

*“God is everywhere. God doesn't ask me to come to him because he's everywhere—in my home, in the temple, in the chair at my side. If I touch God, it doesn't change anything between us.”*



## LESSONS IN DEVOTION

### *A Convergence of Christian and Hindu Religiosity*

MICHELLE HUBELE

WHILE SPENDING TIME IN BANGALORE, VARANASI, AND ARUNACHALA, INDIA, MICHELLE HUBELE INVESTIGATED THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVOTION IN THE BHAKTI, KARMA, AND JNANA PATHS OF HINDUISM. INTERVIEWING MEMEBERS OF EACH TRADITION, SHE WAS ABLE TO LEARN FIRST-HAND HOW EACH GROUP PERCEIVES THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THEIR ACTS OF DEVOTION WITHIN THE LARGER MATRIX OF THEIR RELIGIOSITY. FROM THERE, MS. HUBELE WAS ABLE TO COME TO A GREATER AWARENESS OF HOW THE OUTWARD EXPRESSIONS OF FAITH IN THE TRADITIONS REVEALED EACH PATH'S UNDERSTANDING OF GOD. THIS RESEARCH ULTIMATELY ALLOWED HER TO ANALYZE WHAT IMPORTANT LESSONS CHRISTIANITY AND HINDUISM COULD LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER WITH REGARDS TO THEIR USE OF DEVOTION IN THEIR RESPECTIVE THEOLOGIES.



Hinduism is a diverse religion. Deemed one tradition by the Westerners who came to India, it is actually a collection of faiths. The gods worshipped, the method of worshipping, and the places held sacred vary as much as the individuals who claim the identity of Hindu. Such a range of beliefs may make dialogue between Hinduism and other religions seem fairly void of meaning. How can there be something to learn from a religion if there is not even a defined theology? In the face of such disbelief, though, it is possible to recognize thematic concepts within Hinduism that can inform and transform the religions engaged in dialogue. Three main paths to salvation exist within Hinduism, each leading to the same Truth. This Truth, Brahma, can be understood by two different philosophies. Even with this seeming assortment of beliefs, though, the fruits of interreligious dialogue between other religions and Hinduism can be extensive. In the instance of Christianity, the concepts of devotion found in the margas of Bhakti, Karma, and Jñana offer the possibility of deepening Christian devotion. Through study of these three forms of Hinduism, a Christian can learn new ways to approach Christ, the world, and her or his own self.

### BHAKTI-MARGA

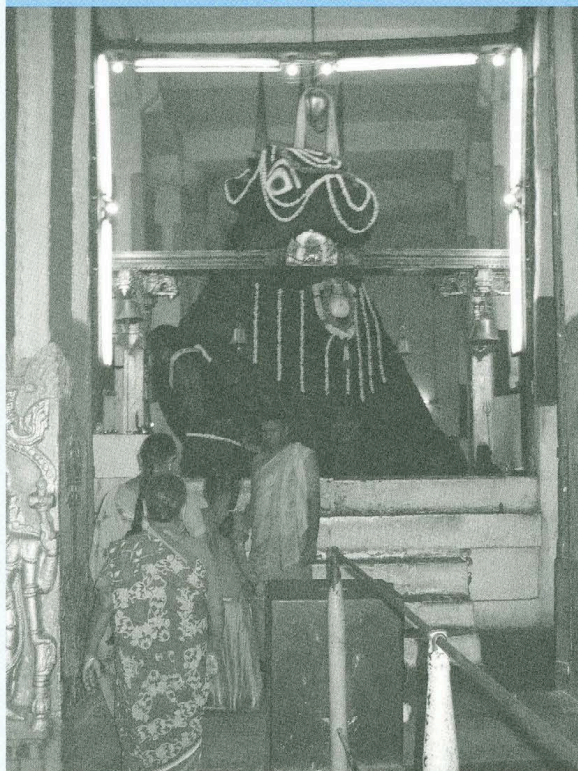
Bhakti-marga, the path of love of God, is one of “reciprocal movement.”<sup>i</sup> Heinrich von Stietencron explains, “The deity reveals itself to the person who praises it. It helps him, shows itself to him in images, in mental visions, and in all beings. Love for God prompts service of God, which should find expression in every thought and deed.”<sup>ii</sup> A devout Bhakti-Hindu should thus pursue and serve God. *The Bhagavad-Gita* encourages this through the discourses of Lord Krishna to Arjuna. By doing everything out of love of God, the believer purifies every action and receives full understanding of God. Thus, the believer, regardless of caste, class, or sex, can reach Moksha (liberation from reincarnation).

Bhakti-marga is popular throughout India. With a pantheon of gods that numbers 333 million, the diversity of deities allows believers to adore billions of combinations of

gods. Each temple will offer something different to the devotee, making Bhakti-marga an excessively varied path to the divine. However, regardless of the deities worshipped, the idea of the transcendent within Bhakti-marga follows Ramanuja's singular description of God (Brahma). As Hans Küng explains:

*Ramanuja, believes that Brahma is “without second” [a-dvaitam, meaning no secondness]; but not that it is without characteristics, attributes, or personality. Ramanuja’s crucial insight is that Brahma is identical with the personal God . . . Brahma is none other than the personal God who from eternity releases the world from within himself, upholds it, directs it internally, and takes it back again . . . But precisely for this reason, Brahma [God] is essentially distinct from matter and the individual soul: Brahma and atman, Brahma and the world . . . must be distinguished.*<sup>iii</sup>

NANDI TEMPLE





Such a differentiation between God and man allows for Bhakti-marga's specific forms of devotion.

Puja (ritualistic worship) at the Nandi temple in Bangalore, India, showcases a common form of devotion. Removing one's shoes with respect for the holy site, the worshipper enters a simple, open-air foyer. Through the doorway, one can see the large black image of Nandi (Shiva's bull-formed escort). This idol is adorned with garlands offered it throughout the course of the day, and has been anointed with oil and spices. Nandi stares at the individuals with large, painted eyes, the prominence of which allows for darĀan (the beholding of the divine). This act of seeing the god is perceived as worship in and of itself, and the experience of the god seeing the individual is received as a divine blessing.<sup>iv</sup> Through this, the full participation of devotion can occur.

Upon entering the sanctum, the scope of the idol becomes apparent. The solid figure stands in awe-inspiring grandeur at twelve feet tall. Its posture is that of the traditional Nandi, reclining but for one hoof ready to go to Shiva whenever Shiva may beckon. The posture of the bull god reminds Nandi devotees of Shiva, which may bring the worshipper to deeper thoughts of the divine. Brahman priests approach the believers, offering a golden tray bearing incense and a lit oil lamp. Worshippers generally offer money, flowers, or food to Nandi upon this tray, and in return anoint their heads and eyes with the heat from the lit lamp. After making her or his offering, the believer will then proceed to circumambulate the large idol in the auspicious clockwise direction. With these actions, the devotee will remove bad karma (taint) and receive the god's blessing.

The devotional act seen at the Nandi Temple takes less than three minutes, but it is perceived as a full participation in the ritual form of Bhakti. The temple is located close to residential areas in Bangalore, and the act is often repeated daily. Many local temples exist throughout India and allow Bhakti rituals to be performed throughout the day, every

day of the week. It is common for individuals to turn to these temples regularly, and when walking through an Indian community, one will frequently encounter individuals with the sandalwood paste marking the forehead above the nose.<sup>v</sup> This outward symbol of Bhakti reveals to an observer that Bhakti-marga is quite prolific in India.

The act of Bhakti performed at a temple is common. But, some Hindus explain, the act of going to the temple is not inherently necessary for devotion to take place. Manish Jai, a devout Hindu, says: "God is everywhere. God doesn't ask me to come to him because he's everywhere—in my home, in the temple, in the chair at my side. If I touch God, it doesn't change anything between us."<sup>vi</sup> That being said, Pintu Lal, another devout Hindu, added, "The ritual is important. The understanding is that God is everywhere, but going to the temple allows for a deeper realization."<sup>vii</sup> When asked how one decides which god to adore, the response was that "God is one." Rajeew Rastogi further explained that "there are many temples for many different gods. Each of the gods has a different story. Whichever message I accept, I go to that temple."<sup>viii</sup>

These young men discussed their understanding of Bhakti while they stood at the large puja ceremony for the river Ganges (an incarnation of Shiva). The ceremony, a daily exercise in Varanasi, India, is to help bring devotees to God.<sup>ix</sup> Throughout the day, believers approach the waters for a sacred cleansing and blessing. Though the action seems purely external, the ritual necessitates an inward meditation and trust. Says Rajeew Rastogi, "Before going into the river, you must cleanse your soul and behavior. Then, you bless the river by anointing the water and raising your hand to your forehead. Once you thank God, you bathe. You don't have to go in completely. A little bit of the water is enough. While you're in the river, you offer its water to the sun and you say the mantras the priests or gurus give you. You do this every day . . . And if you trust [in the Ganges], you will realize."<sup>x</sup> The significance of such an act is in the inward transformation. Behavior, understanding, and thought must be aligned with the act of devotion or else the



act is rendered useless. Thus, it is an internal act of lifestyle devotion as much as a visible act of worship.

The Ganges puja when compared to the Nandi temple visit reveals the range of rituals within Bhakti-marga. Generally, though, all rituals retain certain elements. Heinrich von Stietencron explains that believers approach their god with gifts and expectations:

*Giving and taking become symbolic [in the act of Bhakti]. The gifts are usually small, but as far as possible one does not come before God with empty hands. A handful of water is enough, or a leaf. The gift is, after all, only a sign. Behind it stands the real offering, a devoted heart.<sup>xi</sup>*

The offering of the devoted heart is reminiscent of Lord Krishna's statements in *The Bhagavad-Gita*: "By devotion alone / can I, as I really am, / be known and seen / and entered into, Arjuna / Acting only for me, intent on me, / free from attachment, / hostile to no creature, Arjuna, / a man of devotion comes to me."<sup>xi</sup> The act of devotion, expressed through the offering of a gift, presents a manifestation of the believer's heartfelt focus on the god. And with this attention to the god comes the removal of karma. Lord Krishna indicates this release from karma when he mentions the idea of "free from attachment . . . a man of devotion comes to me."<sup>xiii</sup> Thus, through Bhakti-marga one can reach Moksha.

Significantly, it is through these unattached actions of devotion that Ramanuja's understanding of God manifests itself in Bhakti believers. Hans Küng explains:

*What interests Ramanuja is a knowledge from the heart and an intimate personal relationship with the saving and loving god, who calls the believer to a personal communion with him. Here is where good works, ritual, and the lofty ethos demanded by the Gita come in, along with contemplation.<sup>xiv</sup>*

Although believers do not particularly indicate this statement's truth, they do behave in such a way that verifies this concept: the act of puja is made with gifts that symbolize the devoted heart; the rituals are performed to reveal such a devotional relationship with the god; as Rastogi indicated, even before performing the ritual bath in the Ganges (or any act of puja) individuals must approach the action with a cleansed behavior (one that, no doubt, resembles Lord Krishna's directive of being "hostile to no creature") and mind (one that trusts fully in the power of god to respond). Their devotion reveals their relationship to god and their faith in salvation.

#### KARMA-MARGA

In Karma-marga, or the way of action, the focus of devotion is slightly different. Traditionally fulfilled by strictly following one's dharma (duty) as dictated by caste, Karma-marga has instead been translated into a path of social engagement. Von Stietencron explains: "[*The Bhagavad-Gita*] gives [the way of action] a new dimension by adding social responsibilities to ritual as an essential element. Fulfill your duty *in* the world, the *Gita* would say, but don't tie yourself down *to* the world."<sup>xv</sup> The passage that von Stietencron indicates is in Chapter Two of *The Bhagavad-Gita*: Lord Krishna exhorts Arjuna: "Be intent on action, / not on the fruits of action; / avoid attraction to the fruits / and attachment to inaction! / Perform actions, firm in discipline, / relinquishing attachment."<sup>xvi</sup> By engaging in the world without attachment to the world, followers of Karma-marga actually remove themselves from the cycle of rebirth by ceasing to acquire Karma. Salvation is reached through disinterested action in the world. Revolutionized by *The Bhagavad-Gita*, this marga no longer merely advocates Vedic sacrifice but, more importantly, also advocates works of social awareness.

Fireflies Ashram,<sup>xvii</sup> just outside of Bangalore, presents an image of Karma-marga. Working to create an ecological awareness in the community, Fireflies holds conferences and seminars for the local Hindus. According to director Siddhartha, Fireflies works to create awareness of



humanity's responsibility for the environment by engaging devotional ideas. One such example of this devotional engagement is the Ganesha festival Fireflies hosted for the local community.

Knowing the importance of the elephant-headed god to the local people, Fireflies offered to orchestrate the festival. While preparing and participating in the traditional week-long festival, Fireflies ran seminars teaching devotees how to translate their devotion to social activism. The leaders of the seminars asked believers to explain the significance of Ganesha in the believers' lives. Fireflies used those understandings to encourage discussion and holistic vision. The ramifications were as follows: If Ganesha is the wisher of well being, how should believers translate wishing well to other people? If Ganesha is the remover of hardship, what hardships should the community work towards removing? If Ganesha is half nature and half human, how should the community react and behave towards nature?

By asking these questions and encouraging dialogue, Fireflies was able to help the local community translate its new knowledge into social activism. One result was that the members of the community decided to use unpainted idols in their bathing rituals during the festival. In the past the community would take its heavily painted Ganesha to

*“Fireflies worked within society not for its own benefit but for that of the greater good . . . [manifesting] the selflessness that The Bhagavad-Gita encouraged.”*

the local lake to bathe it. While the idol was submerged, some of the paint would come off and contaminate the local waters. Fish would die as a result. Through the social activism of Fireflies, this phenomena was brought to the community's attention and, through a communal choice, the use of painted idols was stopped.

By engaging the devotional ideals of the community, Fireflies was able to bring about social change in an informed and effective way. The process of informing the community also allowed Fireflies to introduce other devotional actions. These teachings started initiatives for water conservation and the replanting of trees. Thus, by teaching and being socially engaged, Fireflies was able to further eco-devotionalism.

Understanding the ecological future of the community to be transcendent of the individual, Fireflies worked within society not for its own benefit but for that of the greater good. Fireflies manifested the selflessness that *The Bhagavad-Gita* encouraged. Devotion in such a schema is such that the actor does not give recognition to her or his action. By doing so, she or he follows the injunction of Lord Krishna when he says, “As the ignorant act with attachment / to actions, Arjuna, / so wise men should act with detachment / to preserve the world.”<sup>xviii</sup> The goal of such socially aware actions is not for the believer's benefit; it is for the larger society. And when one understands such a notion, she or he is acting in full devotion. Lord Krishna goes on to explain such a concept by saying, “Surrender all actions to me, / and fix your reason on your inner self; / without hope or possessiveness, / your fever subdued, fight the battle!”<sup>xix</sup> Only when one's actions render her or him apathetic to her or his own benefit is the personal “possessiveness” extinguished and the devotional understanding of Karma-marga brought to the fore. When the “fever” of self involvement is removed, then action is handed over to god and ultimately made possible. Von Stietenron explains this idea with the statement that in Karma-marga “the deity alone is the origin of all activity.”<sup>xx</sup> This devotional understanding of god acting through detached human action is only



possible with disinterest in the results of karma-marga. Karma-marga requires devotion to the deity and to be *only engaged as a devotion* for the deity.

The understanding of god is more ambiguous within Karma-marga. Rather than readily aligning itself with Ramanuja's view of God (as we have seen Bhakti-marga do) or stemming out of Shankara's view of God (as we will see Jñana-marga does), Karma-marga may view God in either light. Some socially engaged Hindus act out of devotion to a separate, imminently present deity;<sup>xxi</sup> others act out of an awareness of the true nature of Self.<sup>xxii</sup> While either view of God may easily lend itself to Karma-marga, the significance of devotion does not necessarily require a view of God. The goal and act of devotion is in the present engagement in social improvement. Each believer may approach his or her work out of a different type of devotion; such diversity does not render the actions void or without devotion. Thus, within Karma-marga, it is not necessarily significant how the practitioner views God. In fact, the most important approach to God is disinterestedness even in the fruits of devotion. Salvation, as an end in and of itself, should not be considered within Karma-marga. Oxymoronically, the most devout Karma-marga follower does good for the sake of the good.

## JÑANA-MARGA

In Jñana-marga, or the path of knowledge, the goal is to learn the nature of atman (the deepest self). Through spiritual exercises (generally in the form of meditation), the individual comes to understand the truth of Shankara's philosophy of non-dualism. This philosophy, also known as Advaita, is the philosophy of the "discovery of the One, of the unity of the human soul (atman) with Brahma."<sup>xxiii</sup> Hans Küng explains: "A mystic par excellence, Shankara interpreted the *Upanishads*, *The Bhagavad-Gita*, and the Brahma Sutras (in other words, the fundamental Hindu texts) to contain a 'pure,' consistent, absolute 'doctrine of oneness' (*a-dvaitam*, meaning non-duality)."<sup>xxiv</sup> Küng explains further that:

*"Each believer may approach his or her work out of a different type of devotion; such diversity does not render the actions void or without devotion."*

*According to Shankara, the prerequisite for true knowledge is the distinguishing of two levels of truth. On the level of ordinary empirical truth, there are, of course, many things and many separate selves. But this naïve kind of knowledge is deceptive. On the level of the higher metaphysical truth, all the various selves are one with the absolute Self. . . . Only the One really exists, the truly real, outside of which there is no true reality, the eternal, infinite Brahma, which is at once pure Being (*sat*), cognitive consciousness (*cit*), and overflowing bliss (*ananda*), but which can be known only through holistic mystical experience. In the mystical experience of unity, our individual self, the atman, is known for what it is: only another aspect of the absolute Self, Brahma.*

xxv

With this concept of the transcendent, Jñana-marga practitioners work to experience this oneness. To be successful, they must strip away all understanding of their own persons. It is only at this point that true knowledge is reached. Thus, through different forms of meditation (and, we shall see, devotion), the Jñana practitioners reach loss of self and Moksha.

Given the diversity of the actions of Karma-marga and the assortment of worshipped deities in Bhakti-marga, the range of devotional understanding within Jñana-marga may seem the most unexpected. However, this path to



salvation possesses the highest prestige among Hindus.<sup>xxvi</sup> That said, each group within the tapestry of advaita-Hindus maintains its own supremacy in understanding of the One Truth.

In the Ramakrishna tradition, the understanding of the path of knowledge inherently comes with a path of devotion. In an interview with one of Ramakrishna's 1600 monks, I learned that Ramakrishnas believe in the existence of one Truth as it relates to all world religions. Followers of Ramakrishna believe all people will ultimately be reincarnated until they are given the grace of God to reach this understanding of the Truth through the Ramakrishna tradition. Only then will these believers reach Moksha.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Devotion in the traditional sense is not enough within Ramakrishna's philosophy: one must have a transformation of self. Exercises in devotion may give the believer graces to reach a consciousness of the Truth enough to manifest this transformation of self; thus, devotional acts still have value within this system.<sup>xxviii</sup> Ramakrishna and his followers practiced a devotion to the goddess Kali, praying to her image and offering puja within her temples. While the concept of monism proclaimed by advaita is actively professed in Ramakrishna's tradition, it does seem to be contradicted by this concept of the necessary grace given by God. Devotion to God is a tool through which one may recognize atman. Yet, this knowledge is a gift *from* God. It is unclear whether devotion is directed to a transcendent, external god who is able to give, or to the god within (the Self following the advaita system) who would seemingly be rendered too near to have the separation of a grace-giver. With such a blurry concept of God, it is apparent that the traditional understanding of devotion is redefined within the advaita system of Ramakrishna.

Reminiscent of the "devotion-as-a-tool" teachings of Ramakrishna are the teachings of Ramana Maharshi. While advocating acts of devotion in a large group because it creates a "resonance" that helps with the awareness of

Self, followers of Ramana Maharshi do warn that one cannot make the act of devotion itself the end.<sup>xxix</sup> Through practicing devotion, though, believers can become more aware of their own divine centers. Ramana Maharshi himself possessed an intense devotion to Shiva, moving to the caves of Arunachala to be near the incarnation of Shiva on Earth. He explained the significance of such devotion in a way that permitted his advaitic understanding to still be true: "Whatever you do, do without egotism, that is without the feeling 'I am doing this.' When a man reaches that state even his own wife will appear to him as the Universal Mother. True Bhakti (devotion) is surrender of the ego to the Self."<sup>xxx</sup> Attaching Shankara's value of the Self to his own understanding the Self, Ramana Maharshi was able to align his form of devotion with a non-dualist devotion. There is no external entity to which one must be devoted. Rather, the deeper, divine Self is that to which one must surrender the superficial self. Ramana Maharshi's devotion to Shiva would thus merely be an exercise of surrendering the ego. From this surrender, a deeper awareness of the Self would emerge. Ramana Maharshi, thus, retains Shankara's views on God while advocating devotion.

Yet another form of Jñana-marga would be the teachings of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. Creator of the Art of Living meditation program, Ravi Shankar's philosophy follows the schema of Pranayama yoga. Focusing on the power of the breath as a tool for learning about the Self, Ravi Shankar advocates a devotion of gratefulness. During an interview with one of his followers, this notion of gratefulness as devotion was explained: "There should be a devotion to the Self as it is divine (and is within you). It is the height of love to show devotion, and the [manifestation] of devotion is gratefulness and appreciation of beauty: beauty of nature, of other people, and the love everywhere."<sup>xxxi</sup> Ravi Shankar himself explained, "Devotion is an internal feeling. Anything can trigger it. It is the culmination of love. Darsan does not help . . . It is too short and we close our eyes when we are before the god."<sup>xxxii</sup> While discussing the best form of worship, The Art of Living advocates that, "The best 'puja,' the best form of worship, is to be happy, to be



grateful.”<sup>xxxiii</sup> Such perpetual happiness transcends the traditional idea of an act of devotion made to God. Rather, it turns devotion into an attitude of optimism and gratefulness.

Each of these Jñana Hindu traditions offers a different understanding of the nature of devotion in the pursuit of Truth. However, each retains a place for devotion as a tool with which one may come to a deeper understanding of God. While the understanding of God within the path of knowledge may ultimately lead to a non-dualist system (which makes devotion to God seem obsolete), the retention of devotional aspects in each tradition can ultimately bring one's understanding to the divine within each person. As one Vedantic follower explained, “I worship humanity because each human is God.”<sup>xxxiv</sup>

#### DEVOTIONAL CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA

As seen above, Hinduism is a universalizing term for a diverse assortment of faiths. When Christianity is put in dialogue with Hinduism, the multi-faceted nature of Hinduism leads to a multi-faceted dialogue. Organizations like the National Biblical, Catechetical, and Liturgical Centre (NBCLC) and the Christian-Ashram movement in India work towards this inculturated Christianity; through engagement with local Hindu understandings of devotion, a deeper liturgical, social, and theological understanding can emerge within Christianity.

Bhakti-marga Hinduism can be translated liturgically in the devotion-dialogue between Christianity and Hinduism. One such instance of already inculturated Christian-Hindu devotionality would be the Indian Rite mass. The Roman Catholic liturgy is infused with Hindu devotional acts, whether it is garlanding the Gospel as a Hindu would her or his idol, or anointing one's head with the heat from the lit lamp on the offering tray. These small actions that are reminiscent of Bhakti puja allow for an inculturated representation of Christianity within India. Through the engagement of Bhakti actions while approaching Christian devotion, the offering of a devoted heart (as Hindus under-

stand puja) could inform Christian approaches to devotion to Christ. *The Bhagavad-Gita's* lessons on complete devotion to God (in all acts and thoughts) could inform Christianity's love of Christ and its devotional attitude towards the Trinity. It is hoped that the engagement of Christian-Hindu dialogue with regards to Bhakti-marga may ultimately lead to a deeper devotion of Christians to God.

With regards to Karma-marga, the concept of completely selfless action in utter devotion to God could inform Christians' social activism. As von Stietenron explains:

*Christians can sympathize [with the difficulty of detaching oneself completely from emotional attachment to the world], because they, too, are called to selflessness and generally fail to keep this straightforward commandment. To be selfless to the degree that no more ties of any sort are created . . . is a radical demand. To be strictly logical, this kind of unselfishness would require giving up the wish for one's own salvation.*<sup>xxxv</sup>

Such radical devotion to social action in the world is something that Christianity has always professed, but has always struggled to exhibit. By engaging Karma Hinduism, Christianity could take lessons from *The Bhagavad-Gita* and Karma-marga leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, and ultimately may be able to reach a deeper understanding of the devotional side of social activism. Christ's call to serve could be put into dialogue with Lord Krishna's call to surrender all action to him. Thus, by allowing both tradition's understanding of social activism to engage a deeper, more informed call to social action may be discovered.

Lastly, Jñana-marga's understanding of using devotion as a means to deepen understanding of the imminent nature of God in the world could inform Christian understanding of the dignity of human in the image of God. While the translation of one understanding (non-dual) to the other (reverential distance between man and God) does not completely align, lessons in respect and reverence for the human other





OFFERING ON THE GANGES, VARANASI, INDIA

may stem from such dialogue. If Christians profess Jesus Christ's ability to be within the other (an idea manifested within Matthew 25:31-46), Advaita Vedanta can reverse the concept (as in a notion of "Christ within"). Devotion to God within, as is found in the path of knowledge, brings Christians back to the awareness of Christ within themselves. By studying and dialoguing with Jñana-Hindus, Christians can come to a deeper understanding of teachings of their participation in Christ's body.

But dialogue is a two way street. The goal for those involved in the engagement between religions must be always to have a sharing of ideas. Christianity's devotion to Christ can inform Hindu ideas of devotion just as Christianity's devotion to Christ can be informed by Hindu ideas of devotions. Questions arising from dialogue (such as ambiguities about the nature of God within the different faith-systems) can lead to deeper self-understanding as each

religion must articulate its own beliefs. The exchange of ideas, practices, and questions can ultimately lead to a more vibrant and structured theology within each religion engaged in dialogue. As such, the ultimate goal of the interreligious dialogue can be reached.

#### ENDNOTES

i. von Stietencron (222)

ii. *ibid.*

iii. Küng (203)

iv. Eck (3)

v. This placement is significant for Hindus because it signifies the power of the mind and the source of the soul. By receiving the anointing there, Hindus receive a reminder of their relationship with god. Source: Interview with Rajeev Rastogi

vi. Jai, Manish.

vii. Lal, Pintu.

viii. Rastogi, Rajeev.

ix. *ibid.*

x. *ibid.*

xi. von Stietencron (251).

xii. *The Bhagavad-Gita* (108)



- xiii. *The Bhagavad-Gita* (108)  
 xiv. Küng, "Man and Salvation in Hindu Religions" (229)  
 xv. von Stietencron, (221)  
 xvi. *The Bhagavad-Gita* (38)  
 xvii. An ashram resembles a monastery and is traditionally built around a guru. In the instance of Fireflies Ashram, the environment is treated as the guru.  
 xviii. *The Bhagavad-Gita* (46)  
 xix. *The Bhagavad-Gita* (47)  
 xx. von Stietencron (221)  
 xxi. As evident with some individuals working at Fireflies Ashram.  
 xxii. Seen through the life of Gandhi.  
 xxiii. Küng, (201)  
 xxiv. Küng, (201-202)  
 xxv. Küng, (202)  
 xxvi. von Stietencron, (220)  
 xxvii. Ramakrishna temple  
 xxviii. Ibid  
 xxix. Ashram of Ramana Maharshi  
 xxx. Osborne (86-87)  
 xxxi. Interview at The Art of Living International Headquarters.  
 xxxii. Shankar, Ravi  
 xxxiii. Art of Living Online  
 xxxiv. Lal Pintu.  
 xxxv. von Stietencron (221)

## REFERENCES

- Art of Living Online.  
 <[http://www.artofliving.org/DS\\_MultiLingual.asp](http://www.artofliving.org/DS_MultiLingual.asp)> 7 July 2007.
- The Bhagavad-Gita*. 2004. Translated by Barbara Stoler Miller. New York: Bantam Classic
- Eck, Diana. 1985. *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*. Chambersburg: Anima Books.
- Jai, Manish. 16 June 2007. Personal Interview. Varanasi, India
- Lal, Pintu. 16 June 2007. Personal Interview. Varanasi, India.
- Rastogi, Rajeev. 16 June 2007. Personal Interview. Varanasi, India.
- Ramakrishna temple. 24 May 2007. Personal Interview. Varanasi, India
- The Art of Living International Headquarters. 29 May 2007. Personal Interview. Varanasi, India
- Ashram of Ramana Maharshi. 28 May 2007. Personal Interview. Varanasi, India

Küng, Hans. 1993. In *Christianity and World Religions* by Hans Küng. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.

Osborne, Arthur. 1970. *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge*. York Beach: Weiser Books, LLC.

Shankar, Ravi. 29 May 2007. Question and Answer. The Art of Living Headquarters. Bangalore, India

von Stietencron, Heinrich. 1993. In *Christianity and World Religions* by Hans Küng. Maryknoll: Orbis Books