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**The Quest for a
Meaningful Spirituality**



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The Editor, *Jnanadeepa*, Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune 411014, India Tel (office): +91-20-27034968, (res): +91-20-27034169, 27034497 Fax: +91-20-7034801
E-mail: <kurien@jesuits.net>
<jdv@vsnl.com>

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Editorial

There is a growing interest in spirituality all over the world today. This is particularly true of India. Large numbers of people turn to godmen like Satya Sai Baba or Rajneesh (Osho) for help in their quest for God-experience and a meaningful spirituality. Others flock to the different meditation centres which are proliferating these days. Yet others go in for therapies of various kinds. Among Christians the phenomenal growth of the charismatic movement, the popularity of retreat centres like Pota and the rapid expansion of the neo-Pentecostal churches all testify to their hunger for God-experience and a life-giving spirituality.

It is in this context that this issue of *Jnanadeepa* has chosen as its theme: *The Quest for a Meaningful Spirituality*. The aim here is not to propose any one kind of approach to spirituality as a meaningful spirituality for all. Rather it is to discuss a variety of spiritualities, both past and present, so that it becomes clear that a person today has many choices available to him/her.

Three of the articles included in this issue are historical studies. The first one examines the *Spirituality of Courage* practised by the Beguines of Europe in the 12th and the 13th centuries. Theirs was one of the first known movements by women in the history of Christianity to assert their independence from the oppressive structures of the Church and show that there were choices available to women other than “the husband and the convent”. These women chose to live a gospel-inspired life apart from the framework of the Rule. They adopted a simple life style, engaged in manual labour, worked in hospitals, read and taught the scriptures and had a strict regimen of prayer. They also produced an extraordinary body of mystical literature. All this is of great significance for us today. Another article studies the spirituality put forward in the Bhagavad Gita, the most known book of the Indian spiritual heritage. The Gita offers a way to spiritual integration which includes the four basic relationships of human persons – with themselves, with the Divine, with others and with nature. It helps them to be rooted in the divine centre of their being and from there to be engaged in the liberative work of God in the world. A third article investigates the trans-religious spirituality of Mahatma Gandhi. It is the author’s contention that Gandhi’s conception of Truth will provide us with a common framework, interweaving different religious conceptions of the Spirit and validating the variety of their truth-claims. Gandhi’s understanding of spirituality both transcends and comprehends the wide variety of approaches to religion and spirituality to be found in India.

Another group of three articles study contemporary trends in spirituality. One of them examines the New Age Spirituality and finds that it is a quest for

breaking boundaries. Unlike other movements and spiritualities which define themselves in opposition to other movements and spiritualities, the New Age spirituality seeks to absorb and integrate into itself opposing and even contradictory views and ways of life. It makes space for all world-views and ideologies that promote human well-being and cosmic harmony. However, there is some danger that this spirituality may be co-opted by the forces of the global market to legitimise their unjust policies and practices. Another article discusses the emerging Relational Spirituality from psycho-social perspectives. It explores the emotional-relational dimension of spirituality that would make spirituality more easily accessible to most people. Theories of modern psychology, like emotional intelligence and attachment theory, offer insights and perspectives that enrich the practice of relational spirituality. A third article explores Body Spirituality and proposes the thesis that the Incarnation is an invitation to an embodied spirituality. The main argument of the article is that the body is a source of the experience and knowledge of God. Hence Christian spirituality ought to begin with the foundational truth that the human being is an embodied being and, as an embodied being, he/she experiences and knows God in the body. The author underlines the importance of multifaceted human relationships for body spirituality.

A third set of three articles proposes new kinds/forms of spirituality. The first one seeks to weave an empowering spirituality for women. It outlines the contours of a spirituality which will assist women in their struggle for liberation and empowerment. It bases itself on their psycho-social strengths such as attention to life, capacity for nurturance and body intuition, facility for relationships, connectedness and communication, sensitivity for issues of peace, non-violence and ecology, spirit of sacrifice and a sense of commitment. A second article advocates a spirituality for life. It discusses the essential elements of a spirituality which will foster life in its totality in the context of the grave threats to life in today's world. And third set of articles deals with a missionary spirituality for our times. The author points out that Christian discipleship is a continuation of the sending of the Son by the Father in the Spirit. Hence "Sent-ness" characterizes Christian existence in the world today. He also described some of the ideas and attitudes that should shine through the life of a Christian.

Included in this issue are two articles originally written for the last issue of *Jnanadeepa* which had as its theme: *The Situation of Women*. The first one deals with the problems and difficulties faced by single women. And the second one discusses women and globalization and points out that globalization has had disastrous consequences for women.

It is our fond hope that the articles in this issue of *Jnanadeepa* will be of some help to our readers in their search for a meaningful spirituality.

Kurien Kunnumpuram SJ

Editor