River Ganga on whose curving bank the city of Varanasi has clung for nearly 2500 years, has been one of the most central symbols of Indian culture. Often in western thought, the city occupies the centre and the river flows around the city. It is as though culture, which the city symbolises, has taken over the inner space. But here, the city seems to be part of the circumference. Nature and wilderness remain central in the primal world view of Indian spirituality.

The river is like the pause between nature and culture. In its wild moods, it shares in the ambivalent, dangerous aspects of nature. But, in India, the river also symbolises wisdom. The great Christian artist and poet, William Blake, saw in the city, a figure of the human mind. The city for him was almost like a hollow skull, into whose space we might gaze to discover hidden thoughts. That is why he called the city of his imagination Golgonooza, from Golgotha, which means the skull. Christ was crucified at Golgotha, the place of the skull.

In the series of windows which I have designed for the Cathedral at Varanasi, I have tried to explore this basic symbol of the sacred city on the banks of the holy river. The life of Jesus can be seen as a journey leading from his baptism by the holy river of Jordan to his crucifixion outside the walls of the city of Jerusalem, which, like Varanasi, has been seen as a sacred city by many important religions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Jesus, like the mystic Kabir, was very critical of the religious narrow-mindedness of his time in Jerusalem. Yet he dearly loved the city and wept over it when he prophesied that it would be destroyed again and again. Beyond the political city he envisioned a 'New Jerusalem' a holy city which cannot be taken over by earthly powers. In the Book Of Revelations, this city is described in mytho-poetic terms. Once again at the centre of the future city we find enshrined, not a proud human being, but a sacrificed animal. The city is not meant to dominate creation, to exploit and destroy its environment, polluting the waters from which it is meant to derive its life and beauty.

The essential significance of the Book of Revelations is an ecological one. Coming as the last book in the Bible, it brings us back full circle to the Genesis which is the first, in which the creation of the world as we know it is described symbolically. In the Book of Revelations we are reminded that everything is interconnected. You cannot destroy a part without destroying the whole. Human culture and history cannot be divorced from the whole cosmos. Wars, pestilences, the human thirst for power are all part of a much wider canvas which include what St. Paul called, 'principalities and powers' which rule the whole cosmos. This is very close to the Vedic idea of ritu, the cosmic order (presided over by the God Varuna) which is celebrated not only by sacred ritual, but also by ethical 'righteousness.' Only when human beings can learn to be righteous as well as spiritual, will the balance of nature be maintained. It is this balance or right-ordering of creation which works of art proclaim. And it is in depicting this essential reality that art has a spiritual message to give.

Jyoti Sahi is well known to Christians in India and abroad as an artist and writer. He has always been concerned with the development of Indian Christian culture, having had deep experiences with Hinduism and Indian art. He trained in London, then spent some years with Father Bede Griffiths in Shantivanam, Tamil Nadu. He and his wife have begun an ashram near Bangalore, inspired by Tagore's Shantiniketan. Jyoti Sahi has written a number of books and produced art work for numerous chapels all over India. He is a founding member of the Indian Christian Art Association.
THE HOME OF THE ALTAR

Early Christian architecture seems to have been functional in origin, it provided a place where the faithful could assemble for the celebration of the Eucharist and other rites. Indeed, the altar for the Eucharist and the baptistery (often a separate building) constituted the two basic items that were needed for the ritual practice of Christianity. When it became legally possible in the fourth century for Christians to build churches, contemporary architectural styles were followed. The basilica, with a semi-circular end or apse, became the general form of Christian churches. These early buildings incorporated no specific symbolism in their basic architectural plan. Depending on the resources of their communities, the interiors were richly decorated with coloured mosaics depicting sacred figures and biblical scenes. Sometimes an element of architectural symbolism was introduced by representing the hemispherical dome of the apse as the heavens, against which Christ was portrayed as the Cosmocrator or 'Lord of the Universe'.

The most notable instance of architectural symbolism that developed in Byzantine churches, and has become a feature of Eastern Orthodox churches, is the iconostasis. This is a screen, covered with icons which cuts off the sanctuary from the congregation in the nave. Its doors are closed during the celebration of the Eucharist, symbolising the holiness of the rites performed inside the sanctuary by the clergy.

The Gothic cathedral epitomised the ideals and aspirations of medieval Christianity in the West. In its structure and decoration it represented the Heavenly Jerusalem. It was designed as a setting for the Drama of the Mass, in which was ritually re-enacted the divine mystery of man's salvation by Christ. The High Altar was therefore the focus of attention, and it was set in a harmony of structural lines, symbolising the perfection of balance that characterised the medieval conception of the universe. This geometrical imagery was enhanced by the richness of colour provided by hangings and vestments, and by the light streaming through stained-glass...
windows.

In contrast to the Byzantine church, the Gothic cathedral was designed to enable the faithful to see the ritual presentation of the sacramental body and blood of Christ in circumstances of the utmost solemnity and beauty. But that was not all. The cathedral provided not only the setting appropriate to the divine mystery of the Mass, it also taught the faithful the great truths of their religion. Its sculptures and coloured glass depicted the incarnation, ascension and majesty of Christ, the coronation of the Virgin Mary, and the Last Judgement.

Christian Declaration on Nature
Father Lanfranco Serrini, Minister General of the Franciscan Order, Frati Minori Conventuali

The Fathers of the Church understood well the marvel of man’s dual citizenship and the responsibility it placed upon him.

...man’s dominion cannot be understood as licence to abuse, spoil, squander or destroy what God has made to manifest his glory. That dominion cannot be anything else than a stewardship in symbiosis with all creatures...

Many are the causes of the ecological disaster which mankind faces today. Christians repudiate.

1. All forms of human activity—wars, discrimination, and destruction of cultures—which do not respect the authentic interests of the human race, in accordance with God’s will and design, and do not enable men as individuals and as members of society to pursue and fulfil their total vocation within the harmony of the universe.

2. All ill-considered exploitation of nature which risks destroying it and, in turn, to make man the victim of degradation.

In the name of Christ, Christians call upon all men and women to pursue:

1. A synthesis between culture and faith;

2. Ecumenical dialogue on the goals of scientific research and on the environmental consequences of the use of its finding;

3. The priority of moral values over technological advances;

4. Truth, justice and the peaceful coexistence of all peoples.
In the beginning was the word. Maybe many Bible scholars will not agree with me, but, as a music lover, I like to imagine that this word is OM (in the Christian ritualism, AMEN), the primordial sound, the sound of sounds, the first vibration, the original energy from which all things are derived. Christianity, like all other religions, has made and still makes a great use of music while performing its rites. We have already seen in Vol. 1, Issue 4 of THE EYE, how the Gregorian Chant was born essentially as a form of emotional cohesion in the assembly of devotees during collective prayers. Its technical structures were quite simple, and that was its strong point. It was feasible to use the Gregorian Chant as a religious chant by any member of the community in order to create a stronger mystic energy, which could pervade, like a multiplied echo, the souls of all the devotees.

Now let us take the evolution of music a bit further. After all the elaborations and explorations which derived from Gregorian Chant, the first important step was taken a few centuries later, in 1500, by Pierluigi da Palestrina with his polyphony. For the first time music no longer consisted of a sequence of notes sung either by a soloist or by a choir, but of several melodic lines which entwine and overlap, in order to create a polyphonic fabric of great emotional effect. Polyphony was the first step towards perfecting harmony by the use of simultaneous sounds. In Western music, the twelve notes (seven plus five semitones, the smallest intervals between sounds accepted by tradition and musical theory) are tied to each other by preferential relations, according to which, if a composition is written in a certain tonality, it means that the composer will use prevalently the notes which are tied to that tonality, usually seven out of twelve. A new theoretical system was arising, more and more complex and technically perfect. At first glance, it could have disturbed the mystical urge of composers and created, in their place, a group of cold, uninspired executors of rules written a priori. But this, fortunately did not happen. On the contrary, the technique of harmony, supported by the inspiration and genius of great composers like Monteverdi, Bach, Mozart, just to quote a few, became an open and extremely wide language.

Among these great musicians, I would like to dwell upon Bach in particular, the one who can probably be considered the most mystical among the classical European composers. He belonged to a family of musicians with strong Protestant traditions. He started playing in religious ceremonies when he was only a boy, and soon became Chapel Master, a sort of court musician specialized in religious music. After the death of his first wife, he married Anna Magdalena and had twelve children in all.

In his long life, Bach composed an impressive quantum of work, always of excellent quality, with peaks of absolute genius. He was a great scholar and theorist too. He corrected the imperfections of the musical scale, created the tempered scale and wrote, The Well Tempered Keyboard, a very vast opera in which he explores minutely, the use of the new scale. It is this very habit of minute exploration, of methodic research, of the extrapolation of each single point, of the search for the macrocosm inside every microcosm, that makes Bach the most religious among Western musicians. His vast numbers of religious works include hundreds of Cantatas, vocal compositions based upon parts of the Old and New Testament, several Masses, including the wonderful A minor one, and the two Passions, one according to John and the other according to Matthew. But it is in the purely musical compositions, the ‘secular’ ones, that Bach’s mystical concept of sound becomes more transparent.

Among his many instrumental works, I would like to quote one in particular, in order to make my point clearer: the Passacaglia in C minor, for the solo pipe organ. In ancient times, the Passacaglia used to be a dance tempo of Spanish origin (it means to cross the road), very often used by baroque composers. The composition starts with an eight bars round of pedal bass notes the basso ostinato, which will go on, with very little variation, for the first half of the work. This round is followed by the exposition of the theme, in the same eight bars length, based on
J.S. Bach, Fugue in D major (a) as rewrited, with rhythms written in French overture style; (b) as these rhythms may be interpreted by sharpening them in performance:

the same sequence of chords as the bass. Bach borrowed this from a minor French composer of the former century. After the exposition he wrote thirty-six variations on the theme, each eight bars long, and finally a Fugue. The word Fugue means ‘escape’ and describes a composition form characterised by its continuous and pressing development endowed with great rhythmic tension. Someone who has never heard this music, might think that thirty-six variations on a short eight bars theme is just a claustrophobic exercise of calligraphic bravado, for virtuoso’s sake.

Perhaps so regarding other composers who did not have the deeply spiritual background Bach had. Starting from an intentionally narrow theme, restricted both in size and quality, to create a castle of notes and a structure of sound which seems to knock directly on Heaven’s Gate, is like observing a grain of wheat and suddenly realizing that in that minute thing is enclosed the secret of life. To realize that in this apparently negligible quantity of matter is enclosed the power of self-regeneration and self-perpetuation: the vital breath that God breathed into Adam’s lungs, is nothing but the Cosmic Breath, the sacred sound OM.

This sense of sound research, so developed in Bach, is not very different from the alap in Indian classical music. Just as the Indian musician explores all the possibilities given by a particular raga, with all the different variations, countless facets of the same precious gem, so Bach explores the base material, dividing atom by atom, to put it back together in a greater structure which rises, almost liberating, as an ode to God. Beauty, in music and in all other art forms, is not the author’s singular creation; it simply reflects the harmony of Creation, with its pulsing rhythm or its moments of ecstatic peace.

An admirable example of this quest for the order upon which music is based, is the Musical Offering. In the spring of 1647, Bach went as a guest to King Frederik’s court, where his son was working as Chapel Master. The King was an amateur musician and, together with the court musicians, had written a short composition, full of tricks—a sort of musical riddle, to test the well-known skill of the Chapel Master’s father. That very night, Bach composed a few variations and, a few days after his return home, he sent in a complete series of works based on that theme. Being a gift to the King, this collection was called Musical Offering. These compositions, which have been an object of study and almost an object of cult for many a musicologist, reveal not just an astonishing knowledge of musical theory. They also reveal a deep knowledge of the mathematical order hidden behind every part of it. Some items are symmetrical: they can be read both from left to right and vice versa, not changing the final result. Some, in two voices (composed of two distinct melodic lines simultaneously played by two instruments) are visually symmetrical. This means that, if in the score of the first part notes go up by one space, in the second score they go down by the same measure and vice versa. It might seem trivial, but we must remember that order in the pentagram is not always reflected in musical order and pleasantness.

Other pieces embody more and more complex musical and mathematical artifices, probably the most complicated ever written in the history of Western classical music. The risk of such an operation could have been pure virtuoso again, an exhibition of an unlimited theoretical knowledge. But, once again, deep spirituality, faith, sincere inspiration, all that an Indian would call bhakti, have made such rigorously analytical research give life to a magnificent synthesis, which cannot leave the most intimate part of the listener indifferent. Research for Bach was simply an act of comprehension of a great aspect of the Divine; the aspect of order, of beauty, of the purest and subtlest energies.
SUBSCRIPTION REMINDERS

Dear Reader,

- Remember to renew your subscription. This is a special reminder to those whose subscriptions end with this issue.
- Your issue cover carries your code number. Remember to quote it whenever you correspond with us.
- To ensure safe delivery of your issue, give us your complete postal address and include the pin code.
- Make sure all cheques/drafts only in favour of SPIC MACAY PUBLICATIONS. Include Rs. 5/- for outstation subscriptions as bank charges.
- THE EYE makes a good gift. Subscribe for a friend.

THE EYE is a written-word movement, which seeks to involve a large number of people concerned with the issues discussed in the magazine. It is produced with minimum infrastructure and resources and the workforce is largely voluntary. Therefore, we request our readers to kindly bear with delays between issues and other inconveniences. We would be more than happy to have you join us in any capacity. If you like the magazine, pass the word around.
CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM AND ENGLISH POETRY

SEEMITA RAY

As we have already seen, the experience of mystical union or a direct communion with the Ultimate Reality is what is generally known as mysticism. If in the Indian context the bhakti poets used different symbols drawing from Eastern religions, the Western world has seen various mystic poets drawing from Christianity.

By the 3rd century AD, Christianity had yielded to the Occident and Latin was the lingua franca. By the 6th century, when the conversion of the English to Christianity began, a rich Christian literature in Latin was already in existence and it paved the way for religious narratives composed in the vernacular.

By the 7th century, English religious poetry began with an unusual vividness with the compositions of an illiterate farm hand called Caedmon, who laid claim to having many visions. Religious verse by Cynewulf and a host of anonymous writers flourished at this time. These writers drew their sources from the Bible, often giving the poems a didactic turn.

The Norman conquest of England in 1066, opened the floodgates of continental influence. Soon anonymity gave way to identifiable names like Langland and Gower. At this time we also see the evolution of Christian liturgy into full fledged religious dramatic cycles of Mystery plays like the Miracle and Morality plays.

All art was inspired by the Bible and the character of literature and painting took on an inward gaze. Shakespeare's contemporaries are perhaps the first prominent poets to bring a degree of muscle and sinew to the poetic expression of mystical experiences. From gentleness and humility to indignation and rage, these poets recorded their entire gamut of emotions in their work as evident in the poetry of Walter Raleigh and George Herbert.

In Renaissance poetry, questioning was the cornerstone of mysticism and no one questioned with more energy and faith than these poets. For example, as in Francis Quarles:

Where is Life but in Thine eyes
And yet thou turns't thy face, and fly'st at me
And yet I see for Grace and thou deny'st me
Speake, art thou angry, Lord, or onely try'st me.

Doubt, anger, and incomprehension led to a dynamic dialogue with God. Another example:

I turn my back to thee, but to receive
Corrections, till thy mercies bid thee leave.
O think me worthy thy anger, punish me.

John Donne's poetry became the mirror of his day, and who can read without a thrill,

Death be Not Proud:
Though some have called thee Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so.

And again:

Batter my heart, three person'd God:
For you
As yet knocke, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
Thai I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow mee, and bend
Your force, to breake, blowe, burne and make me new.

(Sonnet).

Visionary poetry has always had a
strange power of its own and, although a century or more separate them, Vaughan, Crashaw and Blake's visions share the same mystic bond:

I saw eternity the other night
   Like a great Ring of pure and endless light.
   All calm as it was bright.
   (Vaughn)

Vaughn's casual beginning belies the intensity of his vision, but Blake compresses his intensity into immediate and moving images. He is able to

See the world in a grain of sand
   Beauty in a wild flower;
To hold infinity in the palm of your hand
   And eternity in an hour.

And there are faint echoes of the opening cadences of Raleigh's 'give me my scallop shell of quiet' in:

Bring me my sword of burnished gold
   Bring me my arrows of desire.
   Bring me my shaft, O clouds unfold!
   Bring me my chariots of fire.

Blake's anti-materialist stance is evident in all his poems such as Songs of Innocence and Experience, Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Jerusalem, etc. These are expressions of a powerful mind imbued with the belief in the prophetic power of poetry and art. He saw his task as one in which 'the eyes of man' could be turned 'inwards into the world of thought'. Blake belongs to that school of mystics who repudiate allegiance to the Church. In an age when the Romantics were repudiating allegiance to any establishment and institution, Blake provided a vision for their anarchy and a divinity to their beliefs.

The Victorian age was assailed by its sense of doubts and fears due to economic and industrial upheavals and colonial expansions. However, through it all, poets like the Browning's continued to reiterate their mystical sensibilities; 'All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist!' (Abt Vogler).

The last quarter of the 19th century saw the emergence of Christian mystic poets like Francis Thompson and Gerald Manley Hopkins. Thompson's poem, The Howl of Heaven, uses the symbol of the hound, adradic breakway from the traditional Christian symbols like the eagle, the phoenix, the lamb or the pelican. The poem rises to majestic heights as the soul flies the labyrinthine ways of the mind blown open with the energy of the divine approach:

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
   I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
   I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways
   Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
   I hid from Him, and under running laughter.

Thompson's contemporary, Gerald Manley Hopkins gave to language the fluidity of music and the vividness of paint, with the suppleness of dance and the precision of sculpture. Prosaic notions of grammar and accepted vocabulary were thrown to the winds in the orrush of his mystic celebrations:

I caught this morning morning's minion, kingdom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn falcon, in his riding of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and stringing
   High there, how he hung upon the rein of a wimping wing
   In his ecstasy!

(The Windhover - To Christ my Lord).

The falcon is a traditional symbol
of Christ but Hopkins finds cause for the celebration of God in all creation:
Glory be to God for dappled things-
For skies of coupled colour as a
brinded cow:
For rose-moles in all stipple upon
the trout that swim:
Fresh-fircoal chestnut falls; finches wings...
He fathers-forth who's beauty is past change
Praise Him!

(Pied Beauty).

Witness to two world wars, T.S. Eliot's poetic outburst is most
impressive record of man's sense of isolation, spiritual alienation, incomprehensibility and
decadence. But if The WasteLand is a picture of the moral vacancy of man, Eliot's later poems, from
Ash Wednesday to the Four Quarters depict the mystical search for the restatement of the Christian belief:

Do not suddenly break the branch, or
Hope to find the white hart behind the wall

Seek only there
Where the grey light meets the green air
The hermit's chapel, the pilgrim's prayer.

(Usk).

From Caedmon to Eliot may seem a long way, but the common thread of Christian mysticism has exercised a quiet influence on world literature as a whole. The wheel is yet to come full circle as aspects of Christianity and its linkages with oriental cultures are yet to be fully explored. But the search for the quiet eye at the centre remains, as mystical sensibilities continue to inspire many more recent poets.

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning
The end is where we start from......

(Little Gidding).

Seemita Ray teaches English Literature at Hans Raj College, Delhi University.

RESURGENCE

Resurgence is a leading edge magazine on ecological and spiritual values.

*One of our most respected new age journals* - THE INDEPENDENT

One year subscription (6 issues) £20 (£25 airmail) including p & p. Orders to:
Resurgence subscriptions, Salem Cottage, Trelill, Bodmin, Cornwall PL30 3HZ.
BLACK AMERICAN SPIRITUALS

SARA STRYKER

O black and unknown birds of long ago
How came your lips to touch the sacred fire?
How, in your darkness, did you come to know
The power and beauty of the minstrel's lyre?
Who first from midst his bonds lifted his eyes?
Who first from out the still watch, lone and long,
Feeling the ancient faith of prophets rise
Within his dark-kept soul, burst into song?

-James Weldon Johnson

Black American spirituals have been a source of musical inspiration around the world. Known for their simple language, highly poetic images that tug on the emotions, and compelling 2 - 4 rhythms that encourage listeners to sing along, clap or tap their toes, you can hear spirituals sung everywhere, from Sunday services in black Baptist or Methodists churches, on radio broadcasts or stereo recordings in many homes in the United States.

The spiritual was one of several arts that sprang from the Great Awakening, a moment to renew the Protestant Christian faith in 18th century New England. Its musical roots include traditional church music, such as the hymns of Isaac Watts (1674-1748) and folk melodies of West African tribes to which many slaves once belonged. Later, spirituals were a vehicle to teach slaves English and religion. They grew in popularity in the American South among field workers, who sang to organize their work in groups and to distract themselves from back-breaking physical labor. The songs were a powerful indictment against slavery. A Civil War commander of a black regiment called spirituals 'codified songs of protest.'

Spirituals evolved into an oral tradition by which illiterate slaves chronicled their cycle of work and holidays. After emancipation through the Civil Rights Movement, spirituals were used to protest social isolation and life's injustices and continue to express deep religious devotion. This music has influenced composers from Antonin Dvorak to Virgil Thompson and musical forms from jazz to hip-hop. Current performers include the Winans and Aretha Franklin and Al Green. You can hear traces of the spiritual in the popular music of M.C. Hammer and Boyz II Men.

Using highly emotionally charged words and choruses to rouse the audience, spirituals touch on every aspect of the Christian experience, including Jesus Christ as Lord, Satan as the Evil One, Death and Life, Love and Hate, Heaven and Hell, War and Peace, Violence and Nonviolence, Patience and Tranquility.

The power of faith:
O the religion that my Lord gave me,
Shines like a mornin' star
O Brother, Mourner, Sister, you'd better believe, believe
To shine like a mornin' star

**
I build my house upon de rock. O yes, Lord!
No wind, no storm can blow 'em down, O yes, Lord!

...of God's forgiveness:

O, I'm happy!
Left my burden!
At the river!
In the valley!

Going to Heaven!
Now, I'm getting happy!

...of Salvation:

There is a Balm in Gilead, To make the wounded whole
There is a Balm in Gilead, To heal the sin-sick soul.
...A cry for freedom:

When Israel was in Egypt's land
Let my people go!
Oppressed so hard they could not stand
Let my people go!

Go down, Moses, Way down in Egypt's Land
Tell ole Pharaoh, Let my people go!

No more in bondage shall they toil
Let my people go!
Let them come out with Egypt's spoil
Let my people go!

**
One o' dese mornin's—it won't be long,
You'll look fo' me, an' I'll be gone.

**
We'll soon be free...
When de Lord will call us home
My brudder, how long...
'Fore we done suffering' here?
It won't be long
'Fore the Lord will call us home
We'll walk de miry road...
Where pleasure never dies...
We'll soon be free...
When Jesus sets me free.
We'll fight for liberty...

When de Lord will call us home.
**
Free at last, free at last, I thank God
I'm free at last.
Free at last, free at last, I thank God
I'm free at last.
'Way down yonder in the graveyard walk,
Me and Jesus goin' to meet and talk...

On - a my knees when the light pass'd by I thank
God I'm free at last
Thought my soul would rise and fly,
I thank God
I'm free at last.

**
Great big stars-way up yonder,
Great big stars-way up yonder,
Great big stars-way up wonder,
O my little soul's goin' to shine, shine...
All aroun' the heavn' goin' to shine, shine,
All aroun' the heavn' goin' to shine, shine.

Stories of the Devil:

Old Satan tremble when he sees
The weakest saints upon their knees

If you want to see de devil run
Just pull de trigger o' de gospel gun.

...of Heaven:

If yer wanter go ter hebben when you die
Stop yer long tongue from tellin' a lie.

...of loneliness:

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
A long ways from home, a long ways from home,
True believer, a long ways from home.

**
Oh you got tuh walk-a that lonesome valley,
Oh you got tuh go tha by you'sef
No one heah to go tha with you
You got to go tha by you'sef.

Excerpts from: Black Song: The Forge and the Flame by John Lovell, Jr.

Send in your poems, with your name, age, occupation and address, to:
Mayura Tewari, Poetry Editor,
39, Anand Lok, New Delhi-110049
THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF HENRI LE SAUX - ABHISHIKTANANDA

ODETTE BAUMER DESPEIGNE

With reference to all that he had written, Henri Le Saux once said: ‘It is all biography... It comes from the confrontation of Christianity and Hinduism (Vedanta) which has been at the centre of my life since the periods I spent in the caves of Arunachala, but everything has been rethought by the mind in the aura of a double culture’. It is this tension resulting from the ‘presence of the Upanishads and the Gospel in a single heart’ which actually lay at the source of his extraordinary interior journey during a quarter of a century, that is, all the time he lived in India, from his arrival in 1948 until his death in 1973. His letters, and especially his diary, allow us to follow the actual course of his spiritual evolution, as it gradually developed and approached what the Upanishads call the ‘further shore’, where speech, having rejoined its source, becomes silence.

Henri Le Saux was born in Brittany in 1910, the eldest of eight children. His parents kept a grocery business at St Britac. While still young, he expressed the desire to be a priest. At the seminary his superiors, finding him a bright student, wanted to send him to Rome for further studies, but he refused because he felt called to the monastic life.

At the age of nineteen he entered the Benedictine Abbey of St Anne of Kergonan, where he successively filled the posts of librarian and professor. When he was appointed ‘master of ceremonies’ he took up his duties with immense enthusiasm, since he passionately loved the liturgy and Gregorian Chant. Later, he wrote to his sister a mobilised. Taken prisoner in 1940 with his whole regiment, he succeeded in escaping by hiding in a field of corn.

We know from a letter which Henri Le Saux wrote to Jules Monchanin on August 14th, 1947, that his desire to go to India to establish a strictly contemplative monastic life dates back to 1934, that is, when he was twenty-four. In 1945 his Abbot gave him permission to take certain steps with a view to realising this ‘most ardent desire’, that ‘dream which was the object of his ceaseless thought and prayer’. It was through a magazine article that he was put in touch with the French priest, Jules Monchanin, the pioneer of an authentic dialogue with Hinduism.

The latter had already lived for some years in South India, where he had been leading a life devoted to the understanding and service of India guided by a single desire: to incarnate Christianity in the ways of life, prayer and contemplation characteristic of Indian civilisation.

With a view to preparing himself for his ‘great departure’, Fr Le Saux studied English, Tamil and the Upanishads. In addition, he adopted a strictly vegetarian diet. He left the Abbey of Kergonan in 1948 and reached India on August 15th. He was never to leave his adopted country, becoming a naturalised citizen in 1960. However, he remained in con-

THE EYENOS. VOL. 1 NOVEMBER DECEMBER 1992
40
tact with his Abbey till the end of his life. With Jules Monchanin he went on to found the ashram of Shantivanam, near Thiruvananthapuram, which still exists and is now presided by Dom Bede Griffiths, an English Camaldolese.

In 1950 Monchanin and Léo Saux adopted Indian names, Swami Parama Arubianandan and Swami Abhishiktananda. They built two huts beside the Kavery which flows one mile wide at this point. The chapel, constructed on the model of South Indian temples, was inaugurated in 1951 with a solemn Mass on the feast of St. Benedict.

In this lonely retreat they collaborated on a book which was to cause a sensation, *Hermits of Sachidananda*, An Attempt at a Christian Integration of The Monastic Tradition of India. Swamijji’s spiritual adventure was based on a conviction—Christianity will only become Indian or universal by the integration into it of the contemplative dimension of the quest so characteristic of spiritual India. First, he was guided by the idea that he possessed the Truth and that it was only a question of presenting it according to Indian culture. But soon he saw things in a completely different light, and realized that he had to penetrate the Hindu religious experience.

Barely six months after his arrival in India, in January 1949, Henri Le Saux accompanied Jules Monchanin to Tiruvannamalai, at the foot of the Sacred mountain of Arunachala, to meet one of the most authentic sages of modern India, Sri Ramana Maharshi. This meeting was to leave a great mark on his spiritual course. Between 1952 and 1958, Abhishiktananda often came back to Tiruvannamalai to stay for long periods in different caves on the mountain, to live there as a Christian hermit among Hindu hermits. In March 1952, he confided to his diary: “I am ready, if it pleases the Lord, to remain forever simply a genuine Christian sanjava...” These times of immersion in a Hindu environment were also times when his existential union with Christ deepened.

A somewhat as July 1952, he had written, “Reason may discuss but experience knows.” Many years later, in 1970, he wrote, “I think the best thing is to hold together, even though in extreme tension, these two forms of a unique faith until the dawn appears.” In fact, Abhishiktananda remained until his last breath, absolutely and totally loyal to Christ. One may say, through this advaitic experience, his Christian faith was not weakened but immeasurably deepened and purified. His disciple, Marc Chadoue said of him, “He never ceased to probe the Mystery at once a Mystery which has a Face as the Gospel presents Jesus, and at the same time the Mystery that has no Face, nothing but pure interiority, as it was revealed in the hearts of India’s sages. Abhishiktananda wrote *Sachidananda, A Christian Approach to Advaitic In fact, Abhishiktananda remained until his last breath, absolutely and totally loyal to Christ. One may say, through this advaitic experience, his Christian faith was not weakened but immeasurably deepened and purified.

Experience. This was followed by *Guhamarta*, which spoke of his experiences in the caves of Arunachala. With the death of Fr. Jules Monchanin in 1957 came a turning point in his life. The ashram monastery interested him less and less. Despite all their hopes, no Indian Christian came to join the two French monks. Slowly his thoughts started turning towards the Himalayas. He finally reached there in 1959. He wrote to his sister, “I have sometimes travelled by bus, but more often on foot, once for 40 Kms, then 50...” One is free...there is enchanting solitude. It is a ceaseless pilgrimage...The Himalayas have conquered me. He, the Christian monk lived thus in India as a Hindu sanyasi. Swamijji delighted in comparing the two conceptions of monastic life, Christian and Hindu. The wandering Indian sanyasi is indeed very similar to the itinerant messenger of the Gospel. Wherever he goes he is a stranger, and yet everywhere he is at home, since he is so sovereignly free in his absolute renunciation.”

Swami Abhishiktananda finally settled down in a hermitage a few square metres in size, in Uttarkashi, on the way to Gangotri. He made a sort of attic which was reached by a ladder. Each morning, Swamijji, seated on the floor, celebrated the Eucharist, facing the Ganga through a small window. It was here that Abhishiktananda worked out his contributions to the Indian liturgy. He wrote to a friend in a monastery: “What interests me as the eternal value of Hinduism is to find the Truth lying behind the edos—the concept not to remain the prisoner of concepts. Therein lies the whole problem that upsets theology...Would it not be good if Western awareness and its conceptualisation were re-vivified by this trans-intellectual experience? In spite of appearances, I remain ‘Greek’, my understanding moulded by scholasticism is really in agony before the problem posed by Hindu and Zen experience to Christian theology. And yet, if Christianity is ever to pass beyond the world of Mediterranean culture, if it claims to be universal, it will have to face up to the irreducible spiritual experience of Hinduism and Buddhism...and to integrate it...And further, I can only aim at awakening the Christians of India to the treasures of their double spiritual heritage.”

The year 1971 marked a new and very important stage in his spiritual journey. Some genuine disciples came to him, especially Marc Chadoue, a young Frenchman. “In him I have found a true and wholehearted disciple; along with
What prevents the majority of mankind from benefiting from the Mystery of Jesus is that most of us who believe in Jesus insist on reducing him to the Judeo-Christian categories of their understanding and so deprive him of his universality. I recognise the same mystery which I have adored from the beginning under the symbol of Christ also under the symbols of Narayana, Krishna or the Parusha. It is in Jesus, my sadguru, that God has appeared to me.

In May of 1972 he stayed for nearly a whole month with his disciple in the small ashram of Paulchatur, on the bank of the Ganga. They devoted the whole time to the meditative study of the Upanishads. In a fit of extraordinary fullness of the truth of the Upanishads he wrote: 'To feel oneself in the presence of the True is too powerful an experience. It scorches one!' Meanwhile, he and Swami Chidananda of Rishikesh conducted the ecumenical initiation of Marc Chaduc, now called Ajatananda, into monastic life. He also got busy writing Sanyasa: The Call to the Desert.

The days immediately preceding his heart attack on 14th July were spent by Abhishiktananda and Ajatananda roaming besides the Ganga in the neighbourhood of a small Shiva temple. During these days Ajatananda wrote to me: 'The inbreaking of the Holy Spirit snatched him away from himself and shone through every inch of his being, an inner apocalypse which at times blazed forth outwardly in a glorious transfiguration.' This intense experience came to its climax when a severe stroke suddenly laid him low in the street of a Rishikesh bazaar. He described it in the following words, 'Seizing myself so helpless, incapable of any thought or movement, I was released from being identified with the 'I' which, until then had thought, willed, rushed about, was anxious about each and everything. Disconnection! That whole consciousness in which I habitually lived was no longer mine, but I, I still was.'

As soon as his condition permitted, he was brought to Indore to the nursing home of the Franciscan Sisters. On December 7th, 1973, Swami Abhishiktananda left the world. The pilgrim to the 'further shore' had reached his goal. His whole being was now harmonised, unified, at peace, entirely faithful to Christ, his Sadguru... His Christian experience and the Upanishadic experience flowed back to their unique origin.
A CHRISTIAN ADVAITIN
RAMANA AND ABHISHIKTANANDA

REV. J. D. M. STUART

In our days how great was the spiritual radiance spread throughout Tamil Nadu and far beyond, by that young Brahmin of Madurai, who one fine day quietly walked out of his father’s house and made straight for Arunachala...... During the fifty years which he passed on the mountain, how many thousands of those who thirsted for truth and salvation came to prostrate before him and to sit at his feet, eagerly drinking in the teaching of his lips, and far more deeply still, quenching their thirst from his silence. These words were written by Swami Abhishiktananda in 1954, when he himself was living as a hermit in one of the caves on Arunachala. To the end of his life he never ceased to speak with love and reverence of the sage whom he regarded as the perfect example of Vedanta.

Abhishiktananda had the darshan of Sri Ramana on only two occasions, once in January 1949 and again, six months later. He recorded his impressions in his diary and later wrote them up in his book, ‘The Secret Of Arunachala.’ When I was introduced to Ramana, the Maharshi replied with a gesture of the hand, accompanied by a smile filled with a kindness that was impossible to forget. But at first he did not know what to make of the sage to whose darshan he had looked forward to for so long. He gazed at him, but all that he could see was a ‘kindly grandfather.....happy, peaceful and smiling among his grandchildren’. Where was the ‘halo’?

He took his problem to an English lady living near the ashram. ‘Your cold which came upon him, had the effect of relaxing the fetters of his mind. Even before my mind was able to recognise the fact, and still less to express it, the invisible halo of this sage had been perceived by something in me deeper than words.’ The fever soon forced him to return home to Kullothi.

But as he lay in bed, ‘in my feverish dreams....it was the Maharshi bringing the true India which transcends time and of which he was the living and compelling symbol.’

After this, Abhishiktananda only saw Ramana once more, in July 1949. This time he was better prepared to profit from the experience. ‘I did my best not to allow my efforts at rationalisation to get in the way as on the first visit’. Abhishiktananda had been studying the Upanishads for several years and felt the attraction of advaita. His contact with Ramana, a living example of advaita, gave to his study and meditation an existential direction. He realised that advaita is nothing until it is lived.

For many years the Swami had been leading an austere life as a Benedictine monk. Now he discovered what it was to live as a hermit in the caves of the holy mountain of Arunachala. In 1952 he spent five months there, mostly inmauna, (vow of silence) and living on shiksha (alms).
Before him was the ideal of Sri Ramanar, the Desert Fathers of Egypt, and of his own St Benedict of Nursia, who loved the solitude of his cave where 'alone in the presence of the heavenly Witness, he abode with himself.' Some hints of his experience on Arunachala are given in these passages from his diary. 'There is a mystery in Arunachala. What is this mystery? Why have so many in the past been drawn by its magic? Why, despite all the inconveniences of life, do I feel so happy here as nowhere else? There is something in the caves of Arunachala.'

A few days after this entry he meditated in the underground crypt of Patala Linga, which he later called his true 'meeting' with the Maharshi. This meeting 'took place on a plane that has nothing in common with any visual, auditory or psychic phenomenon. They, Ramana and Arunachala, have become infused into my flesh; they are woven into the fibres of my heart. . . . . My deepest ideal that to which unconsciously everything in me is referred is that of Ramana, who is such a perfect example of Vedanta.'

A Christian Advaitin: Many would question the possibility of such a conjunction of terms, or at least the possibility of giving to both their full value. But Abhishiktananda's own deep faith in and commitment to Christ cannot be doubted, and it also seems clear that the advaita of which he spoke was personally experienced. He wrote: 'The teaching of advaita is not a matter of negation, no rites, no dogmas, etc. It is the blazing discovery of a secret, of an interior level. The level into which Jesus entered (at his Baptism?) and remained there. It is important to realize that when a Christian comes to advaita, he or she will not come by the same way as will a Hindu. Abhishiktananda constantly stressed that everyone must start from where he or she is, with all their inherited and acquired ways of thinking and experiencing. As he emphasises in the last section of his Introduction to the Upanishads, this experience has 'nothing to do with any religion whatever.'

'The contemplative Christian who comes into contact with the Upanishads cannot fail to feel at home with their general approach and their basic teachings, nor can he fail to recognise something that he has known in his own depths, as he listens to the sages telling of their experiences.'

He once described himself as 'at once so deeply Christian and so deeply Hindu, at a depth where Christian and Hindu in their spiritual and mental structures are blown to pieces, and are yet found again ineffably at the heart of each other.' There is no need to quote the theologians, but there cannot be more than one Truth and he continued to live with his Christian and Hindutva. 'Christianity, Vedanta, are they not two points of view from which man seeks to understand the mystery of God?'

It was at this depth, in the Spirit, that Abhishiktananda looked hopefully for a true meeting of Hindu experience and Christian faith eventually to occur. In his prophetic vision he looked for the day when Hindu and Christian contemplatives, meeting in the cave of the heart, might together explore the experience of saichidianta in silent communion and openness of heart. Together they would be drawn further and further into the 'fullness' of which both the Upanishads and the New Testament speak. For this the Church and the world are waiting. Human society will inevitably be transformed and, at last, aroused by (Christian) seekers who have that essential fire in their hearts, will become Christian in the true sense of the Gospel. . . .

There is a mystery in Arunachala. What is this mystery? Why have so many in the past been drawn by its magic?
As far back as over half a century ago, while addressing a Christian audience in Colombo, Gandhi warned people not to be dazzled by the technological culture represented in this phase of history by the West, dedicated to the single goal of more and more production. 'A time is coming,' he said, 'when those who are in the mad rush today of multiplying their wants will retrace their steps.' Gandhi was not working for a doctorate in economics and you cannot expect to get systematic expositions of theory in his writings. But he has given us the reasoning behind his prophecy. Can these sketchy statements stand up against the monumental foundations of classical economic theory as they were laid by Adam Smith in his Wealth Of Nations in 1776?

The pundits of economics will have no difficulty in contrasting the vague idealism of Gandhi with the clarity and hard common sense of Smith. Self-interest is the basic motivation for men's actions, but the individual, in the vigorous pursuit of his self-interest is led by an invisible hand to promote an end that is beneficial to the whole of society. Since this was the best of all arrangements, Smith exhorted men to be as selfish as they could possibly manage without bursting a blood vessel. 'We address ourselves not to their humanity, but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities, but of their advantages.'

The visible mechanism through which Smith's 'invisible hand' or providence worked, was the market. Honesty tied up consumer and worker sovereignty in economics with citizen sovereignty in politics and assured freedom and happiness for mankind forever on a 'do-it-yourself' principle that was easier than eating toffee. For what is easier to do than being selfish? Why listen to impossible saintly types of medieval Europe like Chrysostom, Basil and Francis of Assisi? and their twentieth century prototypes like Gandhi?

But a snag became apparent even as Smith was penning his bible of Homo Economicus. He noticed the 'avarice and the ambition of the rich', the fact that the entrepreneurs made certain that their activity enriched themselves, while 'to know in what manner it enriched their country was no part of their business'. And he had to admit...
'monopoly has so much increased the number of some particular tribes of them that, like an overgrown standing army, they become formidable to the government and upon many occasions intimidated the legislature.' But this theory just did not have any answer to the question why on earth the monopolists could not be as selfish as they liked. Economics - both theory and practice - shrugged off this fundamental weakness in the basic statement of its philosophy and the going was good for over a century.

Then the worrying started again. Veblen analysed monopoly power and its dangers as early as 1902. But the first edition of Taussig's classic (1911) failed completely to notice the warning and the second edition (1939) noticed it only to underestimate it. However, even Taussig had to notice the 'blatant, mendacious, vulgar advertising' that created monopoly by brand differentiation.

Meanwhile the danger which Gandhi had foreseen with his intuition was only the time hardening into reality and today it has become visible even to the purists of economics. The whole culture of our epoch has been swamped by galling consumption, rapid obsolescence and GNP fetishism. The extensive conditioning has made men into consumer - automata. Wants are endlessly multiplied by what Bertrand de Jouvenel called, 'the civilisation of toujours plus (always more).'

And taking a fresh look at economic growth, Mishan stated that the motto of economic growth had become: 'Enough does not suffice.' But Mishan wrote that in 1967 and by now we have realised that the fun and games cannot last much longer and we have already started scraping the bottom of the barrel. It has become absolutely impossible to claim any longer that Adam Smith was talking sense when he predicted that the 'invisible hand' would transform the selfishness of individuals into the good of the whole. The good of the whole society of which Smith glily promised has never been realised; what has been realised is the good of the few at the expense of the many - private opulence and public squaller as Galbraith sees it in his evaluation of the affluent society.

Transfer of purchasing power from the rich to the poor can achieve the good of the whole Smith referred to. To Gandhi such a transfer created no philosophical problem. He said in 1929 that the moneyd classes should recognise the obvious truth that the poor possess the same soul as they do. Hard-boiled economic thinking has always taken the line, along with the physical and behavioural sciences, that it cannot take into account references to such vague concepts like the soul. What was not noticed by this complacent discipline was the fact that, when Smith erected it on a definition of man as an organism which can act only by selfish motivations, he was implicitly assuming a theory about man's nature, his soul or lack of it. And thereby hangs the tale of another serious failure in economic theory.

Striving to gain for the perceptions of the heart a place in the sophisticated analysis of the intellect, Alfred Marshall argued that the marginal utility of two pence is greater in the case of a poor man than in the case of a rich man; therefore, transfer would increase total satisfaction and can be recommended by economies without any danger of being suspected of contamination by humanitarian sentiment. But neo-classical theory has not been able to accept that this is analytically valid. How can one prove that the affluent sybarite is not getting a greater kick from his tenth glass of whisky than the starving man from his first loaf of bread? But within the framework of Smith's formulation, a rich man can concede that the poor devil may after all be getting a greater kick from bread, but still refuse transfer of resources on principle, because Smith has blessed self-interest. And his own satisfaction, however minimal, matters.
to him more than the satisfaction of another, however maximal. But there are such things as revolutions and the oppressed poor are unlikely to care two hoots if somebody tells them that the *Book of Smith* says that they should save his neat theory by doing nothing except, of course, tightening their belts.

Schumacher explains to the theorists. Stop worrying about social justice. Don't ask for a bigger share of the cake; promote growth and everyone's slice will be bigger. Well, the slices of some people have got big enough to give indigestion; but the case of the majority it has got water thin. And this leads us to yet another bungling on the part of the economic pundits; the assumption of steady growth.

Classical and neo-classical economics assumed that growth would be steady. Walras and Pareto of the Lassasare school tried to explain away local disequilibrium by referring to global equilibrium and by relying on time to restore equilibrium. That is, disequilibrium was regarded as a local and temporary maladjustment. The Italian school of Rucci, Amoroso and Di Nardi exposed the weakness of this assumption and Keynes showed that substantial unemployment would be a permanent feature of the economy in the classical model. He therefore advocated public spending. Spending on wars and armament production has been the easy solutions for nations in maintaining the economy. But Keynes cannot argue that he is not responsible for this. He said that when everybody is rich, we shall 'once more value ends above means and prefer the good to the useful'. But he added, 'Beware! The time for this is not yet. For at least another hundred years we must pretend to ourselves that fair is foul and foul is fair; for foul is useful and fair is not.'

But disenchantment with a value-neutral or value-inverting economics is now complete. In view of the fallacies in theory and costly mistakes in practice. Francois Perroux concludes his monumental work on the economics of the twentieth century with a plea for a 'concept of the economy of man understood as the economy of all mankind'. Barca points out the affinity between this and what Pope Paul said, 'Development must promote all of man and the whole of mankind'.

Immediately, as we talk about the whole man, economics, along with politics loses its autonomy and becomes necessarily subordinated to a perspective which Gandhi would affirm to be religious but which a humanistic sociology can also easily adopt. If saints are suspect, men like Walter Weisskopf and Schumacher should be above suspicion for they are not saints, but professional economists Weisskopf, a professor of economics, risking the wrath of orthodox economists, studied problems like, 'economics and alienation', or 'economic growth and existential balance'. One of the most important contributions by Weisskopf has been his exposure that, while economic theory has always claimed that it is not concerned with intangibles like the interiority of man and has based itself solidly on observables like the behavioural profiles of men, it has all along been making assumptions about the essential nature of man. 'Assumptions in economics about the nature of man, then, are rarely ever factual statements but value judgements - judgements on how man ought to be, how the economy wants man to be, what he should want, will, think, and do, so that the aims of the economy will become his own ends.'

The traditional perspective, with which a modern humanistic outlook can concur, has a wholly different concept of the nature of man. When in 1927, Gandhi held out the warning about the cult of multiplying wants, he was not thinking merely as an economist mindful of scarce resources. He felt that externalised living was an irreducible thing. An acceptable secularised statement of the same view would be that such a lifestyle would deflect man from the realisation of his highest potentialities. It is significant that today economists are less shamed about using the terminology of thought-systems which give primacy to values.
In order to overcome man’s greed, the whole man must now resolutely reject his reduction to a unidimensional homo economicus, i.e. not permit the economic calculus to dictate his ends.

expanses of land and then as frontiers ran out, limitless possibilities of urban growth, productivity, technology and energy. The lesson we are forced to learn from the modern crisis is that there are limits. In order to overcome man’s greed, the whole man must now resolutely reject his reduction to a unidimensional homo economicus, i.e. not permit the economic calculus to dictate his ends. In this context, I wish to quote a professor of business administration at the Harvard School of Business which is often described as being to the heads of business corporations what West Point is to generals. In The New American Ideology, George Cabot Lodge quotes the Katha Upanishad where it says, that he who sees only the separateness of created things and not their unity wanders from death to death. He adds: It is now our task to perform the job that has been deferred for 2000 years, to capture the energy and power of the commercial sector and graft it on to community. The central institutions will all be changed by this integrative process, both in spirit and in letter.

K.K. Nair is better known as Krishna Chaitanya, under which pen name he has written over forty books. He has been prolific in the literary arena, covering a ten-volume History of World Literature, a four-volume History of Indian Painting, and a five-volume Philosophy of Freedom. He is a very respected thinker, who was awarded, among several awards, the ‘Critic of Ideas’ award by the Institute of International Education, New York. He has lectured and taught all over the world.
AN INTERVIEW WITH
HELENA NORBERG HODGE

RUKMINI SEKHAR

When Swedish-born Helena Norberg Hodge came to Ladakh, she didn’t realise that she would be spending half a year every year here, for the next sixteen years. For that is how long her relationship with the little mountain kingdom has been. To say that she was alarmed at the massive changes (and not all positive), that were taking place in Ladakh is an understatement. She felt that here was an ecological, cultural, linguistic and spiritual marvel that was on the brink of a complete wipe-out. In 1978, she founded the Ladakh Project, with the goal of providing the Ladakhi People with the means of making more informed choices about their own future. This led to the formation of the Ladakh Ecological Development Group with whom she shared the 1986 Right Livelihood Award, otherwise known as the ‘Alternative Nobel Prize’. Her latest book, Ancient Futures, (reviewed in our Book Review section) is a testimony of her admiration for Ladakh infused with pain and anguish at what is becoming of it.

Rukmini Sekhar: Helena, what motivated you to come all the way from your native Sweden to Ladakh, not only to stay on but establish the Ladakh Project?

Helena Norberg Hodge: I originally came as part of a film team, planning to stay only for six weeks. But no sooner did I come here than I became absolutely fascinated by the landscape, architecture, people and culture of Ladakh. So I decided to stay on after the film was over and do a thesis on the Ladakhi language which hadn’t really been documented for non-Ladakhis. For the first year I was concerned with this aspect of Ladakh and soon became the only outsider to speak the language. Slowly, the drama of the impact of ‘development’ began to unfold before me, compounded by tourism. It struck me that this had begun to attack the ‘character’ of the local people. A people who had described themselves as rich and prosperous, inviting me to their homes and serving me traditional food, now began to describe themselves as ignorant and backward, stupid and poor. Their loss of self-esteem was only too visible, and of course, the yardstick of their judgement was the ‘new style of Western development’. I felt I had to do something.

R.S.: You must have travelled quite a bit in India and observed that the similar pattern of development was rampant even elsewhere. What made you choose Ladakh rather than some other area?

H.N.H.: No, not really. I had travelled a lot, but mostly in Europe, Africa and Mexico. Before I arrived in Ladakh, (which was completely by chance), I had not really experienced India. But Ladakh was pure magic. I knew this is where I wanted to be. I had never seen a people imbued with so much self respect, which in turn bred tolerance and freedom. I was amazed to see Buddhists, Muslims and Christians living so harmoniously.

R.S.: What would you say is the traditional pattern of governance in
Ladakh?

H.N.H: Their traditional political ideology is what more and more people are asking for in today’s world - decentralisation, respect for diversity, participatory democracy. What they had here was closer to democracy than any other living society, including America.

R.S: Like the Panchayat? How did village governance take place?

H.N.H: Yes, very close to the Panchayat. Since every farmer is almost completely self-sufficient, and thus largely independent, there is little need for communal decision making; each household essentially works its own land with its own resources. Nonetheless, sometimes matters have to be decided on a village level. Larger villages are divided into chaisos, or groups of ten houses, each of which has at least one representative on the village council. This body meets periodically throughout the year and is presided over by the goba, or village head. The goba is usually appointed by rotation. One of his jobs is to act as adjudicator. So you see, you had that decentralisation which empowered the people. This structure started from below, thereby avoiding conflicts at the grassroots level, unlike top-centred, mega-powered institutions of power.

R.S: What was the percentage of women in these local governing bodies?

H.N.H: Almost none. This is because the household was the basic economic unit of their society. Here, women had a lot of say, in fact, very often they are the chief decision makers. It is ironic, although women in Ladakhi society ostensibly have no public voice, they, as a matter of fact, wield a larger share in societal governance than women in industrialised, ‘advanced’ societies, including my own country, Sweden.

R.S: Helena, what do you feel about education today?

H.N.H: I think education today insidiously undermines traditional cultures in favour of a mono-cultural, macro-economic Westernised pattern. What this does is to sever peoples’ relationships with their local ecosystems. This relationship starts the minute you are born and adapts itself into a whole context and way of life. It fosters a close connection between generations and you end up teaching and learning for your entire life. Not formalised into separate age groups. I see modern education separating people from the land and one another, in a hideously disruptive process.

R.S: For example?

H.N.H: In Ladakh, people grew up learning how to deal with each particular situation, let’s say, regarding their ecosystem. For instance, that here, in your
village, at 14,000 ft, a particular type of barley grows very well. Whereas, on the other side of the village, because of shade, sandy soil or clay, you would have to sow another breed. How can we talk of biological diversity and not bring up the issue of cultural diversity, especially since the two are so closely interlinked? Modern schooling in Ladakh is blindfolding children, imprisoning them without windows. You are virtually destroying their entire hoary culture in one fell swoop. What you are teaching them, in the final analysis, is, as we can see all over the world, an urban oriented, Western lifestyle. If you had an education, there’s no way you can get a job in the village. With more education, you might have to go to Srinagar, Delhi or the West. I wonder why the elite of the Third World are not taking an even more dynamic role in reassessing their own education trends.

R.S.: You seem to imply that all this has disrupted self-sufficiency and created economic disparities. How?

H.N.H.: This can be understood if one takes a broader look at the whole development process, along with education, which is fundamental. Add to this, urbanisation and centralisation. This process started very dramatically in Ladakh with the infusion of capital, building of roads and large structures and changes in energy patterns. This whole structure is based on centralised sources, particularly fossil fuels that are very expensive. The consequence is a physical shift of populations to ever larger centres and centralisation of power. This happens by fostering an education where each individual narrows his focus and is made more and more dependent on artificial, man-made, techno-economic structures. This naturally breaks the link with the living world and the basic, natural needs of the people. It is this process which is creating poverty.

Another reason is the shift to the nuclear family where the individual feeds for oneself and is no longer part of a network of mutually dependent relationships. The media augments this change in values by advocating the nuclear family as the progressive way to live and extended living as primitive and unhealthy. The extended family had land, animals, clothing and food in plenty. As the units get smaller, it is more difficult to survive off them. You now have to pay wage labour for farming, in which, earlier, the entire family participated. There were also reciprocal exchanges between neighbours and friends and one didn’t have to employ people. With inflation hitting the economy, partly since Ladakh has been thrown open to tourism, the situation is becoming more and more difficult for farmers. A gradual psychological change is thus being wrought upon Ladakh society. It has begun to feel that what it has considered adequate all these centuries is not enough and that there is another culture where an infinite amount of goods and money are available.

Ladakhi society has begun to feel that what it has considered adequate all these centuries is not enough and that there is another culture where an infinite amount of goods and money are available.
goods and money are available. The external appearances of modern industrial life seen from a distance has thus created a feeling of deprivation. In my opinion, this is the biggest poverty of all.

R.S.: You have been working in Ladakh for a long time. It sometimes seems easier to address a system that has gone the whole hog and is now reassessing the process. But in a society like Ladakh, which is on the brink of modernisation, it must be infinitely more difficult. Who is it that you appeal to? Do the bureaucrats and government officials speak your language? Or do you have to appeal to the people directly?

H.N.H.: We are trying to talk to as many people as possible, appealing especially to government and the local elite who have made good with new money. Unfortunately, the latter have most of the power. We are trying to keep villagers informed about the whole movement towards development by highlighting how it has affected other parts of the world. But, you see, we are fighting an uphill battle, as the Ladakhi society is continuously exposed to Western tourism and the mainstream media, which gives it a feeling of being backward and poor. For some, it is unrealistic to reject development altogether. Many want to hold on to some parts. But unless we learn to see this whole system and its directions clearly, our attempts to hold on to some parts of it entail the risk of tearing the fabric of the whole of traditional culture. At the moment, the Ladakhis are extremely sensitive to this whole issue. They don’t want to be denied any ‘fruits’ of development.

R.S.: Education is a State endeavour. Can one infiltrate its system and make any impact?

H.N.H.: Ultimately, it is up to the planners in Delhi...Srinagar or wherever. However, private educational institutions can bring about a significant change. Personally, I have been lobbying for Ladakhi children to have holidays for four months in summer, which is the peak of the agricultural season. This way, children are not entirely cut off from their land and culture. Intellectual education should teach children to think, question. They should be well equipped to assess the merits of their own civilisation and contrast it with others. Perhaps, in order to be more in touch with the outside world, they should be taught English, although personally I don’t subscribe to this view.

At present, businesses and multinationals have a vested interest in promoting mono-cultures, separating producers and consumers further. They are responsible in promoting the idea that trade will break down boundaries, bringing in oneness and unity. Yet, honestly, is that what is happening?

R.S.: Why? Do you think that the English language is in any way connected with development in today’s world?

H.N.H.: Absolutely! At least in the way the Ladakhis feel simple and backward if they don’t know it. Also, it doesn’t fetch them jobs where it really matters. I am talking of the unviability and unsustainability of one culture dominating and replacing every other culture in the world. Cultures were a consequence of respecting biological and ecological diversities and people reflecting these diversities. Language is an important and integral part of culture and in the diverse richness of language was a reflection of the diversity of life. Therefore, part of our world view must be a real concern against standardisation and ‘internationalism’. A global educational campaign should spell out very clearly, the unsustainability of mono-cultures and also point out the alternatives. My experiences in Ladakh brought me to a closer sense of community and a more indigenous and localised way of living, with the feeling of being part of a larger whole. Smaller communities are a necessary prerequisite for this to happen. At present, businesses and multinationals have a vested interest in promoting mono-cultures, separating producers and consumers further. They are responsible in promoting the idea that trade will break down boundaries, bringing in oneness and unity. Yet, honestly, is that what is happening? For me, the biggest paradox is that the proponents of the ‘plastic monoculture’ are using this very language of interdependence to promote a very selfish and shortsighted interest.

R.S.: Helena, in conclusion, what is your deepest belief?

H.N.H.: I believe in real equality through a just and sustainable system which respects diversity, a real interdependence of all things cemented by a spiritual tradition.

Helena can be written to at the following address: The Ladakh Ecological Development Group, Leh, Ladakh-194101.

THE EYE NO.6, VOL. 1 NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1992
ERICA THAKAR
MEMORIES OF A GURU

I
first met Thakarji some twenty
years ago when I joined the choir
at Gandharva Mahavidyalaya in
Delhi. My relationship with him
was, at that time, fairly distant. It
was only years later when he started coming
to home to teach that we quickly developed
during rapport that lasted almost ten years
until his abrupt end in December '92.

I remember that I was terrified of
him in my first class because Thakarji
had a reputation of making his students
cry! To my surprise, I found that though
he was extremely thorough and
conscientious, he was also very lucid
and logical in his explanations which
were accompanied by vivid
gestations and facial expressions. He
was kind.

He thought continually about
music, believing that it was a vehicle of
self-expression latent in everyone in
different degrees. He struggled hard not
only to get his students to sing the right
notes but to breathe life and meaning
into it. Overworked technique, practice
and even knowledge, according to him,
deadened the heart, not reserving space
for fresh feelings and emotions. He felt
that we should suspend all judgement
and listen to different kinds of music.

Despite his sometimes non-
traditional approach, Thakarji was
steeped in it with a knowledge of
ragas
and compositions that was phenomenal.
Perhaps shy and reticent in larger groups,
he would blossom out in a class and
surprise you with amazing anecdotes of
famous musicians like Pt. Vishnu
Digambar. I used to often wonder why Thakarji,
with his obvious musical talents never
became a performing musician. It could
have been an extreme sensitivity to
criticism as well as a tendency to be too
self-critical. Also, he perhaps, never
really 'grabbed' the right opportunities
to be one.

Little did I imagine in that class the
day before his cancer was diagnosed, that
the small music room would never again
resound with his voice, teaching,
cajoling, coaxing and scolding. It was a
fight he couldn't win.

To many of his students, indeed for
me, Thakarji will be an inseparable
part of my love for music.

Poornima Rai

Every five hundred years or so
The door opens for ten seconds
Every five hundred years
We get a chance to look
Between worlds.
Act quickly or you'll miss your chance
Slam!
Oops too late!
There goes another five hundred years!
Panchatantra

One Vishnu sharmah
shrewdly gleaming
All worldly wisdom's
inner meaning.
In these five books the
charm compresses
Of all such books the
world possesses.

It is said that an ounce of
sense contained in the
Panchatantra is better than a ton
of scholarship. Most of us are
familiar with it from our
childhood as ‘once-upon-a-time’
stories and have read them in
abridged forms or in comics.
Rarely have we encountered a
literal translation in verse form.
Indeed, these wise verses, often
epigrismatic in style, go to make
the real character of the
Panchatantra. The stories are
charming when regarded as pure
narrative, but it is the beauty,
wisdom and wit of the verses which
lift the Panchatantra above the
best story books.

The Panchatantra is a ‘niti
shastra’ or textbook of ‘niti’. The
word ‘niti’ roughly means the
‘wise conduct of life’. It is witty,
mischievous and profoundly sane.
The word, ‘Panchatantra’ means,
the ‘Five Books’, the
‘Pentaieuch’. Each of the five
books is independent, consisting
of a framing story with numerous,
inserted stories, told by one or
another of the characters of the
main narrative. The device of the
framing story is familiar in
oriental works, as in the Arabian
Nights. The large majority of the
actors are animals, who have, of
course, a fairly constant
character. Thus, the lion is strong,
but dull of wit, the jackal, crafty,
the heron stupid, the cat, a
hypocrite. The animal actors
present far more vividly and
undenied and free of
all sentimentality, a view, that
piercing the humbug of everyday
ideal, reveals with incomparable
wit, the sources of lasting joy.
And this is how it happened....

INTRODUCTION

In the southern country is a city
called Maiden’s Delight. There
lived a king named Immortal-
Power. He was familiar with all
the works dealing with the wise
conduct of life. His feet were made
dazzling by the tangle of rays of light from
jewels in the diadems of mighty kings
who knelt before him. He had reached
the far shore of all the arts that embel-
lish life. This king had three sons. Their
names were Rich-Power, Fierce-Power
and Endless-Power and they were
supreme blockheads.

Now when the king perceived that
they were hostile to education, he sum-
momed his counsellors and said, “Gen-
tlemen, it is known to you that these sons
of mine, being hostile to education, are
lacking in discernment. So when I be-
hold them, my kingdom brings me no
happiness, though all external thorns
are drawn. For there is wisdom in the
proverb:

Of sons unborn, or dead, or fools,
Unborn or dead will do:
They cause a little grief, no doubt;
But fools, a long life through.

and again:

To what good purpose can a cow
That brings no calf nor milk be
bent?
Or why begot a son who proves
A duncé and disobedient?

Some means must therefore be
devised to awaken their intelligence.”
And they, one after another,
replied: “O King, first one learns gram-
mar, in twelve years. If this subject has
somewhat been mastered, then one
masters the books on religion and
practical life. Then the intelligence
awakens.”

But one of their number, a counsel-
lor named Keen, said: “O King, the
duration of life is limited, and the ver-
bal sciences require much time for
mastery. Therefore let some kind of
epitome be devised to wake their intel-
ligence. There is a proverb that says:

Since verbal sciences have
no final end,
Since life is short, and
obstacles impend,
Let central facts be picked and
firmly fixed,
As swans extract the milk
with water mixed.
THE STORY OF THE LAST EPISODE...

Godly was a holy man who lived in a secluded monastery. He managed to amass a fair amount of wealth and was extremely miserly. He trusted no one and kept his treasure under his arm, day and night. June, a rogue, was eager to get at this treasure. But, of course, there were obstacles, so how should he go about it? The only way was to win Godly's confidence, which is what he did. He persuaded him to believe in his virtuousness by mouthing righteous platitudes. He was so deaf at this, that Godly even accepted him as a disciple.

But the treasure never left Godly. As a matter of fact, he distanced June even further by giving him a hut near the monastery gate where he could spend nights. Naturally, frustration loomed large.

But fate intervened. Godly was invited one day, by his pupil who wanted him to officiate at the latter's thread ceremony. So, he started out with June.

On the way, they came across a river. Godly went in to bathe and as luck would have it, he handed over the treasure to June for safekeeping. Naturally, June promptly decamped with it.

On discovering this, Godly was destroyed. In abject melancholy, he tried to locate June, not very successfully. He went home muttering, ‘And we, when tricked by June’.

THE WEAVER’S WIFE

Now as he walked along, Godly spied a weaver, who with his wife, was on his way to the neighboring city for liquor to drink, and he called out: “Look here, my good fellow! I come to you as a guest, brought by the evening sun. I do not know a soul in the village. Let me receive the treatment due a guest. For the proverb says:

No stranger may be turned aside
Who seeks your door at eventide; 
Nay, honor him and you shall be
Transmuted into deity.

And again:

Some straw, a floor, and water,
With kindly words beside;
These four are never wanting
Where pious folk abide.

On hearing this, the weaver said to his wife: “Go, my dear. Take this guest to the house. Treat him hospitably, give him water for his feet, food, a bed, and so on. And stay in the house yourself. I will bring plenty of wine and meat for you.” With this, he went further.

So the wife started home with Godly, and showed a laughing countenance, for she had a certain swain in mind.

She went home, offered Godly a rickety cot and said: “My holy sir, a
woman friend has come from the village and I must speak to her. I will be back immediately. Meanwhile, you may stay in our house. But please be careful.” With this she put on her best things and looked for her swain.

At this moment she ran into her husband, clapping a jug of wine. He was reeling drunk, his hair was tousled, and he stumbled at every step. She ran when she saw him, entered the house, took off her finery, and appeared as usual.

Now the weaver had seen her flee, had observed the finery, and since he had previously heard gossip about her, his heart was troubled and anger overcame him. So he entered the house and said: “You wench! Where were you going?”

And she replied: “I have not been out since I left you. What is this drunken twaddle? There is sense in the proverb.

After wine and fever, these Selfsame symptoms come: Shaking, falling to the ground.

Mad delirium.

And again:

The setting sun and drunken man Are both a fiery red: They sink in naked helplessness; Their dignity is dead.”

When he had taken the scolding and had noticed her change of dress, he said: “I have heard gossip about you for a long time. Today I have seen the proof. I am going to give you what you deserve.” So he beat her limb with a club, tied her firmly to a post and fell into a drunken slumber.

At this juncture her friend, the barber’s wife, learning that the weaver was asleep, came in and said: “My dear, he is waiting for you over there...you know who. Go at once.” But the weaver’s wife replied: “Just see what a fix I am in. How can I go? You must return and tell my adorer that I cannot possibly meet him there at this mo-

ment.”

“My dear,” said the barber’s wife, “do not say things like that. For a wench of spirit this is no way to behave. As the saying goes:

Those who earn the name of blessed Show a camel-like persistence When they pluck the fruit of pleasure Counting neither toil nor distance”

“Very fine indeed,” said the weaver’s wife. “But tell me how I am to go when I am tied fast. And here lies my husband—the brute!” “My dear,” said the barber’s wife, “he is he plies with drink and will not wake until the sun’s rays reach him. I will set you free and take your place myself. But you must hurry back after you have entertained your admirer.”

This she did, and a moment later the weaver rose a little mollified, and said drunkenly: “Come, you nagger! If you will stay at home after today and stop nagging, I will set you free.” The barber’s wife said nothing, fearing that her voice would betray her. Even when he repeated his offer, she made no answer. Then he became angry and cut off her nose with a sharp knife. And he said: “Where! Now you can stay there. I shall not be nice to you again.” So he fell asleep, muttering.

Now Godly, having lost his money, was so tormented by hunger that he could not sleep, and was a witness of all that the women did.

Presently the weaver’s wife, after enjoying herself with her swain, came home and said to the barber’s wife: “Well, are you all right? I hope that brute did not get up while I was gone.” And the barber’s wife answered: “The rest of me is all right. But I’ve lost my nose. Set me free quick, before he wakes up. I want to go home. If not, he will do something worse next time, cut off ears and things.”

So the wench freed the barber’s wife, took her former position, and cried reproachfully: “Oh, you dreadful simpleton! I am a true wife, a model of faithfulness. What man is able to vio-
late or disfigure me? Listen, ye guardian deities of the world! If I am a faithful wife, may these gods make my nose grow again as it was before. More than that, if I have had so much as a secret desire for a strange man, may they reduce me to ashes.

After this explosion, she said to him directly: “Look, you villain! By virtue of my faithfulness my nose has grown as it was before.” And when he took a torch and examined her, he found her nose as it was originally and a great pool of blood on the floor. At this he was amazed, released her ropes and flattered her with a hundred wheedling endearments.

Now Godly had seen the whole business. And he was amazed and said:

Learn science with the gods above
Or imp in neither space.
Yet women’s wit will rival it:
How keep them in their place?

The lion o’er whose awful face
Fall fierce the tussled mane,
The elephant upon whose cheeks
Streams ichor’s glistening rain,
The men of wit or courage who
In books or battles gleam,
In presence of their females, all
Turn into cowards supreme.

With these thoughts the night dragged drearily for the holy man. Meanwhile the go-between went home with her nose cut off, and reflected: “What is to be done now? How is this great deficiency to be concealed?”

That night her husband the barber, had to spend in the king’s palace, practicing his trade. At dawn he came home and, being eager to begin his thriving business with the townspeople, he stopped at the door and called to her: “My dear, bring me my razor-case at once. The townspeople need my services.”

Hereupon an idea occurred to the noseless woman. She remained in the house, but sent him a single razor. And the barber, angry because the entire case had not been delivered, flung the razor in her direction. This gave the wench her opportunity. Lifting her hands to heaven, she dashed from the house, screaming with all her might: “Oh, oh, oh! The ruffian! I was always a faithful wife. Look! He cut off my nose. Save me, save me!”

Hereupon the police arrived, thrashed the barber limp, tied him fast, and took him to court with his wife whose nose was gone. And the judges asked him: “Why did you do this ghastly thing to your wife?” Then, his wits being so addled by astonishment that he could give no answer, the jurymen quoted law:

The guilty man is terrified
By reason of his crime. His pride
Is gone, his powers of speaking fail.
His glance rve, his face is pale.

And again:

The sweat appears upon his brow.
He stumbles on, he knows not how,
His face is pale, and all he utters
Is much distorted; for he stutters.

While, on the other hand:

The innocent is self-reliant;
His speech is clear, his glance defiant;
His countenance is calm and free;
His indignation makes his plea.

The prisoner is obviously guilty. The legal penalty for assaulting a woman is death. Let him be impaled.”

But Godly, seeing him led to the place of execution, went to the officers of justice and said: “Gentlemen, you make a mistake in putting this wretched
barber to death. His conduct has been correct. Pray listen to these words of mine:

_The jackal at the ram-fight:
And we, when tricked by Jne;
The meddling friends—were playing
A self-defeating tune._

So the officers said: “How was that, holy sir?” Then Godly related to them the three stories, complete in every detail. And they were all astonished as they listened. They set the barber free, and said:

_Stay not a woman, Brahman, child,
An invalid or hermit mild;
In case of major dereliction,
Disfigurement is the infliction._

Now she has lost her nose through her own act. As additional punishment from the king, let her ears be cut off.” When this had been done, Godly, strengthening his spirit by the two examples, returned to his own monastery.

“And that is why I say:

_The jackal at the ram-fight,..._ and the rest of it.”

“Well,” said Cheek, “such being the case, what are you and I to do?” And Victor answered: “Even in these circumstances, I shall have a flash of intelligence, showing me how to separate Lively from the king. Besides, he has fallen into serious vice, has our master Rusty. For

_Mad folly stings
The greatest kings,
Who then embrace a vice:
But servant’s care
Should check them there
By means of learning nice._

“Into what vice has our master Rusty fallen?” asked Cheek. And Victor replied: “There are seven vices in the world, namely: Drink, women, hunting, scolding, dice, greed, cruelty: these seven are vice. These, however, really make a single vice, called ‘attachment,’ with seven subdivisions.” Then Cheek inquired: “Is there only a single fundamental vice, or are there others also?”

And Victor expounded: “There are in the world five fundamentally vicious situations”. And when Cheek asked: “How are they differentiated?” Victor continued: “They are called (1) deficiency, (2) corruption, (3) attachment, (4) devastation, (5) mistaken policy.

“To begin at the beginning, the vice called ‘deficiency’ means the non-existence of one or another of these: king, counselor, people, fortress, treasure, punitive power, friends.

_“Secondly, when subjects, foreign or native, become restless, whether individually or en masse, there arises the vicious situation called’ corruption.’ ‘Attachment’ was explained in the words: Drink, women, hunting.....and the rest of it. Here there is a love-group (drink, women, hunting, dice) and a wrath-group (scolding, and the rest). A man thwarted in the love-group becomes obnoxious to the wrath-group. The love-group requires no elucidation. The love-group, however, threefold as already described, needs some further characterization. ‘Scolding’ is ill-considered imputation of fault on the part of one bent on injuring an antagonist. ‘Cruelty’ means ruthless and unwarranted refinements in putting to death, imprisonment, mutilation. ‘Greed’ is covetousness pushed to a merciless point. These are the seven subdivisions of the vice of attachment.

“Next, there are eight kinds of devastation: by act of God, fire, water, disease, plague, panic, famine, devillun (which is a mere name for excessive rain). This disposes of the vice called ‘devastation.’

“Finally, there is mistaken policy. Where a man makes a mistaken use of the six expedients—peace, war, change of base, entrenchment, alliance, duplicity—adopting war instead of peace, or peace instead of war, or making similar mistakes in regard to the other expedients, there we have the vice of mistaken policy.

“Now our master Rusty has fallen into the very first vice, that of deficiency. For he has been so captivated by Lively that he pays not the smallest heed to counselor or any other of the six supports of his throne. He adopts rather completely a vegetarian morality. So what is the use of lengthy discussion? Rusty must by all means be detached from Lively. No lamp, no light.”

“How will you detach him?” objected Cheek. “You have not the power.”

“My dear fellow,” said Victor, “there is a verse to fit the situation, namely:

_In cases where brute force would fail,
A shrewd device may still prevail:
The crow-hen used a golden chain,
And so the dreadful snake was slain._

“How was that?” asked Cheek. And Victor told the story of: _HOW THE CROW-HEN KILLED THE BLACK SNAKE._

To be continued...
MA’AMING IS MAIMING

RUKMINI SEKHAR

The transition from the springy days of youth to middle age occurs in a variety of ways, all of which can be tackled. The greying temples can be smothered with Tru Tone, wrinkles washed away with Nivea and lassitude with Thirty Plus.

But what happens when someone ‘ma’am’ you? The thing has assumed dangerous proportions and you can’t treat it lightly any more. You have to will all your resources to the fore and resolve on a frontal attack. You can’t take it lying down (although that’s what you want to do most of the time).

Ma’mology is a whole new subject, deserving a chair at all reputed universities. Its study should be undertaken with seriousness and respect. Research scholars should be given scholarships to explore Ma’mology and books should be written on the subject (after all, aren’t there books on Gerontology?). Poets should sing about it romantically to reduce its pernicious effects and sociologists should study the reaction of the afflicted individual in relation to society. Not to mention the infinite potential it offers to psychologists wanting to study the connections between verbal tortures and mental trauma.

For trauma it is. Childhood is full of happy memories of sticking chewing gum under the class room desk, adolescence, confused and easy and the twenties, a period of exciting discoveries, including the neighbour’s son. Just when you begin riding on the euphoria of perennial youth, along comes a ma’am-er and shatters all your dreams.

But let me pause in my lamentations like the Jews in Babylon must have (at least for a tea break). And illustrate my point with an example I wouldn’t hesitate to call painful. I was going to attend a programme in a girl’s college and requested the girls to pick me up on the way. With customary pep I greeted them at the door.

One of them in culottes, breezed in and proceeded to pick up my bag, saying “Good evening ma’am”, I froze. The axe had fallen. Blood rushed to my ears and the tongue cleaved to my palate. I couldn’t reply. I had to do something to show them that I wasn’t perturbed by a mere ma’am-er. With impeccable sang froid I replied, “Hi folks”? They were not to be foiled.

“Are you ready to leave ma’am?” I had to resign myself to my fate. I was ma’am-ed.

Suddenly I was defiant. Was I not recently in college, drinking chai in the canteen, making fun of Mrs. John’s Malayali accent, bunking college to see films? Did I not judge assignments and swing at college socials? Was I not a bit of alright?

Well, anyway, don’t think you men are not going to be victimised too. Remember, your days are numbered, when a similar ruthless collegian ‘ji’ or ‘saab’s’ you. Get prepared, for one day you will be maimed just like the ma’ams.

READ THE BACK ISSUES OF THE EYE!

THOUGHT PROVOKING!
INSPIRING!
WORTH COLLECTING!

Available at Rs. 14/- each.
(Plus Rs. 2.00, postal charges)
CHEQUES AND DRAFTS ONLY
IN FAVOUR OF
SPIC-MACAY PUBLICATIONS.

Send to/ Collect from:
THE EYE,
39, ANAND LOK,
NEW DELHI-110049.

THE EYE NO. VOL. NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1992
59
Development Alternatives (DA), is an organisation committed to the development of 'alternative technology', or technology that is non-exploitative of natural resources, lends itself to low costs and furthers values of social justice. Their efforts have resulted in the creation of the 'Tara' loom for making cloth, moulding bricks with mud and recycling of paper, to name a few.

In the face of devastating onslaughts by the media promoting rampant materialism, the possibilities of people getting an 'alternative' view is heavily minimised. It calls for a concerted effort from all concerned, to disseminate a system of values which are not destructive and promotes human well being.

Two cassettes, Ankur and Songs on Environment and Development, are therefore a happy occurrence. They have been produced by DA with help from NORAD. The jacket flaps are elegant and made from hand-made paper.

The cassettes are almost disarming in their simplicity. The tunes are simple and 'humble' with catchy refrains. They are largely hill tunes, conjuring the Himalayas in all their diverse natural expressions. The lyrics call people to once again look at the Kaghz depicting the nature and animals in the jungle in Sati and Savitri, the words exhort women to come out of their homes and be instrumental in social change. All in all, the songs have a simple, direct appeal.

One wonders whether it is not high time that our education planners thought about introducing such songs into the curriculum, instead of carrying on with nursery rhymes which have not only no indigenous relevance, but create a division between the child and its local culture.

One hopes that modern technology, instead of swallowing up all manner of resources, is used instead to promote values of eternal relevance. More power to other such endeavours!

-Rakmini Sekhar

The cassettes can be got from:
Development Alternatives,
B 32, Institutional Area
Tara Crescent,
New Mehrauli Road
New Delhi-110016.
Telephone: 665370/657938.

THE DEVELOPMENT SET

Excuse me, friends, I must catch my jet
I'm off to join the Development Set;
My bags are packed, and I've had all my shots,
I have travellers cheques and pills for trots.

The Development Set is bright and noble,
Our thoughts are deep and our vision global;
Although we move with the better classes,
Our thoughts are always with the masses.

In Sheraton hotels in scattered nations,
We damn multinational corporations;
Injustice seems so easy to protest,
In such seething hotbeds of social rest.

We discuss malnutrition over steaks
And plan hunger talks during coffee breaks.
Whether Asian floods or African drought,
We face each issue with an open mouth.

We bring in consultants whose circumlocution
Raises difficulties for every solution;
Thus guaranteeing continued good eating
By showing the need for another meeting.

The language of the Development Set,
Stretches the English alphabet:
We use words like 'epigenetic',
'Micro', 'Macro', and 'logarithmic'.

Development Set homes are extremely chic,
Full of carvings, curios and draped with batik.
Eye-level photographs subtly assure
That your host is at home with the rich and the poor.

Enough of these verses-on with the mission!
Our task is as broad as the human condition;
Just pray to God the biblical promise is true:
The poor ye shall always have with you.

Ross Coggins
BOOK REVIEW

KRISHNA CHAITANYA
A PROFILE AND SELECTED PAPERS.
Edited by Suguna Ramachandran.
Published by Konark Publishers, New Delhi.
Price Rs 200/.

SUBHASH MALLIK

This book is about K.K. Nair, better known by his pen name, Krishna Chaitanya, for his wide ranging writings, too many to mention their titles both in numbers and subjects. There are more than forty books, not to mention essays, articles and so on. He has written an ten-volume history of world literature, classics retold for children, books on art, including a four-volume history of painting, Indological works, and a five-volume philosophy of freedom. He has received many awards and degrees, travelled widely and continues to work as hard as ever even today.

Formidable as the list is, it is commendable that the editor has done a successful job of a difficult task, i.e., writing A Rather Piquant Profile in the first eighty four pages. It succinctly summarises the many dimensions of Chaitanya’s personality and work, giving also in a nutshell, extracts from some of his essays in this book and others. ‘At seventy odd years, the disciplined regimen continues and it has received inspiration from other traditions too. Father Jerome D’Souza once took him to Champigana in the South which was then the place where novitiates of the Society of Jesus lived conditioned organism. Why, when, where and how this happened has been his mission to retrace intellectually and incisively. But he goes beyond merely being a critic, very often suggesting methods of discovery. It is pertinent to mention that only a fractional sampling of his work is delineated in this volume. The range covers sixteen topics, namely, Poetic Experience: The Indian View, Through A Labyrinth of Images. Flowers from a Temple Pond, A Cup of Coffee, Pilgrimage to a Far Off Buddha, Art and Social Consciousness, Two Great Composers, Indian Dance—Naive Longings for Winds of Change, Towards a Revival of the Bhasa, Studies in Film Aesthetics, The Whole Man and The Economic Man, Unorthodox Thoughts on Peace and Development, Some Questions for Every Indian, Religion-helpor Hindrance?, A Lesson in Symbiosis and A Profounder Eclogy.

In Profounder Eclogy Chaitanya stresses on holistic living between Man, Nature and the Cosmos. Myth plays an important role in this understanding. While talking about the Himalayas, it brings to mind yet one more instance seeking benign ends through poetic legends: ‘Siva is the deity of the Himalayas. When the Ganges, which was a river of heaven was prayed to for coming to the earth, she said it could not be done because the force of her descent would shatter the earth. But the matted locks of the great Siva broke the fall and the impetus of the waters did not destroy the earth. The locks stand for the Himalayan forests that break the fury of tropical rain and conserve both the water and the top soil of the slopes in ways beneficial to man.’ To include another quote from the same essay: ‘After a bitterly disappointing experience with a science that decayed into scientism and a philosophy that took to discussing utter trivialities with enormous seriousness, we have begun to realise that poetry may possibly provide redemption. Gaia is the Earth Mother of ancient Greek myth and worship; and in advancing his “Gaia” hypothesis, Lovelock stresses the need to go beyond the mind-set of mere expediency to a sense of the sacramental.’

Somehow, Chaitanya is shy to call himself a spiritualist. Although he did at one time think seriously of joining the order of Ramakrishna, Chaitanya has travelled extensively and in essays such as Pilgrimage to a Far Off Buddha and Flowers From a Temple Pond, one sees his refined powers of observation, which seeks to restore cultural impulses ‘which have been lost under the leaf-drift for centuries.’

His works have been called,
'stupendous, colossal and titanic'. He is known to write 'with an integrative energy that welds in lucid prose insights, ideas drawn from an astonishing range of disciplines.' The Gita, as indeed the whole of the Mahabharata, has been an unflinching source of inspiration for him and he claims that a gross transgression of the values of this great book is an unforgivable lapse on the part of the Indian tradition.

It is difficult to make sweeping statements about Chaitanya's works, since they are so voluminous, requiring careful reading and digestion. However, in this volume, readers are offered glimpses into the brilliant mind (and soul) of Krishna Chaitanya.

ANCIENT FUTURES—LEARNING FROM LADAKH.
HELENA NORBERG HODGE.
Published by Sierra Club, San Francisco.

RUKMINI SEKHAH

Is the Eurocentric model of development the right one for Third World countries? It is difficult to say as the excitement of Rambo with a gun on a poster in downtown Leh screams at you, while under it walks an old man in patched clothes, carrying a load on his back.

The old man and the poster can throw one into confusion and add grist to the mill of the development debate, which is loud and forceful, yet arriving at little or no solutions. Except to perpetuate a gargantuan change into cultures that it proclaims are facing 'cultural and economic isolation'.

Into this development debate of Ladakh steps Helena Norberg Hodge, tall, Swedish, fluent in Ladakhi and her book, Ancient Futures. Each year and more of Helena's sixteen years of walking and trekking in Ladakh, is woven into its lines as she takes us into the interiors of the Ladakhi world—material, emotional and spiritual.

The book is a first person narrative and reads like a story, simple and sincere. It is written by a woman and to that extent it is intensely intuitive and gentle. In a rather overpowering masculine analytical world which stresses on tangibles, Helena's analysis of Ladakh goes deeper into the human psyche—the study points consistently to the bottom line, namely the well being of the human being.

The book is divided into two broad parts—Tradition and Change. The author, herself a protagonist in the drama, shuttles between a complete, integrative and spiritually oriented world and a world of competition and fragmentation, prompted by an unidirectional, monocultural system, widely favoured by development experts. As she says, the singular most devastating impact of this is the loss of the Ladakhi's self respect, making them feel backward and poor.

The author touches on every aspect of life—agriculture, housing, animal husbandry, marriage, local self governance, upbringing of children, education, festivals, medicinal practices and religion. In a systematic way, she proceeds to explain how each of these aspects has been mutated almost entirely, by a centralised, highly consumptive, dependency-increasing modern economy.

Tourists have swarmed into Ladakh since Ladakh opened up to the world in the early seventies, making irreparable holes in the fabric of Ladakhi culture. From the plastic invasion, only too visible in the streams and streets, to the pathetic imitativeness of adolescent boys, wearing leather jackets; cutting off from family and riding noisy motorbikes, the transformation is nearing completion. Of course, our national television has done little to stem this image creation.

In the chapter, Nothing is Black, Nothing is White, the author admits that it is easy to romanticise traditional cultures. Yet, how is it that these cultures survived as a sophisticated civilisation, with a highly sustainable lifestyle, a profound spirituality and wisdom and joie de vivre? And why is it that we find that the aspiring get-rich-quickly Ladakh reduced to a wage earner, disconnected from the land, buying third rate food grown far away and soiled in transit? In the chapter called The Development Hoax, Helena painstakingly explores these contradictions.

When the West, which has unambiguously dictated development is now willing to put on brakes, we in the Third World are myopically racing towards what the West didn't want to become in the first place.

Ancient Futures is the story of a people who were happy with themselves and suddenly are not. Telling black and white pictures embellish the author's point of view. It's a book worth reading for anyone concerned with the directions of human life.
ELEPHANTS’ APPEAL

Dear Human Being,

Our present situation has necessitated among other things this appeal. They tell us that we have friends among you.

As you know, we belong to a community comprising the two remaining species of the two surviving genera in the order Proboscidea or the natural group of animals with a proboscis or trunk as our distinct feature. Your scientists say we were 352 families originally roaming the earth, 350 of which have succumbed to the pressures of time. Our African cousins and we remain on this planet only to languish in the thought of certain death.

Five thousand years ago our habitat spread over the length and breadth of the Indian subcontinent. Today, none of us wild elephants live in Pakistan and Western India. The habitat that sustains us today are isolated pockets in Asia. The concerned habitat is the remaining evergreen and moist deciduous forests in Asia.

In the ecological pyramid that your teachers draw on blackboards, we are at the apex. We need a lot of fodder and so, a degraded habitat cannot sustain us. We are under constant threat from poaching and forest fires.

Two of our slave brothers, who were chained to huge trees drowned in recent floods prompted by degradation in the southern hill ranges of the Sahyadri.

What nature’s fury cannot accomplish, two arms and a breech-loading rifle can do. And thus, our free brothers and sisters in the wild are left to the mercy of Greed.

Save us.

Your brothers on earth,
Asian Elephants.

If you wish to be part of GAJARAKSHA, a world-wide campaign to save the Asian elephant from extinction, contact

SEED, Post Box 14, Kochi, Kerala-682001, India.

SAVE RANTHAMBORE MOVEMENT

In the late seventies, the resettlement of villages from the core of Ranthambore National Park to the outskirts of the park resulted in a steady rise in the tiger population. But the present state of affairs has put all the efforts back to square one. Today, there is no buffer zone between the park. Poaching is the biggest hazard, compounded by the increasing demand for tiger bones in recent years. The bones and skins go to the Far East via Nepal and other markets in India itself.

What has to be done now? What immediate remedial measures should be taken?

Join our movement to save our forests and wildlife.

Write to:
Sandip Diwan,
Coordinator, Baroda Chapter, Save Ranthambore Movement,
P.O. Box 2010, Baroda 390002.
**SRI AUROBINDO EDUCATION SOCIETY**  
Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch, New Delhi-110016  
1993 Summer Camps & Programmes  
at Van Niwas, Nainital

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>April 26</th>
<th>May 5</th>
<th>May 14</th>
<th>May 23</th>
<th>June 1</th>
<th>June 10</th>
<th>June 19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Camp 123</td>
<td>Youth Camp 124</td>
<td>Youth Camp 125</td>
<td>Youth Camp 126</td>
<td>Youth Camp 127</td>
<td>Youth Camp 128</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FEES for YOUTH & STUDY CAMPS:**

(a) 13-35 years, Rs. 550/- per person (Subsidized)  
(b) others, Rs. 850/- per person

**TRAVEL:**  
Delhi-Nainital-Delhi: Per Person 250/-

**ACTIVITIES**

(a) **Youth Camps:** Rock-Climbing, Trekking, Yoga and/or keep fit, Games, Bhajans, Meditation, Cultural Programmes, Shramdan.

(b) **Sri Aurobindo Study Camps:** Lectures & Discussions on spirituality, Yoga, Bhajans, Meditation, Scenic Sightseeing, Cultural Programmes, Yoga and/or accumpressure and/or naturopathy, shramdan.

For reservation of your seat in any of the programmes, send the total amount of fee by M.O. or Demand Draft only, in favour of **Sri Aurobindo Education Society**, and mail along with personal details to:

**Sri Aurobindo Education Society**  
**Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi-110016**  
**Phone: Delhi: 669225, 667863**

---

**CONSERVATION SOCIETY DELHI**  
N-7/C, SAKET, NEW DELHI-110 017

Annual Sunday WALKS FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WALK</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>CONDUCTED BY</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>MEETING POINT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hastsal Monuments</td>
<td>7.3.93</td>
<td>Nalini Thakur</td>
<td>2 p.m.</td>
<td>D.T.D.C. office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moolchand Flyover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Defence ColonyMkt.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mehranui of Bahadur Shah</td>
<td>14.3.93</td>
<td>Nalini Thakur D. Pounya</td>
<td>3 p.m.</td>
<td>Adam Khan Tomb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Behind Qutab Minar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Near Bus Terminal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archaeological Site</td>
<td>21.3.93</td>
<td>Dr. Mani</td>
<td>3 p.m.</td>
<td>Car Park, Qutab Minar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archaeological Park</td>
<td>28.3.93</td>
<td>Nalini Thakur</td>
<td>3 p.m.</td>
<td>Car Park, Qutab Minar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ALL ARE WELCOME

---

**SOCIETY FOR AFFORESTATION AND VERDANT EARTH**

*Did you know that the man who invented CFC's which have punched a large hole in the ozone layer, also put lead into petrol? Tetra-ethyl lead is an additive in motor fuels, used to stop knocking in petrol engine. SAVE has begun campaigns to Help Mother Earth Fight Back, to demand fresh air, clean water and nature, wholesome food. We call for a time-bound plan to phase out tetra-ethyl lead from petrol and chemical fertilizers, pesticides and from Indian agriculture.*

**CAMPAIGN (1993)**

* January 15th - Release of two posters. Starting of a signature campaign to mobilise and build public pressure. Stickers, T-Shirts, Cinema slides have been used.*

* March 15th - Consumers Day. Release of third poster - REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE. A series of panels on the Bhopal gas tragedy and pesticides will be on display.*

* April - Fortnight long festival of films on envi - eco issues. Children's films jointly with Max Mueller Bhavan and Institute for Cultural Research and Action.*

* May - (1st-15th), Launching of post card and letter writing campaign to call for immediate reduction in traffic and CO2 emissions in industrialized countries.*

A concert by a British Reggae Band.

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR ALL MANNER OF THINGS!**

**Contacts:**  
**The Chief Coordinator, SAVE, 136, 1st Cross, Residency Road, Bangalore - 560025, Tel: 5846795/85749.**
SAVE 136, 1st Cross, Residency Road, Bangalore-25, Ph: 584679, 585749
Society for Afforestation And Verdant Earth

LEAD POISONS

DEMAND UNLEADED PETROL

The Indian government has decided to:
* Poison you for 4-1/2 years more.
* Severely damage vital organs in your children and infants—Cause brain damage in children below 3 years.
* Cause liver and kidney failure in adults, raise B.P. and cause infertility and affect pregnancy.
* By adding 0.5 gms. of Tetra Ethyl lead in one litre of petrol. Upto 60% of the ingested lead will remain permanently in your body.

HELP MOTHER EARTH FIGHT BACK

Co-sponsors:

3M Cares For The Environment.