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upon to "bear", it is neither Jesus nor Lord, but could plausibly be construed as Christ, since he is a *Christ*-ian. The prayer should plainly concentrate on (1) circumcision or (3) the name Jesus, and the misleading complications of (2) and (4) should be dropped. In the Liturgical Commission's own *Commentary* p.54 the source of this collect is given as "1662". The Prayer Book in fact wisely confines the collect to the theme of circumcision, and ASB 1980 would have done well to copy it.

Finally, as examples of bad exegesis we may take two of the places—not the only two—where the duty of "witness" is urged upon the people in collects:

"Almighty God, who gave such grace to your apostle Saint Andrew that he readily obeyed the call of your Son and brought his brother with him: give us, who are called by your holy Word, grace to follow without delay and to tell the good news of your kingdom; through . . ." (St Andrew/815)

"Almighty God, who caused the light of the gospel to shine throughout the world through the preaching of your servant Saint Paul. grant that we who celebrate his wonderful conversion may follow him in bearing witness to your truth; through . . ." (Conversion of St Paul/754)

In 1662 the ready obedience of St Andrew is the theme, and obedience to God is sought in petition. Here we have an intrusive reference to "and brought his brother with him" with a corresponding addition about "tell the good news of your kingdom". The Marcan narrative of the sudden call (Mk. 1,16-18) is fudged with the Johannine account of Andrew bringing Simon Peter (Joh. 1,40-42), which is bad exegesis. But worse, the moral is drawn that we should all "tell the good news of your kingdom" as if all God's people were apostles and evangelists. This runs clean contrary to the scriptural picture of the body of Christ articulated so that each has his special function (e.g. 1 Cor. 12,27-30). In the New Testament, those called to evangelise are a small, specially chosen group, and for them we should pray that they may be bold in speaking for the mystery of the gospel (Eph. 6,19). The same misguided notion has corrupted the old collect about St Paul. Instead of showing our gratitude for his conversion by following the holy doctrines which he taught, we are now to follow him in bearing witness to God's truth. If "witness" means evangelism, we have no right to ask that God should choose us. If it means martyrdom, we should pray to be spared it (like "lead us not into temptation"). The notion that every Christian should go in for "personal evangelism" or "personal witness" is a falsehood without scriptural warrant it would certainly be better to pray that we may follow St Paul's holy doctrine.

Conclusion. We have criticised comparatively few of the prayers. Some others are poor, but many are good and some very good. We cannot expect a rapid overhaul of ASB 1980. But when the time comes, we must hope the revisers will think again about the content of the prayers, and try to ensure that the prayers are worthy instruments for teaching the people to pray, and above all worthy expressions of the great intercession which the Lord himself makes before his Father for us.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON INDIAN SPIRITUALITY

Friedhelm Hardy

III *COMMUTING WITHIN ONE WORLD*

It is difficult to envisage in what sort of cultural or psychological circumstances one would decide that the *totality* of one's experiences is worthless. But unlike his European existentialist counterpart, the Indian can fall back on 'extraordinary experiences' to avoid

the despair that we would expect to overwhelm him on the ordinary plane of existence. Another question follows from the first one: what happens when this type of world-view is 'exported', that means, introduced to areas which have nothing to do with those cultural or psychological circumstances that originally gave rise to it? One such transfer is well documented and deserves to be mentioned here[1]. Towards the close of the last millennium B.C., the Tamil-speaking people of the extreme South of India developed an indigenous, highly sophisticated civilization. Hardly influenced by what was going on much further noth, it concerned itself with the down-to-earth affairs of man, like stealing a neighbouring chieftain's cattle, displaying strength and bravery in battle, and falling in love with an attractive girl. Then,

from about the 3rd century A.D. onwards, Jainism and Buddhism imposed their world-negating views on such concerns, introducing in Tamil minds the *samsara : moksha* dichotomy and a totally new concept of transcendence to people who till then had considered survival after death to be no more (and no less) than the perpetuation of one's fame for marvellous exploits in the songs of later generations. It seems to have taken the Tamils about three hundred years to free themselves partially from this ascetic control; by the 6th century A.D. they move rather enthusiastically towards less restrictive facets of Hinduism, choosing what, or placing new emphases where, they felt an affinity to be. Thus the Hindu god Krishna became known to them not only in the many temple sculptures, beautifully decorated and
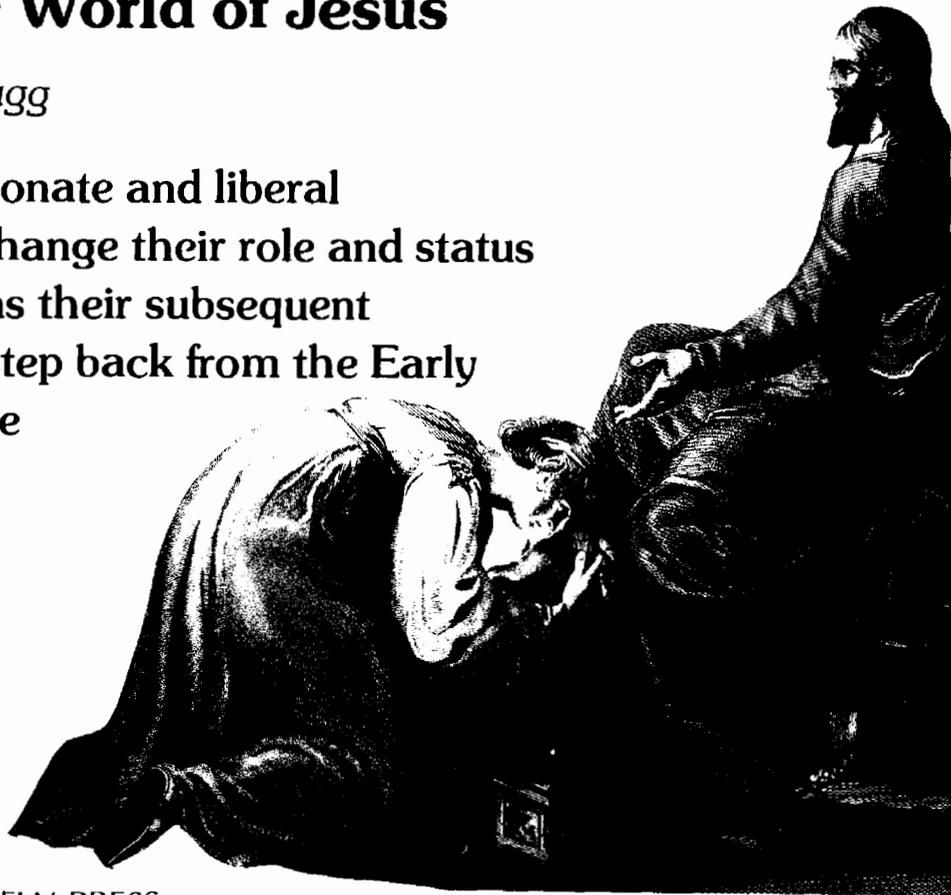
worshipped daily with sensuous rituals, but also through northern myths about him. There many stories were told about him, but the one closest to the Tamils' hearts was the story about his love affairs with the girls and wives of the cowherds among whom he had grown up. But these Tamils by now were unable to recapture the full-blooded down-to-earthness of their ancestors: the awareness of *samsara* was haunting their minds. The theology within which Krishna was presented to them reinforced this sense of 'alienation': essentially he is the transcendental absolute who, by taking on human form (in myth) or descending into the temple image, lures man away from the allurements of *samsara*. The poets who document for us this early stage of Tamil devotion to Krishna, concentrate precisely on this 'alluring' aspect of Krishna, pushing the pursuit of yogic meditational exercises into the background, and thus they allow residues of the old Tamil sentiment—man as an emotional and sensuous being—to play a new role. They opened themselves to the beauty of the temple images and rituals and to the eros of the myths and tried to communicate them in turn through their sensual poetry. But the more they took in from this sense- and emotion-filling nature of Krishna, the closer they thereby came to him and the more they thus fulfilled themselves as human beings—the more they suffered. This peculiar experience of suffering in one way could only be explained as due to Krishna's very presence in their hearts, and in another way they saw this as the reflection of human incapability to contain or encompass the transcendental. This complex emotion is labelled 'separation', and their poetry resorts to the agonies of a woman separated from her lover (along the lines of the earlier secular Tamil love poetry) to express and communicate it by means of these images. They express this experiential dilemma through fits of weeping, choking voices, sleeplessness, trembling limbs, etc. And when the tension between being so close emotionally to Krishna and the suffering of 'separation' this produces become unbearable, they break down—in ecstasy.

The 'agony of ecstasy' is a well-known phenomenon from many religions of the world, and recourse to this comparative context would considerably assist us in illuminating what surely must be a puzzling phenomenon, the 'mysticism of separation' as outlined above[2]. However, in referring to this expression of Krishna devotion in South India I have a different context in mind; in fact, what the previous observations have been concerned with: the *samsara : moksha* dichotomy. The peculiar emotional-'mystical' constellation styled 'separation' is important, first of all, because it has historically infiltrated into the texture of Indian spirituality as a whole. It succeeded in breaking the linguistic and cultural barriers of the Tamil South and making itself available, through Sanskrit and many vernaculars, to the rest of India, giving rise to many movements and individual mystics who displayed and cultivated all the symptoms of ecstatic Krishna religion. But precisely because it entered the pan-Indian scene, it had to get involved in the more general undercurrents of Indian spirituality. In this context 'separation' had to appear as a particular mode of bridging the gap between human nature and the transcendental, and of 'containing' as it were the dialectical tension between a world-negating drive towards *moksha* and a 'return to the world', the blueprint for which has been established in the *Bhagavad-Gita* and in the Bodhisattva ideal, and which was backed up, in the original Tamil context, by a 'holding on to the world'.

The observations of the previous Parts I and II brought us no further than to the realization of two currents in Indian spirituality. Both of these offer numerous points of contact with the Occidental religious awareness, although traditionally the first has been overemphasized in our image of India as a country filled with ascetics, and relatively little credit has been given to the Indian 'return to the world'. But my brief sketch of a 'mysticism of separation' has indicated that our observations have not yet come to an end—other areas remain to be explored, areas in which the two trends appear within a dialectical synthesis. It is here that our conventional image is forced into radical modification, away from mere ignorance or from wilful distortions and misunderstandings. It is in these areas that 'Indian spirituality' has achieved its most typical and sophisticated expressions.

As we have seen, 'separation' can be regarded as a––primarily psychological––means of bringing together the two realms of *samsara* and *moksha*, of containing the move away from, and the return to, the world. In it is implied that *samsara* and *moksha* are not separate, irreducibly independent realms and that a 'unity of being' is accepted. From this we may derive an abstract general characterization of the material which the present Part III concerns itself with: a variety of modes of envisaging a fundamental unity of being which nevertheless is dialectically differentiated. Besides a psychological or emotional starting point, individual varieties may focus on ritual or meditational aspects, and besides straightforward theistic and more elusive quasi-theistic varieties we find definite non-theistic conceptions. A few examples will have to suffice here to illustrate this enormous richness of the concrete solutions to the abstract dialectical pattern.

* * * *

The mysticism of separation reinforces a deeply ingrained acceptance of man's empirical being––his emotions, senses and desires––through the belief in the world as Krishna's place of 'work' and manifestation and as man's place of achieving his perfection through sharing in this work of Krishna. But quite unconsciously a choice is made of only certain aspects that reveal Krishna: beauty, eros, ecstasy. Such a restriction is unknown in other quarters. Here a similar 'throwing oneself' into empirical reality is suggested, but as becoming open to the totality of life, and that means, by over-coming all forms of making a choice. Here the beauty of a woman is consciously set in the context of the cremation ground where the fire devours mortal flesh. The transcendental is envisaged as Woman––dancing on her prostrate corpse-like lover, with a cut-off head in one hand, its blood dripping into a skull held in another hand, and decorated with a 'necklace' of children's heads. Devotion here consists in the containment of such divergent images of a personal absolute, and at the same time in the total surrender to the incomprehensible dialectic of beauty and terror, joy and suffering pervading the contingent world which manifests Kali's own

nature. In the words of the famous Bengali poet Ramprasad Sen (18th century):

> You bear in the world the name of
> 'mother all-compassionate',
> yet there is no trace of pity in you.
> You cut off the heads of others' children
> to adorn your neck with a garland of skulls.
> My words are the cry 'mother! mother!'––
> is it to hear me say this
> that you don't seem to listen?
> Prasad is like that:
> kicked about, he still
> cries out: 'Kali!'[3]

The 'unity of being' spoken about above appears here coded as the total dependence of a child on its mother, and the 'differentiation', 'separation' as that of the beatings and suffering imposed through her 'cruelty'. The poet's crying out in surrender reenacts his unity with Her, just as She is the cause of the cries (both as causing suffering and as wanting to hear him). In passing we may notice––to return to this point later – that here the awareness of a rift emerges which runs vertically through reality: Kali's nature as much as the poet's world of experiences, and in turn their relationship, are seen as dialectically differentiated.

From the religion of Kali we can move to the world of the Tantras –those texts that have recently attracted attention in certain quarters. To the extent that these texts contain anything like a typical conception, this might be presented as follows. Reality is one, held together in a mysterious unity of being. Yet it appears differentiated, 'bipolarity'[4] being its charac-teristic from that angle of observation. A fragrant rose is obviously one whole unity, and yet its fragrance could suggest a description in terms of 'rose endowed with power of emitting fragrance'. Thus a 'bipolarity' emerges: a (passive) rose and an (active) power of fragrance. Some texts, but by no means all, will phrase this bipolarity as Shiva endowed with his *shakti* ('power'). The latter may then 'solidify' further, personified for instance as Kali, or envisaged as creative energy and the world of phenomena as such. Moreover, Shiva perceives himself in *shakti* as a pure mirror, relates to her, and the reflected radiance gives rise to the world. Man, a spark in this radiance, thus shares in his own nature the differentiation of Shiva and *shakti*; his

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fulfilment lies in realizing through ritual and meditational means the other facet, the fundamental unity of Shiva and his *shakti*.

Let us add one further variety to our list before stepping back and trying to make some sense of this. Partly drawing indirectly on such 'tantric' ideas, and partly using directly the psychological heritage of Krishna devotion, a Krishnaite theology evolved in Bengal in the 16th century through the inspiration of the mystic Caitanya[5]. Krishna and his favourite milkmaid Radha figure here as the concrete Absolute and his *shakti*. They unite as lovers— the ultimate unity of being—and yet remain 'separated' (a confluence of mythical models with the mysticism of 'separation'). The phenomenal world is as it were the solidified emotions of Krishna and Radha, their concretised 'separation'. By cultivating the mysticism of separation, the devotee throws himself into the mysterious love of Krishna and Radha and thereby rejoins his transcendental origin, but paradoxically only through 'separation', and only to the extent that Krishna and Radha themselves are undifferentiated, one.

* * * *

No doubt this kind of language will have taxed the reader's patience. Our modes of thinking are bound to find this weird and exotic confusion of the 'ontological' with what would to us be 'psychological', confusing and puzzling. Yet a closer look soon reveals that the difference is by no means one of premises—'mystical thought of the East'—but of appearance. Traditionally our 'realistic' ontology was acquired for the price of a 'creatio ex nihilo'—a most weird and puzzling conception in view of the Indian realistic concept of causality (any real product must have a real cause, including material cause). Modern Occidental thought is quite prepared to operate with the concept of 'quantum'—a 'real' which may take on the form of an energy wave or that of a (material) particle. Thus when in the previous pages the phenomenal world was said to be the 'solidified radiance' or 'concretized emotion', this is less irreconcileable with the notion of a quantum or of the world as materialized thought of God. The difference between Occi-

dental and Indian thought here is thus not due to different premises; what is different here is the point of emphasis. Now this emphasis is placed not on any 'objective', neutral aspect of the phenomenal world 'an sich', but on those aspects which were felt to be directly connected with man's spiritual pursuit. This is best explained in a more general context, when we have looked at some further conceptions; but for the moment the following metaphor may be helpful. There are many different ways possible for a reflection on 'woman'; in a context in which 'desires' are a problem area, it is bound to happen that 'woman as stimulating man's desires' will be the aspect most pronounced, and from here it is only a small step to an 'objective', 'ontological' definition of 'woman as embodied evil desire' or even 'as wicked' . . .

The different conceptions we have been looking at so far have one feature in common which distinguishes them from others in our spectrum. Whether involving Krishna, Kali or Shiva, they all imply a 'substantialist' understanding of the Absolute. Such an understanding goes traditionally against the very grain of Buddhism which, after all, evolved the Bodhisattva ideal as its 'return to the world'. In early Buddhism (where *moksha* appears styled also 'nirvana') any conceptual determination of the liberating experience and its possible ontological status is rejected. Only 'negative' labels are possible, like the following:

> Because it is attainable by means of the special cognition perfected by unfailing effort, . . . because it has existence in the ultimate meaning, *nirvana* is not non-existent. So this was said: 'there is, monks, an unborn, not become, not made, uncompounded, and were it not for this unborn (etc.) no escape could be shown here for what is born, has become, is made, is compounded.'[6]

The Bodhisattva ideal of Mahayana Buddhism implied a commuting between the 'unborn' and 'what is born', and thus really substituted it for the one-directional 'escape' implied in the above passage. It seems logical that the spiritual union between 'wisdom' and 'compassion' postulated for the Bodhisattva demanded some kind of metaphysical framework within which it could be envisaged. This evolved, for instance, in

the school of Nagarjuna, naturally in typical Buddhist, non-substantialist manner. Indeed, it is argued here, *samsara* and *nirvana* are inter-related, held together by a 'unity of being': it is their very 'essencelessness' which underlies both. What is done here is that a far-reaching conclusion is drawn from the traditional assumption that everything on the plane of *samsara* lacks an 'essence'—a non-transient centre of self-identity and of distinctiveness. The conclusion was that in such a case even *samsara* would not permit an ontological definition in terms of 'is', 'is not', etc.—it is 'empty'—just as traditionally *nirvana* had been regarded beyond any such definitions. This produced stunning statements like this: ..

> There is no difference between *samsara* and *nirvana*, and there is no difference between *nirvana* and *samsara*. The borders of the one are also the borders of the other. There is nothing at all which separates the two from each other.[7]

Both are 'empty', and it is thus 'emptiness' (*shunyata*) which unites them; the Bodhisattva commutes in one reality, by realizing this 'emptiness' through the perfection of his wisdom and by taking the phenomena seriously through his compassion. The phenomenal world of our ordinary experience 'is there'; it ceases to be there in *nirvana*[8]; and the ultimate insight of 'wisdom. . . . reveals both to be 'empty', neither there nor not there: final truth experientially available to the Bodhisattva.

Nagarjuna's thought appears far removed from the world of Caitanya or Ramprasad Sen. Yet a brief glance at two further spiritual models will reveal, I hope, that we are dealing here indeed with a spectrum. We may conveniently begin by looking once again at one area of human experience which has provided such an important focal point of Indian spirituality: the 'altered states of consciousness' achieved through the meditational exercises of *yoga*. Just as Arjuna meets through it Krishna and is then pushed back into the world, the Bodhisattva achieves by the same means his perfection of wisdom. At a time when *moksha* could simply be identified with these exalted states, *samsara* as the phenomenal plane was simply envisaged as its opposite: final insight logically contraste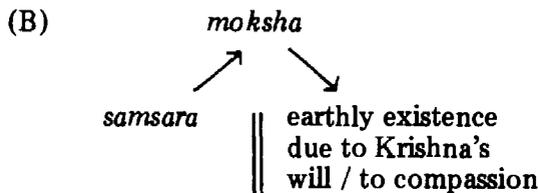d with 'ignorance', and in turn this ignorance is envisaged as the primary cause for man's continued existence in *samsara*. As long as the radically anti-substantialist attitude implied in the notion 'emptiness' was adhered to, little could change in those conceptions of ignorance and wisdom. We know however of certain trends within Mahayana Buddhism—certainly contemporary with, if not earlier than, Nagarjuna—which followed a somewhat different line. A 'self-luminous mind', as it were the locus of enlightenment, acquires more positive, transcendental characteristics and begins to play the role of a unifying factor containing both *samsara* and *nirvana*. Inadvertently it usurps the position of 'emptiness'. The phenomena of ordinary experience obscure this 'mind'—they *are* ignorance; yet as 'empty' phenomena they become transparent and permit the experience of 'enlightenment'. The Buddhists still try to avoid a further substantialist inroad by maintaining that such a Mind is 'empty', that enlightenment is no more than perceiving the one reality 'such as it is'. But this line of development is taken over by the Hindus, particularly by Shankara (7th century A.D.), and turned into a very prestigious 'Hindu system' by identifying this 'self-luminous mind' with the Upanishadic *brahman*. In a sense, this turned the whole Buddhist approach upside down: traditionally, and also in Shankara, *brahman* is regarded as the *one real*—a concept specifically rejected in Buddhism. The phenomenal differentiation of the world is explained as 'illusion', 'unreal', or 'ignorance', and its relationship with *brahman* is defined in a rather nebulous manner as *advaita*—'non-dual'[9]. *Moksha* is envisaged as the elimination of this ignorance, which *is samsara*. We seem to have returned in a full circle to our initial starting point.[10]
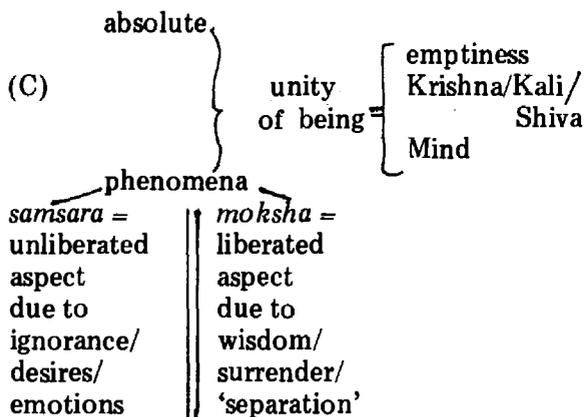
* * * *

This may be the right moment to survey the material which we have collected so far and attempt a more general description. The situation encountered in Part I can be formalized in this way:

(A) *moksha* (realized through
↑ destruction of *karma*)
samsara (caused by *karma*)

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Karma (lit. 'action'), a kind of residue of all one's activities, whether positive or negative, is already at an early stage explained as due to 'ignorance' and 'desires'. From here we moved to a more complicated situation:

(B)   *moksha*

           ↗   ↘

   samsara   ‖ earthly existence
              ‖ due to Krishna's
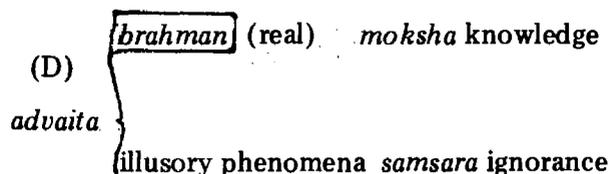   ‖ will / to compassion

Here the crucial point is the continued existence on earth which cannot be described in terms of *samsara*; or in different words, *samsara* by itself ceases to denote 'earthly existence' as such. In the present Part III we looked at various ways in which (B) was developed and placed on a more satisfactory conceptual basis. The 'spectrum' which I have assumed to exist may be represented as follows:

                absolute

(C)   ⎧ emptiness
               unity   ⎪ Krishna/Kali/
               of being = ⎨   Shiva
                           ⎩ Mind
             phenomena

samsara =   ‖ *moksha* =
unliberated   ‖ liberated
aspect   ‖ aspect
due to   ‖ due to
ignorance/   ‖ wisdom/
desires/   ‖ surrender/
emotions   ‖ 'separation'

Common here is that besides a fundamental unity of being a differentiation of an 'absolute' and a 'relative' or phenomenal realm or aspect is assumed, and that *samsara* and *moksha* are now strictly two facets of the phenomenal plane. How precisely this 'unity of being' is defined is interconnected with the kind of factor envisaged as decisive for the phenomenal alternative *samsara : moksha*. Thus for example, when the unity is seen as Mind, it is perfectly logical to assume not only a 'mental' nature for the phenomena, but also a 'mental' (=meditational) factor as decisive for *samsara : moksha*. When it is envisaged as the love between Krishna and

Radha, it is perfectly logical not only to regard the phenomena as 'solidified love', but also make the 'right' kind of love the cause for liberation. Our dichotomy thus appears here to distinguish whether or not the individual has made himself available—in devotion, surrender, wisdom, etc.—to the whole, the 'unity of being', and whether or not the phenomena are cutting him off from it[11]. What remains important here is the fact that my 'absolute' is not substantial (like Nagarjuna's *emptiness* or Shiva in the Tantras). Once it becomes identified with the 'one real' (as Shankara's *brahman*), it also becomes easier to read the pattern differently: *samsara-moksha* rotate by ninety degrees and denote directly *brahman : avidya* (ignorance).

           ┌─────────
           │ *brahman* (real)   *moksha* knowledge
(D)   ⎰
advaita ⎱
           (illusory phenomena *samsara* ignorance

Somewhat rashly—but haven't I been rash all the way through?—I am tempted to say that the tension between (C) and (D) describes the inner tension of major expressions of Indian spirituality over a long period in time. I use 'spiritual' intentionally here, for however precisely an individual school or system tried to spell out its metaphysical structures—the pattern—, this has never prevented individuals or groups from evolving their own *spiritual* reading of this pattern, and it is here that (C) and (D) circumscribe the major area of choice.

*   *   *   *

However, even the briefest and most superficial exploration of Indian spirituality must not forget to make reference to yet another strand in this complex tradition. It is represented by a whole range of courageous individuals such as Basavanna, Kabir and Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion[12]—and the Buddha himself may well be included here—who felt that not only rituals and spiritual exercises but also theologies and philosophies, names and labels interfered with unimpeded, unobstructed pure spirituality. They heaped scorn and

ridicule on everything that appeared to them as 'established' religion, appealed in their vernacular poems to the masses not to get carried away by externals (including concepts and systems), but to open up to—the indescribable mystery. Just *be*! There is nothing to *do*, no goal to be reached! Wait, and it will *happen*! A spiritual freedom devoid of mythical images and conceptual structures, spiritual disciplines and institutional frames is advocated which by its very nature cannot spell out its own content—language is understood to achieve no more than shock, assist in the breaking down of the obscuring walls and thereby in the 'happening'. Whilst I cannot possible hope to do any justice to these poets, we must take notice of them as an integral part of Indian spirituality: over a period of two and a half millennia they appeared time and again, trying to demolish what they felt were obstacles to spirituality, getting 'institutionalised' themselves by later generations, while others carried on with their task.

Some concluding remarks

What have we been doing in the previous pages? Anybody familiar with the Indian traditions must have noticed the absence of any overall historical frame of reference and a certain cavalier attitude towards conventional labels, systems and categories of classification. It has almost appeared as if I regarded Indian spirituality as a whole. Obviously the present last few remarks cannot provide a justification, specification, detailed modification or whatever of this impression, and instead I can only state blandly that it may well be possible to regard the millennium between say 500 and 1500 AD as a culturally evolved and socially perpetuated era of common discourse. That means, it seems to me, that behind the fixed labels, the 'systems' and 'schools' of the text-books, an underlying discussion can be recognised. In spite of my using expressions like 'pattern', and diagrams, I don't regard this discussion itself as thereby fixed. What I am really trying to get at is the general frame within which this discussion takes place, and its inner rhythm or lines of movement. This I have attempted to describe, for instance, as spiritual 'readings' of metaphysical systems. Relatively simple patterns [like my (A) and (B)] can be regarded as building

blocks for the more complex ones, first in a historical sense, but secondly also in a logical one—note the re-emergence of (A) in (D).

One last question may be asked here: what about the *content* of Indian spirituality? We began with a quotation from Radhakrishnan, in which something like a content description was attempted. I wonder whether 'spiritual tendencies' really encompasses the oscillation between the divergent views concerning the phenomena; and yet, in view of occidental consumerism, the oscillating spectrum as a whole might well appear in stark contrast. Whether or not we decide to envisage the dynamism of the 'inner discussion' underlying the systems and schools as a content, one point emerges with all clarity: it seems a dubious enterprise to pick bits and pieces from the 'surface' and use them for any comparative purpose—or judgment.

Footnotes

1. See my forthcoming *Viraha-bhakti: The early history of Krishna devotion in South India*, OUP, Delhi, 1981? (=Oxford University South Asian Studies Series, vol. 3).
2. A wide variety of material will be found in I.M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion* (Pelican Books, 1971). Unlike Krishna ecstasy, however, most of the examples referred to by Lewis are understood by the respective devotees as 'possession'.
3. Translated from M. Lupsa, *Chants a Kali de Ramprasad*, Pondicherry, 1967, (PIFI, No. 30), p. 98 (song 79).
4. Goudriaan, pp. 54ff in: *Hindu Tantrism*, by S. Gupta et al., Leiden, 1979.
5. The main theologians here are Jiva and Rupa Gosvami, whose works have been summarised by S.K. De in his *Early history of the Vaisnava faith and movement in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1961, pp.166-223; 254-419.
6. Quoted from E. Conze, *Buddhist texts through the ages*, New York, 1964, pp. 102, 95. The text is Buddhaghosha's *Visuddhimagga* 509, and the passage quoted by him is *Udana* 81.
7. Nagarjuna's *Madhyamaka-karikas*, XXV, 19f.
8. When the Mahayana contrasts *samsara* with *nirvana*, its understanding of the latter term differs from that of earliest Buddhism or Buddhaghosha in that it denotes merely a 'nothing', a stopping of the *real* continuity of *samsara* (compare the notion of *nirvana* found in the Sarvastivada or Sautrantika).
9. One of the stereotyped metaphors used to explain this relationship is that of the snake and the rope: in the dim light of evening, a man mistakes a piece of rope for a snake (= through ignorance the one real, *brahman*, is mistaken for the differentiated world of

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the phenomena.) However, even if there *is* no more than a rope, one still would have to regard the *concept* of a snake as 'real' in some sense, which in turn must have been acquired from some *real* snake. All this is rather mysteriously expressed by means of 'non-dual'.

10. In a sense, this is not surprising, since Shankara purports to do no more than systematise the Vedanta, viz. the Upanishads. But since the conceptual structure he uses for this system is ultimately derived from Mahayana Buddhism, a fluctuation in the 'reading' of his conception (to be discussed below) arises from this.

11. This 'being cut off' becomes conceptually clear particularly in the notion of *anavam* which the South Indian Shaiva-Siddhanta evolved. It denotes a 'framentation', 'isolation' of the individual (from *anu*, 'atom, fragment'), in relation to the all-pervasive Shiva. Compare also *Bhagavad-Gita* VII, 14: 'this is my *maya* consisting of material components; they will transcend it who take refuge with me.'

12. See for examples A. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Shiva*, Penguin Classics; C. Vaudeville, *Kabir*, Oxford, 1974; W. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, Oxford, 1968.

THE 'INDISPENSABILITY' OF THE INCARNATION

J. Astley

I

Professor Stephen Sykes's essay, 'The Incarnation as the foundation of the Church', is one of the most interesting papers from the critics of the 'mythographers' printed in the recent collection *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued.* [1] In it he argues that 'the place of the incarnation in catholic orthodoxy is, in the first instance, in the form of a story' (p.115)—a 'true' story (p.117)—albeit a story with 'doctrinal implications'. Sykes argues that 'the language of the story is irreplaceable and necessarily temporal and sequential; but it is not, for that reason, as a whole mythological or poetic or metaphorical . . .' (p.116). He rejects Maurice Wiles's view [2] that understanding such a story (Wiles says 'myth') is a matter of finding some corresponding ontological truth, for 'in this case the myth becomes disposable'. More precisely he avers that:

> The incarnation is, in the first instance, an event in a story which renders who God is in concrete form. It is not a story which illustrates something which we otherwise already know, nor is it a story which is archetypal in the human consciousness. Rather it is a story whose meaning cannot be rendered otherwise than by the narrative. It is, literally, indispensable. (p.122)

Later he adds that, 'It is indispensable because it is in the end by means of stories that human identity is patterned' (p.123), and 'that it is by means of this, and no other story, that God desires that he shall be identified' (p.125). The incarnation, therefore, is a story—or an event in a story; incarnational theology, on the other hand, consists of 'a variety of different articulations of the incarnation, whose primary form is the story of God's self-identification with the human condition' (*loc.cit.*).

Now this is at first sight a most illuminating and fruitful position, and the importance of story in Christian theology has been stressed by a number of recent writers [3]. My concern in this paper, however, is to attempt to analyse and discuss the senses in which the incarnation story, or 'drama' [4], might be viewed as indispensable. Before embarking on that exercise, however, I should say that I fully accept the notion that the incarnation theme exists primarily in the form of a story or narrative [5], expressed best perhaps in some Christmas hymns, and that incarnational theology—*doctrines* of the incarnation—are secondary, more or less inadequate, articulations and explications of that story [6]. If this is true, it is as true of the 'two-nature model' in Christology as it is of the less orthodox 'revelation' or other models [7]. So the 'story ploy' can not be regarded as a straightforward defence of Chalcedonian