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Book Review: "Materialien zur Geschichte der Ramanuja-Schule II"

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religion" are being played out. This stimulating analysis forms the last half of the book and brings new dimensions of understanding to the discussions of India's law and polity. India's hybrid development, maintains Larson, sees the secular as religious and the community (rather than the individual) as citizen. He quotes Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan who described India's Neo-Hindu secularism: "Secularism here does not mean irreligion or atheism ... it lays stress on the universality of spiritual values which may be attained in a variety of ways" (p.197). Larson calls this "Indic Civil Religion", and identifies its critics as including: Muslims, Marxists, Ambedkar, the BJP, and the VHP. Larson's discussion of Gandhi, Nehru, and the Indian Constitution in this regard is very insightful.

Another helpful observation is Larson's distinction between citizenship (as we know it in the West), and "community-ship". In India the latter is stronger than the former. When "community-ship" is selfish and separatist in nature it becomes "communalism" and acts as a negation or distortion of the "community-ship". Partition is communalism's primary symbol. Rather than using religious, linguistic, and cultural identity to divide and destroy (communalism) community-ship finds strength, value, and even identity in the overarching conversation between communities that is for Larson the core Indian value. Today India is in agony

because this central Indian way is not being followed. On the one extreme the Neo-Hindu secular state rules out discourse regarding religion in public-policy matters. On the other extreme is the idea of a Hindu state where public policy is informed by only one religion. Larson's solution is a middle way in which India is a multireligious state with no established religion, but where all – including secularists and agnostics – would be recognized as discussants in the overarching conversation among groups on public-policy matters. While lacking in detail, Larson's idea is that then tax money could be used to foster a religious-studies-type educational curriculum at all levels in schools and universities.

While I learned much from Larson's book and plan to use it in my senior seminar, I have one quarrel with him, namely his interpretation of Sayid Ahmad Khan as the father of the idea of partition or two-nation separatism (p.184). Although Larson may be correct in seeing Sayid as playing a major role in developing a "neo-Muslim" perspective in response to the Neo-Hindu perspective, I find in Sayid's writings an emphasis on the purification of religious practice and the reform of Islam within a *unified India* and not the intention of creating a separate Muslim state.

Harold Coward
University of Victoria

Materialien zur Geschichte der Rāmānuja-Schule II. Gerhard Oberhammer. Wien: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996.

THIS IS A scholarly translation and presentation of Vātsya Varadaguru's (c.1190-1275) treatise on the Transcendence of Brahma belonging to the controversial theological discussions of the Ramanuja tradition. The *Materialien zur Geschichte der Rāmānuja-Schule I* was the first

presentation of another work of the same tradition: *Parāsarabhas Tattvaratnākaraḥ* (1979). The present treatise is a part of Varadaguru's *Prameyamālā*, a work on Rāmānuja's Śribhāṣyam in which the author treats the question of Brahma's transcendence and defends his position

against that of Śaṅkara.

The whole question turns around the problem of defining Brahma in relation to space, time, and being, the problem of "becoming" as the problem of "limitation". Transcendence is to be understood as *triparicchedarāhityam*, that is, the dissociation from the threefold limitation of space, time, and being. Varadaguru's *Prameyamālā* treats also the question of *sarvavastuśarīratvam*, that is, all that is distinct from Brahma is to be considered as

the body of Brahma. Oberhammer's accurate and readable translation of these two dense philosophical concepts and their exegesis is in fact a rich contribution to the Rāmānuja literature in the present-day languages. It brings also a significant contribution to the contemporary philosophical discussion on the concept of God and its relationship to the contingent being.

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Shabda Shakti Sangam. Vandana Mataji (Ed.). Bangalore, 1995, xxxii+376pp.; xxxvi+438pp.

THIS VOLUME IS in fact two books put together "upside down". It is an ambitious project of Vandana Mataji to bring two traditions together in one volume - Christianity for the Hindus and Hinduism for Christians. "Sangam" is the confluence of the Word (*śabdam*) and the Power of the Most High (*Śakti*) and to the surprise of both Christians and Hindus, in this book Word (*śabda*) stands for Hinduism and Power (*śakti*) - always associated with the mother aspect of God - represents Christianity.

The occasion for this book is to celebrate the two great sannyasis: Swami Vivekananda and Swami Abhishiktananda, Henri Le Saux, a Western Christian monk who lived in the Himalayas as a *sādhu* among the wanderers. The book stands as a symbol of interfaith dialogue - a meditative process - contributed by Hindus and Christians. There are 80 contributors to this volume, almost a who's who of the interfaith venture in India.

The contributors include among others Swami Chidananda, Swami Ramaswarupananda, Raimon Panikkar, Paulos Mar Gregorios, Murray Rogers, V. R. Krishna Eyer, S. J. Samartha, and George Suares Prabhu.

Some of the titles of the write-ups in this

volume might give an idea of the confluence that has taken place or is taking place in the thinking process of these two traditions in India. The core of Christianity, the Dharma of Jesus, Trinity-Sacchidananda dialogue, avatar and incarnation, God as Mother in Hindu and Christian traditions, prayer patterns: Hindu and Christian, Christic advaita, and so on.

The book is designed in such a way that what is considered the essence of Christianity is given as the truth and the life, the ways (to reach the Divine), Christian perceptions, Christian saints and mystics; there is also a critical appreciation (Christ and Christianity as experienced by Hindus) and their understanding of interfaith dialogue. The same pattern is followed in presenting the essence of Hinduism, their scriptures, their notion of the divine, the ways to reach It, Hindu Saints and mystics, Hinduism as perceived by Christians, and so on.

The book is unique in its kind. It is a record of sharing of people from two traditions, giving account of themselves to each other, with the hope that the other will understand at least the spirit behind this attempt. It is an achievement to get some eighty people to be involved in a project like this. Naturally it is a Christian initiative and