

## Abhishiktananda Centenary Symposium – a report

John R. Dupuche

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**Abstract:** *Abhishiktananda (Henri Le Saux osb) (1910-1973) is one of the pioneers in interreligious dialogue. Together with his mentor, Fr. Jules Monchanin, he founded an ashram at Shantivanam in Tamil Nadu. After some years he went to live the life of a hermit in the Himalayas. His life-style, books and diaries are now the subject of considerable interest. In recognition of his outstanding contribution, symposia were held around the world in the centenary year of his birth. The first, at Saccidananda Ashram (Shantivanam) in Tamil Nadu, was particularly valuable as it provided information which is not otherwise accessible about the circumstances of Abhishiktananda life and the present situation of interreligious dialogue in India.*

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**Key Words:** Abhishiktananda; Henri Le Saux; interreligious-dialogue; Shantivanam; Bede Griffiths; Marc Chaduc;

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The first of many symposia<sup>1</sup> on Abhishiktananda took place over six days, January 10-15, 2010, at Shantivanam on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its foundation. There were twenty participants from Europe, USA and Australia, and twenty from India. Seven major papers were delivered. Five personal testimonies of their relationship with Abhishiktananda were offered by Bettina Bäumer, Ama Samy SJ, George Gispert-Sauch SJ, Swami Nityananda Giri, and Annakutty V.K.Findeis.<sup>2</sup> The program was very full, perhaps too full! The day started at 5.30 am and continued, with only a ninety minute break after lunch, till late into the evening. Mass was celebrated every morning in an inculturated Indian form.

Despite the great number of valuable papers and contributions, it was not clear how Abhishiktananda actually lived. What did he do during the twenty four hours of each day? Did he have financial support from his Order? Was he still a Benedictine, in fact and not just in name? Did he recite the divine office? Why or why not? Did he spend the hot months in Shantivanam? How much time did he spend reading and writing? What form did his Mass take? We acquired a good knowledge of his ideas but not of his actual life. In this sense the symposium was very “Western.” And yet his whole life, down to the smallest details, was symbolic, which is what makes him particularly interesting. The same was

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1 Bad-Schönbrunn, Lassalle Haus (CH-6313 Edlbach (Switzerland), (20 to 23 May). info@lassalle-haus.org; Maguzzano (BS) Monastero (Lonato del Garda, Italy) (18 - 20 June). abatesgiovanni@libero.it; Dorset, Gaunts House (Great Britain) (15 - 20 July). hilaryhones@hotmail.com; Landévennec, Abbaye Saint Guénolé (France) (16 - 20 October). dimfrance@gmail.com; Camaldoli, Monastero, (52010 Camaldoli (Italy) (22 - 24 October). monastero@camaldoli.it; Rome, Sant’Anselmo, (3 December). wskudlarek@csbsju.edu

2 A selection of these has been published under the title *Witness to the Fulness of Light: The Vision and Relevance of the Benedictine Monk Swami Abhishiktananda*. (Brooklyn NY: Lantern Press, 2011.) Some others have been published on the website [http://www.dimmid.org/index.asp?Type=B\\_BASIC&SEC={D04A1605-DAAB-4651-B26A-A73780814F42}&DE={E0071FF0-2C92-4335-A42A-B17D17CB4744}](http://www.dimmid.org/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={D04A1605-DAAB-4651-B26A-A73780814F42}&DE={E0071FF0-2C92-4335-A42A-B17D17CB4744}).

true of his disciple Marc Chaduc. We did not learn much about him or how he spent his time with Abhishiktananda, about their practice and techniques. Given these limitations, the symposium was excellent in its breadth and thoughtfulness, in its organisation and its attempt to give the participants an experience of ashram life.<sup>3</sup>

## ABHISHIKTANANDA

There is no need to repeat the story of Henri Le Saux but rather to mention some aspects of his life that were revealed during the symposium and may not be generally known.

Fr Jules Monchanin, a priest of the Archdiocese of Lyons, "was in touch with Lyon's entire elite in the theological, philosophical, literary, artistic and musical spheres."<sup>4</sup> He mingled with such eminent personages as Fr Paul Couturier, Picasso, Cocteau, Max Jacob, Louis Massignon, René Voillaume, and so on. In the context of a serious illness Jules decided to fulfil a vow he had made to go to India to found an ashram. Henri de Lubac, one of his friends and one of the luminaries of Vatican II, had urged him to:

Rethink everything in the light of theology, and rethink theology through mysticism, freeing it from everything incidental, and regaining, through spirituality alone, everything essential.<sup>5</sup>

Although Monchanin published little he nevertheless inspired Henri Le Saux, a Benedictine monk from the monastery of St Anne in Kergonan in Brittany, to join him. Henri left France in 1948 at the age of 38, and two years later in 1950, taking on the name "Abhishiktananda" which means "The Bliss of Christ", co-founded Shantivanam with Monchanin who had taken on the name "Parama Arubi Ananda", which means "Bliss of the Supremely Formless." Monchanin, who had never enjoyed good health, died in France in 1957. It was perhaps the first attempt since the time of Robert de Nobili in the 17th century to link the Catholic and Hindu traditions by taking on the life-style of a Hindu monk.

Some held that Monchanin was the better theologian and that Abhishiktananda spoke more from experience and the heart.<sup>6</sup> Others felt that Abhishiktananda "had

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3 A full list of the papers and authors is as follows: Fr. Michael Amaladoss, "Abhishiktananda's Influence on Indian Theology"; Swami Vinaya Chaitanya, "The Upanishads are true, I know it!"; Fabrice Blée, "Exile and Wandering as Spiritual Practice in Abhishiktananda"; Fr. Michael Peterson, "Abhishiktananda's Engagement with Sacred Texts"; Dr. Shivamurthi Mahaswamiji, "Dimensions of Hindu-Christian Dialogue: A Virasaiva Perspective"; Dr. Bettina Bäumer, "From Purusha to Shakti: Abhishiktananda's Experience in the Light of the Upanishads and Kashmir Saivism"; Jane Lee, "Bridge Building for God's World: The Work of Romano Guardini and Swami Abhishiktananda"; Fr. George Gispert-Sauch, "Abhishiktananda's Influence on Jacques Dupuis"; Fr. Fausto Gianfreda, "The Eucharist in Abhishiktananda's Theological Reflections"; Fr. Emmanuel Vattakuzhy, "Swamiji's Influence on my Spiritual Journey"; Fr. Antony Kalliath, "Christic Wheel: Theological Reflections on the Pilgrimage of Abhishiktananda"; Sr Tureeya Mataji fci., "Abhishiktananda's Influence on the Christian Ashram Movement"; Dr. Susan Visvanathan, "Abhishiktananda and his Contribution to Hindu-Christian Dialogue for our Times"; Dr. Paolo Trianni, "Abhishiktananda's Contribution to the Present Theological Hindu-Christian Research"; Fr. Cyprian Consiglio, "Unity by Identity, Unity by Communion."

4 Odette Baumer-Despeigne, "An evocation: the spiritual path of Father Jules Monchanin," in *Jules Monchanin (1995-1957) as seen from East and West*, Vol. 2, Saccidananda Ashram and Ashish Amos eds (Delhi: Saccidananda Ashram/ISPCK 2001), 9.

5 J. G. Weber, *In Quest of the Absolute: the Life and Work of Jules Monchanin*. (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Pub., 1977), 25.

6 Comment by Paolo Trianni, a participant.

tremendous theological insights in the Hindu context.”<sup>7</sup> One of the participants in the symposium was impressed by Abhishiktananda’s passion for the spiritual path but disagreed with all his theologising.<sup>8</sup>

In 1952 Abhishiktananda went to the great temple of Tiruvanamalai built at the base of the sacred mountain Arunachala, the “Mountain of Light”, one of the places where Abhishiktananda had access to the heart of Hinduism.<sup>9</sup> There he saw Ramana Maharshi who is one of the persons who allowed Abhishiktananda to touch the soul of India.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, he would often return and spend time in caves on the holy mountain where food was brought to him by members of the ashram.

Despite Monchanin’s protestations Abhishiktananda chose to be his guru one of Ramana’s disciples, Gyanananda, another of the persons who helped Abhishiktananda reach the heart of the ancient tradition,<sup>11</sup> for it was essential to identify with the guru, to be absorbed into the guru.<sup>12</sup>

Nityananda, a disciple of Gyanananda, who was present at the conference, said he did not believe that Abhishiktananda’s book *Saccidananda* represented his real theology. Nityananda went on to say it was a question of transcending a religion, not abandoning it but not identifying with it either. There is a stripping involved. He said that the unnegatable substratum is summed up in the phrase: “Brahma is all”; he admitted also quite simply that “Christ is consciousness.” In short advaita is for all religions, because it is what all religions seek.<sup>13</sup>

Abhishiktananda was greatly inspired by Gyanananda, but was badly deceived by Harilal Poonja, another of Ramana’s disciples, who seemed so fine at first but was shown to be an unworthy successor.<sup>14</sup> While this was one of the many disappointments in life, Abhishiktananda did not lose his inner peace.

In November 1963, Bettina Bäumer visited Shantivanam, which consisted at that time of a grove of coconut trees about 20 acres in extent with a chapel, two or three huts and a small library but no guest room. A man from the village would come to prepare meals.

Bettina Bäumer was the linchpin of the symposium and her reminiscences were invaluable. She found Abhishiktananda to be transparent, radiant and open. He was utterly simple, externally and internally, with a childlike innocence. He would help anyone.<sup>15</sup> He was also a lonely man, only too happy to speak to those who understood him. Indeed, he was so talkative that one day Bettina begged for a day of silence. They often sat together in meditation and she felt he was overflowing with love. Indeed, his purity purified her. He

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7 Comment by Bettina Bäumer, a participant.

8 Comment by Fr Ama Samy sj, a participant.

9 Comment by Fabrice Blée, a participant.

10 Comment by Fabrice Blée.

11 Comment by Fabrice Blée.

12 Comment by Fr Ama Samy sj

13 Comment by Fr Ama Samy sj

14 Comment by Annakutty V.K.F, a participant

15 Annakutty V.K.F

was down to earth and very accessible. Although there were two dimensions to him - crisis and bliss - the crises never overcame his bliss.

Abhishiktananda received lots of letters from people who wanted to join him. He would ask Bettina to meet these people when she returned to Europe, and eventually to share with him her impressions of them. At his request she also went to Ganeshpuri and met Muktananda, the founder of Siddha Yoga which has flourished in many countries of the West, but did not deliver a favourable report. Abhishiktananda had hoped that a priest from Mauritius would join him in Shantivanam, but his bishop refused permission. In any case, Abhishiktananda was not yet ready to take disciples, and would send to his Hindu friends those who did wish to take on discipleship.

From the start Abhishiktananda wanted to found an ashram for women in parallel with Shantivanam and indeed wanted Bettina to be one of its pillars, but was not able to find the right people. He did have female disciples but did not feel at ease with women. It was perhaps the result of his long years of monastic life and the strict discipline involved. He had inhibitions, Bettina said.

He also handed over to her some manuscripts which he felt he could not publish. Indeed, on one occasion he had written a text which was condemned by the Jesuits, an event which caused a profound crisis that haunted him all his life. One of the participants in the symposium noted that at that time the Jesuits as a whole were not interested in spiritual things but only in social service and so on.<sup>16</sup>

While as far as Abhishiktananda was concerned the standard presentation of Christology had disintegrated, he remained faithful to the Eucharist.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, it was one of the high points of his day. He celebrated thoughtfully and slowly, equally at ease with the Tridentine form of Mass or freely and spontaneously experimenting in the development of an Indian Eucharist. For example, he would use a rite based on the Upanishads, which few would understand. He would also celebrate in different situations, such as with Fr Raimundo Panikkar at Gomukha, the source of the Bhagirathi Ganga. He would take hours to celebrate Mass. In fact it would seem that Abhishiktananda could say a Eucharist using just the sacred syllable OM.<sup>18</sup> He did not explain the Eucharist to those who attended but allowed it to be a time of communion in silence.<sup>19</sup>

Murray Rogers, in a video taken three months before his death, noted that Abhishiktananda was full of anguish; that he did not put himself forward; that he was retiring and fussy, somewhat bound by rules and finicky. For example he could not celebrate Mass without a corporal with the relics sown into it, as was required by the rubrics at that time. At the end of the video Murray powerfully proclaims, with deep emotion in his voice, that Christ is everything; that all one must do is worship him; that we must not create a pocket-book Christ. Murray gives a moving witness to his faith.

Abhishiktananda would sometimes leave Shantivanam and go to Tiruvanmalai or Varanasi or to the Himalayas. Bettina recalls how the visits to Varanasi were times of

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16 Comment by Fr Ama Samy sj.

17 Comment by Fr Amaladoss sj, a participant.

18 Comment by Fr Fausto Gianfreda sj, a participant.

19 Comment by Annakutty V.K.F.

intense sharing. Annakutty, a participant in the seminar, who also spent time with him in Varanasi, recalled his profound comment as he got into the rickshaw: "There is no coming and no going. Who leaves whom?"<sup>20</sup>

Abhishiktananda felt he was a failure because no one wished to join him in community. But he also wanted to live the life of the true sannyasi in the Himalayas near the Ganges. For this reason he refused the many invitations to travel and speak internationally.

On one occasion he visited Fr Francis Mahieu, also called Francis Acharya, a Belgian, and the superior at Kurisumala who passed the remark: "he is an angry man."<sup>21</sup> Abhishiktananda had wanted Fr Francis to take over from him, but instead Francis delegated Fr Bede Griffiths whom he wanted to get rid of. Abhishiktananda equally did not want Bede to come and in fact left Shantivanam before Bede arrived so that he would not have to welcome him. The bishop of Bangalore also wished to prevent Bede, an Englishman, from going to Shantivanam as it was the "Quit India" phase. Bede came anyway and the bishop later told him he was glad he had done so.

These auspices were not good for Bede, nevertheless under his leadership Shantivanam became world famous, and as a result the ashram now has many buildings and huts, kitchens and halls. It is vastly different from the time of its two founders

Bede loved Shantivanam but, whereas the previous Bishop Mendoça had been open and supportive, his successor, who was stifling the church in Tamil Nadu, was not in favour. Bede soon realised that its existence might be in jeopardy. He chose, therefore, to place the ashram under the authority of the Camaldolese Benedictines who shared something of the style of Shantivanam, allowing for individual huts where monks would live in solitude and only come together for meals and ceremonies.

In 1975 at the age of 40, Sr Marie-Louise, who was originally a Franciscan Servant of Mary and is now a Camaldolese Benedictine, arrived, despite the opposition of her superior in France.<sup>22</sup> In 1980, she founded Ananda Ashram across the road from Shantivanam.

So in 1968 Abhishiktananda left for Uttarkashi and later for Phulchatti, both located on the Ganges. Bettina helped him make a selection from his many books. In the process, he would share his thoughts with her about his books, and in this way she got to know what was really important for him. At one point, she went with him into the forest to spend time meditating on the Kena Upanishad. In fact, the Upanishads as a whole constitute one of the principal ways in which Abhishiktananda reached the mystic heart of India.<sup>23</sup> He himself stated: "The experience of the Upanishads is true, I know it."

In 1969 Bettina was with Abhishiktananda at Murray Rogers' Gandhian ashram at Jyotinetan and remembers Easter there with him and Murray and Therese. They went

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20 Comment by Annakutty V.K.F.

21 Comment by Emmanuel Vattakuzhy, a participant.

22 Comment by Fr Skudlarek osb, a participant.

23 Comment by Fabrice Blée.

through the Upanishads and the Rig Veda, and on the Easter Vigil recited these texts the whole night long whilst performing a ritual Vedic fire ritual followed by prasad.

In 1971 Marc Chaduc arrived on the scene and had a huge impact since Abhishiktananda now discovered the role of spiritual fatherhood. Marc, who took the name Ajatananda Saraswati, "Stream of Uncreated Bliss", was another of the persons who enabled Abhishiktananda to arrive at the heart of Hinduism.<sup>24</sup> He was like a brother to Bettina. Together they went to Bodh Gaya. She remembers on one occasion going to call him for breakfast but he was in samadhi and she could not stir him. Can Bettina call Abhishiktananda her guru? In a sense yes because he gave direction to her life and work, but no, since she was not a disciple as Marc was.

Fr Ama Samy sj, a participant in the symposium, found Marc arrogant, as he was interested only in Ramana and dismissed Zen which was Fr Samy's specific interest. Furthermore, he sensed a certain tension between Abhishiktananda and Marc. Whereas Abhishiktananda was more incarnate, Marc was more transcendent.

In 1973, Abhishiktananda suffered a heart attack in the market (chowk) at Rishikesh while running to catch a bus and spent his last days in a nursing home in Indore. News of his death on 7th December was delayed and was announced by Panikkar at Varanasi only on Christmas Eve. The news produced a sense of both sadness and joy.

At one stage in the symposium a lengthy discussion took place concerning the episode in the chowk at Rishikesh. Something profound had happened which had allowed him to reach the heart of Hinduism.<sup>25</sup> What was it? Different opinions were expressed. The further question was asked: what does resurrection mean if the atman is immortal, or indeed if there is no atman. No definite answer given to this question, but Vinaya, a participant in the symposium, who had left wife and family to go on the fourth stage of life – which is to go on indefinite pilgrimage in search of the absolute – suggested that resurrection means coming to fullness of knowledge; that we must move away from substantialism to knowledge as a means of understanding resurrection.

Sometime between February and April 1977 Marc disappeared from his hermitage in Kaudiyala. His watch was smashed and his glasses lay on the table. Did he want simply to disappear since the laws on visas were about to change – but Marc could not see without his glasses? Was he killed? Did he immerse himself permanently in the Ganges? Bettina went looking for him, inquiring from all who knew him but she found nothing. She did this again, using his diaries and maps as a clue, but still without success.

Bettina asked the question whether, since there is now an intense interest in Kashmir Shaivism, Abhishiktananda's thought is out of date? She said no. It is true that he did not know Kashmir Shaivism in any detail but he was already distancing himself from a Vedantic conceptual understanding of the Upanishads. He had come to know the power of the divine energy. He was being led; someone was at work in him.

As I remember, one of the participants publicly summed up his impressions of Abhishiktananda in this way:

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<sup>24</sup> Comment by Fabrice Blée.

<sup>25</sup> Comment by Fabrice Blée.

I leave with the conviction that [he] does not call us to systematize his message and experience, to put them into a clear and definitive theological framework. He rather calls us to root our theological categories within the heart, in the dynamic search for the Divine, in the presence of the living God.

## THE PRESENT SITUATION OF SHANTIVANAM

A major four lane highway is being constructed just outside the ashram, which worries the Europeans but does not worry the Indians. Furthermore, the waters of the great Kaveri River have been dammed for irrigation such that wide sections near the ashram are once again covered in bushes and trees. The location has change profoundly over the last 50 years.

The community at present consists of about ten monks, among whom Fr George, Fr John, Fr Paul and Br Martin; there are novices and postulants. Fr Christadas is in USA. There are three sisters in the adjoining Ananda Ashram.

Many years ago Br Martin had gone to Rome to study for the priesthood. While in the Eternal City, he had a profound mystical experience, which his superiors could not understand and wished to suppress. Bede, however, accepted and encouraged him. He has been at Shantivanam since 1984. He has long since decided not continue with studies for the priesthood. Therefore, according to the rule of Camaldoli, he cannot be prior. He writes powerfully, and goes each year to give retreats in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany and Spain. He reaches out to the marginalised. He seems profoundly sad, yet at the same time fascinated by certain aspects of theology

Fr George, the prior, did his studies in Rome in the 90's and has been prior of Shantivanam since 1997.

## THE CHRISTIAN ASHRAM MOVEMENT

After the declaration of Independence in 1947 the Catholic hierarchy sought to Indianise the Church. This move received further impetus at Vatican II and at the National Seminar held in 1969.<sup>26</sup>

Surprisingly, there had been no attempt earlier, even in Goa, to set up monasteries, as had been done in other parts of the vast Portuguese empire. The first Benedictine monastery in India was founded from Ryde in England. A participant at the seminar, Fr Bernard osb, was one of the first Benedictine monks in India.

There are sixty-three Benedictine foundations, some with as many as fifty monks. The problem, however, is the inability of the monks and nuns to engage in contemplation. They have turned the monastery into a comfortable living. Moreover, while many come, many do not last.

The ashram movement itself was started in response to the question of the Church's relevance, but ashrams were suspect in the eyes of Hindus as just another form of proselytism. The ashrams were suspect in the eyes also of the Church as a form of "going

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<sup>26</sup> Comment by Fr Michael Amaladoss sj.

native”, especially as ashrams were open to all faiths.<sup>27</sup> They were too drastic for religious and laity alike who wished to stay within familiar territory. This is perhaps understandable since the Church, with only 2% of the population, wanted to be distinctively different and not become absorbed into Hindu forms or religion. Furthermore, 70-80% of the Church in India consists of “untouchables” (dalit) who identify ashrams and ashramite spirituality with Brahmanism. As members of a repressed group, they are more interested in liberation theology and social justice. Further again, the religious orders do not want their members to develop the depth of spirituality required for ashram life. They prefer to prepare their members for active service in the institutions.

Sr Tureeya Mataji fcj, who now lives in the ashram, “Jivandhara”, in Rishikesh, expressed her concern at the future of the Church in India. There are no mystics, she said, on whom she can call. She went on to say that people are indeed becoming more spiritual but on their own initiative, not in connection with the established institutions. Political, social and economic groups for their part see religion not as a spiritual endeavour but as a utility. Despite all this, there are many ashrams in India.

Fr Anthony Kalliath CMI, a specialist on Abhishiktananda, is president of the Indian Theological Association, which consists all of professors of theology in seminaries and has about 250 members. They have a yearly conference, but when Fr Anthony recently suggested the theme of Abhishiktananda there was general opposition. The opposition is found not only in theological circles in India but in the Vatican as well.

A significant discussion revolved around the theme of sannyasin. How does it relate to the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience? Is it something extra? The following points were made which reflect significantly on the Shantivanam project of a Catholic/Hindu ashram.

- (1) The *sannyasa* idea is normally understood in the context of the four classical stages of life: student, householder, forest-dweller and one who has left all (*sannyasi*). It is not necessary for a person to go through the first three stages of life before adopting *sannyasa*. Indeed, Vinaya said, if a *sannyasi* is defined as someone who has no rules, it is possible for a person to be a *sannyasi* in any state of life. Even a householder can be a *sannyasi*, although it is difficult.
- (2) Next, ashram life is not to be identified with celibacy, since there are many ashrams, like that of Gyanananda, which have married households. Other ashrams are involved with social and political concerns such as Mahatma Gandhi’s ashram, or Tagore’s at Shantiniketan, or Jyotiniketan set up by Murray Rogers.
- (3) Finally, the *sannyasa* ideal is quite different from the three monastic vows. In fact Christianity does not have the custom of full *sannyasa* which means leaving all and going out on the roads with no security of any sort. By definition *sannyasa* is not tied to Christianity or Hinduism or any particular tradition.

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<sup>27</sup> Comment by Sr Tureeya Mataji fcj, a participant.



## THE ABHISHIKTANANDA SOCIETY<sup>28</sup>

Abhishiktananda gave all his manuscripts to James Stuart of the Delhi Brotherhood Society (DBS), an Anglican group which is formally independent from the Church of North India but also comes under its aegis. The Abhishiktananda Society also gave its holdings to the DBS when it was dissolved in December 2007. In the meantime a Belgian Melkite, who had adopted the Indian name "Atmananda", had become president of the Abhishiktananda Society and had acquired control of the manuscripts. The situation is not clear.

### CONCLUSIONS:

The symposium concluded with some points for possible future action:

- attending to the conservation and availability of the Abhishiktananda archives;
- offering retreats based on his writings and involving communal *lectio divina* of Indian sacred texts;
- inviting known and respected spiritual sages from India to the West to offer a three-day introduction to their spiritual teaching;
- insuring that the writings of Abhishiktananda are translated into other languages;
- editing small books of quotations from Abhishiktananda on particular themes: e.g., prayer, silence, the Divine.

All in all it was disturbing to find a significant level of tension, indeed hostility and even bitterness, between the participants in interreligious dialogue and those in authority, defined as bishops and superiors of religious orders who reflect the attitude of the Church as a whole in India, which is not open to dialogue. There was a resentment, sometimes not too well hidden, against the "non-placet" of efforts in the field of interreligious relations. That went hand in hand with scant regard, from the participants in interreligious dialogue, for the diocesan clergy. The author of this article had the honour of publicly presenting Bettina with a copy of his book *Vers un Tantra Chrétien* which had been dedicated to her, but participants in the symposium did not understand how a diocesan priest could write a book. It was a rather strange situation to be in. The many Abhishiktananda conferences which have taken place around the world in 2010 may help reduce that tension.

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<sup>28</sup> Of the Bulletins that were published by the Society between 1978 and 2007, numbers 1-14 were called "Occasional Bulletin." With #15 they were called "SETU: Bulletin of the Abhishiktananda Society." Abhishiktananda Society *Bulletin Archive* <http://monasticdialog.com/index.php>.

**Author:** Rev. Dr. John R. Dupuche is a member of the Centre for Interreligious Dialogue, Australian Catholic University. He specialises in Kashmir Shaivism and interfaith relations. He has published the following books: *Abhinavagupta: The Kula Ritual as elaborated in chapter 29 of the Tantraloka*. Delhi, MotiLal BanarsiDass, 2003; *Jesus, the Mantra of God*, Melbourne, David Lovell, 2005; *Void and Fullness in the Buddhist, Hindu and Christian Traditions* (Co-editor with Prof. Dr. Dr. B. Bäumer.) Delhi, D.K. Printworld, 2005; *Vers un tantra chrétien: la rencontre du Christianisme et du Shivaïsme du Cachemire*. Melbourne: David Lovell Publishing; *Towards a Christian Tantra; The interplay of Christianity and Kashmir Shaivism*. Melbourne, David Lovell Publishing, 2009.

Email: [jrdupuche@pacific.net.au](mailto:jrdupuche@pacific.net.au)

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