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Gnaa Naa Bha Yoga Conference – East meets West

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God dances in Man. Paths to the inner Self in the Christian-Hinduism Dialogue.

God dances in man. Who is then dancing? Deep experience points to a non-dual structure of reality. This needs to be cognitively and emotionally cultivated, and socially communicated.

Swamiji, friends, my dear sisters and brothers,

Religion has two anthropological roots. One is suffering due to the human conditions of dependency, death, dealing with the unforeseen, dealing with what we cannot control, what surprises us in a negative way, what makes us fear. Religion in all different cultures is trying to give an answer to looking beyond these conditions to a source, which we hardly can describe by words.

However, there is a second anthropological root for religion, and this is ecstasy. Ecstasy which pulls us out from our ordinary mind, from our ordinary experiences into an ecstatic level of awareness where we realize joy, more than joy, something which the German language has, I think, no equivalent for, but in Sanskrit is called ANANDA. An ecstatic state of consciousness is where the things in our usual experience, which cause us trouble or cause us discomfort, become one or we become one with them. We experience these different states in an ongoing mood of growing into oneness. For instance in erotic experience, in nature, in the natural beauty of a sunset or sunrise, in India the SANDHYA experience, also in experience of art, especially of music or dance. Why music and dance? Because music and dance are the arts in which time becomes one. The modi of time, the present, past and future become one in the movement of ecstatic being. And also in near death experiences or in other ecstatic experiences we realize or at least we get a glimpse of this oneness. However, all these ecstatic states just give us a foretaste, they come and go, and it is only when we are not only touched but totally penetrated by this divine presence, that this state of ecstatic unity does not go anymore.

I'm going to present a few images, which different traditions have found to express in language or imagery, this kind of ecstatic oneness, which draws our mind to a non-dualistic view of our world experience. And I've been asked to do so with emphasis on the Western tradition. However, I will probably compare and also go into the Eastern traditions, because in the realm of spirit there is no east, no west. The human being on this earth did not change very much over the last few thousand years. Of course, our civilisations in their external ways have changed, but the human heart, the human condition, the human desire and longing for fulfilment, for TURIYA, has not changed.

In Indian, Chinese and in East Asian traditions we find so many views, in fact so many different religions, so many different rituals, so many different names of God, Jay Sri Ram, Rama Krishna, etc. We have so many names, which give us a hint of union, of non-duality of what we usually experience as dual states. Take the Indian names which combine the male and female in one name: Sita Ram,

Radha Krishna, where you have the MAITHUNA, the divine couple seen as one. This oneness is not up in the sky. This oneness is us, in everyone of us developing his or her qualities, which are unity within duality.

At the same time, in any of these traditions you have the dualistic experience. Take for instance the tradition of the Divine Mother. Or, you have experiences of profound doubt, take the LOKAYATAS, materialists, and others, or for that matter the Buddhists. Similarly in the West you have traditions, especially in the Christian, Jewish or Islamic traditions, where you have the real separation between God and man. At the same time you also have traditions, which we call the mystic traditions in Judaism, in Christianity and Islam, where God and the human being, God's presence in the very human being, are seen, more than seen, are experienced as oneness.

So there is no point in dividing the dualistic West from the non-dualistic East, but we have to realize that there are different stages in the human spiritual development. There are stages from a more dual approach, from the experience of a beginner that God is there, and I am here, and through that worship I actually become imbued with divine qualities. Later on I realize that these divine qualities are my very being. And this is so in the West as well as in the East.

I will give you a few examples. Let me start with Paul, since I have been asked to focus on the Western tradition. Saint Paul, the founder of Christianity as it were, was an extremely interesting saint. In the letter to the Galatians, chapter 2, verse 20, he says, "It is not anymore I who lives, but Christ lives in me". The interesting question is who says the sentence? Does Paul speak this sentence, or does Christ in Paul speak this sentence? Or does Paul in Christ speak this sentence, "It is not anymore me, but it is Christ speaking in me", and of course, not only speaking but 'living'. Who utters this sentence? If you try to reflect on this sentence, and try to analyse it you are in the mood of GNANA, you are in the mood of investigating who is actually the I. And then you come to the question, "Who am I?"

This is the basic question of all Indian philosophy, starting with the Upanishadic experience. Who is actually my identity, who is this person who bears this name? Is it my memory accumulated during the last sixty years, in my case, in your case a little less time, maybe? Or is it the genes I inherited from my mother and father and generations back? Or is it the experience I got from my teachers, the language I speak, the dialect, whatever? Who am I? This body here is all growing and passing, and those who are a little bit older, know even our memories are passing and we forget. We change all the time. Who is the one who changes? What is the identity? We talk, "It's my person, my name. I am ..." and then we utter our name, our profession, but this is all historical change. Who am I? Paul asks this question and says, "It is not anymore me, it is Christ speaking in me." What does it mean?

Actually in our tradition, in my spiritual practice, that is Chinese and Japanese Zen, we would call this a typical KOAN, because you cannot find a rational solution. But what you find is a non-dual experience. It is what lives in me. It is what makes my limbs move, what keeps my breath going, what makes my heart beat, what invigorates my thoughts, my feelings and everything. This power is what the UPANISHADS call the ATMAN, and other traditions call it PRANA, vital energy, being our phenomenal human life. In Christian terms it is called in Greek the PNEUMA HAGION. It can be translated in a very insufficient way with 'Holy Spirit'. Saint Paul calls it the Christ Power in him. If you translate the original Greek term, PNEUMA it reads breath. Pneuma, you have it in the 'Pneus' of your car, car tires. It is wind, it is the breathing, it is moving energy, and this is what makes up our very being. Without that we would be lifeless in one second. Non-duality. It is not me here and God there. I would not be existing for a second, neither as a physical being, nor as a psychological, and not as a spiritual being, if not for the divine energy, the PNEUMA HAGION, the ATMAN, the

ANTARYAMIN, the inner ruler, the actual energy, which makes up all that we enjoy and experience here.

There is no duality at all if we experience, if we look and if we investigate into our very being. There is one force, one energy which moves everything. It is not anymore me who lives, but the Christ energy within. This is Paul's spiritual insight. Paul writes in the first century. He writes in Greek the 'lingua franca', the language of antiquity. And many centuries later, in the 14th century we have this amazing scholar, preacher and mystic, Master Eckhart. We do not know much about him, except that he gave wonderful sermons and wrote most interesting and elaborate Latin works. And it is still very difficult to interpret and find out what he really meant. I'm not going to go into these details of scholarly investigations. I only want to quote one image he uses, which is very interesting in our context. It is an image some of you probably will know, but which falls into place here, because it is so stimulating for us to reflect on. Eckhart says in one of his sermons, "The eye by which God sees me, is the same eye by which I see God".

This is a poetic expression of the non-duality we were just speaking about. There is not a divine eye far apart in the sky or in heaven or somewhere else, and there is not a human eye here looking at something which we call God. But there is the process of seeing, recognising, being seen. That is the most intimate communication, an understanding of coming together, and this communication is the one energy which pervades and permeates the whole world. The eye by which God sees me is the same eye, not similar, it is the same eye by which I see God. Allow me to reflect on it in one sentence, to reflect or interpret it in Sanskrit or the Indian tradition. This is what we call DARSHANA in Sanskrit. Darshana is not that I see the Guru or the Murti in the temple. Darshana is that I see while I am being seen. Darshana is the most intimate sacramental 'comm-unication' or 'comm-unity' between the two. It is the process of becoming one in the act of seeing. It is the dance of perception, because in perception we are first two. I look at you, you look at me. But the way I look at you changes you. You start to smile a little. Then you look at me and then I start to smile, and a dance of communication of energy starts. This is how communication between different beings takes part, and the very energy of communication is what we call the DIVINE. It is what brings us in movement and what draws us together. It is smiling at each other. You see this is the original smile of the first dawn of creation. And we repeat it right here and it is repeated in the whole of creation, time and time again.

Master Eckhart again, "The eye by which God sees me, is the same eye by which I see God." By the way, Eckhart was from Thuringia, Thüringen, in Germany, but he taught in Paris. He moved about everywhere in Europe and at that time, in the 14th century, Europe was one, at least intellectually. The language the educated and intellectual people could understand was Latin.

Now, I would like to add a third quote from someone who is not quite such a mystic as Eckhart. He lived in the 15th century, much later. He was a GNANA and KARMA YOGI, if you like to put it in Indian terminology. He was a cardinal and politician at a time when the church was fighting, was engaged in in-fights, and when they tried to arrange for a council in Basel. At the same time he was a philosopher, one of the greatest philosophers of his time of the Renaissance. He studied mathematics and tried to express the movement of the planets and the movement of everything in mathematical terms. He was probably one of the greatest mathematicians of his time, and was also the abbot of a monastery not far from where I come from, in Bavaria, Tegernsee. He was a Benedictine monk as well. Since he was travelling so much all the time, he had to do something for his monks at home, to give them some comfort. And he so wrote one of the most marvellous books which was written in the Renaissance in Europe. The book is called "De Visione Dei", about the vision of God. And the year is 1453. That is important. I will come back to it in a moment. The name of this philosopher and mystic is Nikolaus von Kues. One of my favourites in the whole of the Western tradition.

Actually he grew up by the Mosel river at a place which is still there, called Kues. One of the great joys of my life was going to the library where Nikolaus still has a library and looking at the books. I was not only looking at the books, I was taking them into my hands and found an edition of Master Eckhart, which Nikolaus had commented on the side. Nikolaus uses images, simple images for his monks, because they were not all intellectuals. He says, "Look, there are these pictures that you paint on the walls", and he had some of these images where there is a figure with the eyes open and when you look from this side, the eyes look at you. You walk a little bit, look from this side, the eyes look at you. And you walk along, the eyes go with you. He says, "How marvellous. How come the painter can paint the eyes in such a way that the image overcomes the duality of space?" Here or there, it is a present view beyond the dualities. It is what in Sanskrit is called the AJNA CHAKRA. The eye which sees beyond the duality. The marvellous thing here is you can even paint it. And Nikolaus argued that this is like the vision of God. God sees you all the time and you see him all the time.

We use it in English, 'vision of God' or in Latin, 'visione dei'. It is in the language. The Latin or Greek or even German or English language knows that there are two meanings: the vision of God is the vision God has looking at us, and the vision of God is my vision, my view of God. So even in the language we can see there is non-duality between the two aspects of vision. God seeing me and me seeing God. It is the same. It is the same eye, which Eckhart talks about. We call it, those of you who still had Greek or Latin in school, the genitivus subjectivus and the genitivus objectivus. But it is one, you understand? The language itself is wise and the language tells us that God's vision and human vision merge in the depth in one.

What has all this to do with dance? As you know, in Indian traditions there are two basic images of creation. There are many images of creation in the Rig Veda and the Brahmanas of the Veda, but I think there are two basic images of creation, which have caught the people over centuries, over thousands of years. The first image is Vishnu sleeping on SHESHA on the ground of the ocean on the coiled snake and is breathing. He breathes the rhythm of life, and out of this breathing grows a lotus, and the lotus grows above sea level. The lotus opens itself in full beauty and in there sits Brahma, the creator God. And when Brahma opens his eye, one world appears. When he closes his eye, a world disappears. This happens, there are different traditions, usually a thousand times. Then Vishnu lying on the ground of the ocean breathes in again, the lotus draws in, and we have PRALAYA, the world coming to an end. And then again the whole process starts. Vishnu, out of his cosmic sleep, in a pre-mental state, breathes the pranic energy in the rhythm of coming and going. This is the first rhythm of the world, the first music of the world, breathing in, breathing out, worlds appear, worlds disappear, very slowly, very calmly, there is no noise. There is the beauty of the lotus opening itself, the beauty of the conscious world opening itself in the opening eye of Brahma, and closing itself. Pre-conscious. I would call it pranic movement of Lord Vishnu.

The other image is of course Shiva's creation of the world. Shiva dances a rapid dance. You all know Shiva Nataraja with his beautiful image, which you have in Chidambaram and many other Indian temples. Shiva with his four arms, using the fire in creating and destroying, and the whole rhythm of his being. In his other hand of course he has the DAMARU, the drum. As if he were drumming the rhythm of time, much faster than Vishnu's sleeping rhythm. He drums the rhythm of time and he has the fire. The fire is the element of transformation and purification, as you know. It creates and destroys and also creates anew. And Shiva's right hand is in ABHAYA MUDRA, telling human beings "Don't be afraid". The other left hand is making the gesture pointing to his raised left foot, indicating movement and energy and transformation. Shiva dances, and it is interesting that he dances the movement of time and his dance actually creates time. This dance is the first rhythm of being in the conscious way. The beautiful aspect of this image, and this is fundamentally different from the Western tradition, is that he dances on the demon, on the negative force, without killing the negative force. Rather, he transforms the negative force, takes the energy and creates the negative force into a

structured universe. A structured universe is a musical universe and out of this energy comes again, time and again, the beauty of creation. The negative is never destroyed, but is interpreted as an aspect in the cosmic dance.

Here we have a fundamental difference to the Western experience, where the negative force, the LEVIATHAN is killed. Or Michael's or George's fight with the dragon, where the negative force is killed. Or think in modern terms in Wagner's Parsifal and so on. In the Western tradition the psychic condition, conditioned by thousands of years of mythology, is that the evil must be overcome in the sense that it has to be killed. In the Eastern tradition, in the dance of Shiva, the evil is to be continuously integrated rather than being killed. There is a difference, not only in the mental, but I would say in the very fundamental psychic condition. And the difference is, to put it in abstract terms, when you kill you have a duality. The body which has been killed will come again in through a different door into being. When you integrate it you have a continuous movement of non-duality and integration. And again if you compare it with the Western image, Shiva's dance means forming the amorphous. Because the ASURA, the demon, in a way stands for the amorphous, for the a-dharmic, for the non-integrated aspect. Forming it into a cosmic dance, means giving it form, giving it beauty, giving it structure.

In a very similar way the first account of creation in the Bible is to be read. As you all know, in the beginning God created heaven and earth. This is how the Bible starts. It is created out of what the Hebrew works call 'tohu-wa-bohu', which means chaos. That means creating a cosmos out of chaos. The whole creation myth in Western Asia, in Babylonia and also in the biblical traditions, is that God creates the cosmos out of chaos. There is cosmos, which is the rhythm of being, which is the dance of the cosmic energies in an integrated form, in a rhythm. 'Tohu-wa-bohu' becomes cosmos and cosmos in the Greek language first of all is the beauty expressed as ornaments such as jewellery and so on. There is sparkling beauty because of order, because of geometrical order. The Western philosophers starting from Pythagoras and Plato, Aristotle and so on until Albert Einstein and others, were all fascinated by this order which could be systematized or abstracted in geometrical and arithmetical forms. This is why arithmetics and geometry are not natural sciences, but are sciences of mind, sciences of spiritual realisation. To order unordered things, to order or form our mind, our emotions into one stream, is as Dr Nath quoted before, CITTA VRTTI NIRODHAH. This is not derogating, but structuring, as if it were creating music out of noise. Because all the time there is noise going on in our mind, and when you form it you have the music of an ordered mental movement, and this is what YOGA is all about.

It is very interesting how these old myths of creation, which seem to deal with the outside world, in reality give us an insight (expressed in metaphorical language) into our own mental development, creating cosmos out of chaos. This is of course reflected in the different formative images of our different traditions. The Indian tradition has it in the beautiful Upanishadic and later Vedantic expression of 'SAT CIT ANANDA', which many holy persons in India try to envisage when they identify their name not with this or that, but with SAT CIT ANANDA. Because SAT is being, CIT is consciousness and ANANDA is bliss. The total bliss you experience when your whole consciousness realizes being as it is. When there is no AHAMKARA, no ego in between, trying to manipulate being, but when the whole being has totally filled your conscious reality. When being reflects itself unhindered in the human mind, this is ANANDA, and this is the process. This is the cosmic dance of SAT CIT ANANDA. In Indian dance, in Bharata Natyam and other dances, when the dancer actually goes into the dance, he or she starts by worshipping Shiva, who is always present there and who is radiating his rays, his energies into the dance. He is the actual dancer and the dancer as if switches, but he does not switch, it is just two sides of the same aspect, from the worshipper of Shiva to Shiva himself, or Krishna and other figures. So the dancer in his or her very dance represents the oneness of adoration between God and the human being. In the dance, the oneness of what we call the 'seeing' in

Eckhart terms, is enacted here in the very movement of the body. God and the human being dance together as oneness and become oneness in the dance. This is SAT CIT ANANDA in an abstracted expression.

We have an equivalent in the Western tradition, which is however not much understood by people today. It was already not much understood in the 4th, 5th century when people lost the insight into the platonic and neo-platonic tradition. I am talking about the Trinity. The Trinity perhaps is the Christian image of a non-dualistic realisation, because the Trinity is not about three Gods up there. This would be 'three-theism'. This was not the message. The Trinity is an imaginary expression of one Godhead, which creates itself in continuous movement, because the father is father only if there is a son, otherwise there is no father. And there is no son if there is no father. That is logic. The son-ness of the son depends on the father-ness of the father. The father in itself is not father but with the son. So the father's identity is precisely his non-identity. It is the son and vice-versa. That's a logical figure. I can heartily remark that in India it was worked out very nicely by Shankaracharya to explain the Brahma Sutras.

Anyway, something is something by not being this something but being, as it were, given its identity by the other. So identity is actually a movement out of oneself, translated into Greek by ek-stasis, 'ek-stasis', in a movement out of oneself into the other, and becoming oneself by realising the other in oneself. This is perfect non-dualistic movement. It is SAT and CIT. This is what they call the father-son relationship.

This is very interesting, is it not? And it comes from real platonic roots. Christians did not invent it. Christians took it over to realise the mystery in, 'How can God be God, but at the same time be here in this human being... but also in a dog, or here in the flowers, in these beautiful decorations?' Everything is God's energy, you see. It is totally here, but it is not enclosed here. At the same time it is a million times more! As the Bhagavad Gita says, only one quarter of God is here in the whole world. But God is much more. It is an over abundant flow of energy which can never be grasped by our mind. This is why the Christians have a third 'person' in the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, and that is why they call it the all-pervading energy. Because these two persons, having the identity one in the other, have to be involved and engaged in an ongoing process of self-realisation. This is spiritual presence which is not bound to any place nor bound to any time, but which is all-pervading beyond space and time. This is what 'Spirit' is all about.

This is a perfect non-dualistic image, and indeed the Greek Church fathers called this, 'The Dance of God'. The famous Greek who termed this was Chrysostomos. This name is translated into the one with the golden mouth, golden speech, because he was speaking beautifully. You can see why. Because he called this movement of the Trinity, this movement of identity, the divine self-generation as it were, 'PERICHORESIS'. Chorus, the choir, is what we find in this word. This is the dancing around. These three figures are dancing around and this dance is of the three aspects, Father, Son and Spirit. The SAT CIT ANANDA in the image terms, is what makes the world a cosmos, an integrated structure, melody and music.

Unfortunately, Western tradition has forgotten about this. It is because we do not speak Greek. Chorus, yes this is dance. You see, God is not God and then dances. Only in the process of dancing God is God. In other words, dance is not an attribute of God, who otherwise is there, but the very being, the SAT of God, the very being of God is dance, is this movement. And this movement of course is a conscious realisation, it is CIT, and this is the whole ANANDA of reality.

This is the EK-STASIS I was speaking about in the very beginning. Of course, in Indian tradition we have a wonderful expression for this very innate movement, for this innate vitality and this is brought

out very beautifully in many traditions, but nowhere else as clearly as in the great philosopher of Kashmir Shaivism, Abhinavagupta. It is called SPANDA, the continuous vibration, the continuous stir in the very basis of reality, and because of this stir, this movement, which is a structure, a rhythmic movement and therefore a dance, reality comes into being.

Now, here we have a very interesting realisation. Usually, in a very un-enlightened view, we think there are many different beings. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 are here and there is this team and that team and so on. Or let us be more sophisticated. There are atoms, or maybe elementary particles. They are tiny beings, they are there and move around and then come together and create something else, molecules and so on. In fact we know it is not so, because we can split even the most elementary particles. What there is in the beginning is movement, is a structure, and out of this movement under certain conditions appears what we call matter, or our reality. On a very fundamental level of reality it is not something which is, but it is the movement. In image terms it is the dance of energy. This is what Aristotle, the great philosopher, the other one next to Plato, calls ENERGEIA in the Western tradition. The energy which is there, the very movement which brings about the energy. Reality is not there and then by chance or maybe by a kick of God who would have set it into movement. But what is there at the beginning is, as Aristotle calls it, KINESIS. Kinesis is movement. Movement is the very first thing and this is why he calls it God. Aristotle's definition of God is the PROTON KINOUN, the first mover. First it is movement, which is there and secondarily out of this movement comes what we call reality, matter.

I think this is the basic experience of resonance. And we have beautiful images in all the different religious traditions for this. I will close with giving one of these images that reality is resonance. Reality is NADA BRAHMA, is the cosmic sound resonating in itself and by this resonance creating what we call a material world. I will give you one example which I love so much. It is from the Chinese tradition, and since India calls Buddhism 'export Hinduism', it is appropriate to quote it here. Buddhism is rooted in the Indian culture, but it spread. It moved to China and to many other places in Asia and now also to the West. It moved there and amalgamated in that culture. Here in China we have a beautiful synthesis of Indian logic and mental framing the Buddhists brought in, and the Chinese love for poetic imagination.

There was a Zen master in the 7th century in China, called Fa Tsang. Fa Tsang was asked by the empress Wu Tse Tien, who was a very powerful empress there in the T'ang Dynasty, to explain Buddhism in one sentence, because empresses at that time did not have much time. Poor Fa Tsang had to explain Buddhism in one sentence. He said, 'Wait a moment, your majesty. Just move out for five minutes and allow me to prepare the room.' And she moved out because she was curious, and he prepared the room. He started mirroring the walls. Mirroring the ceiling and mirroring the floor. So the whole room was totally mirrored. Then he put a little image of Buddha in the middle and next to it a little oil lamp. Then he asked the empress to come in and he said, 'You see, that is it. That is Buddhism. That is what reality is all about.' What did she see? One figure mirroring, mirroring, mirroring in all mirrors, ad infinitum, no end. Each reality is a mirrored image of the one original image, which is the divine image. All the different appearances, phenomena in the world, be it material phenomena, be it psychological phenomena, be it spiritual phenomena, whatever it is, all are mirroring reflections, are resonances of the one cosmic sound. This is the music, this is the dance of the universe. Realising it means ecstasy, means ANANDA, means spiritual realisation.

Question and Answer Session

Dr. Nath

Poornamadaha poornamidam poornaat poornam udacyate
poornasya poornam aadaaya poornam evaavashishyate

Poorna being depicted as '0'. That Paramatman is complete '0'. This body made alive by the atman is complete '0'. This complete body '0', Jiva, takes its origin from that complete '0'.

When you take this complete '0', Jiva from that complete '0', Parabrahman, Paramatman what is left is that complete '0', Parabrahman.

From the SPANDA comes the SPHUTA, the Creation, the bursting into view. The Vedas are eternal and even eternal to the creator Brahma. Lord Vishnu commanded Brahma to create and while he was contemplating on the task, just the big bang theory, there was SPHUTA of the Vedas and they came into view of Lord Brahma, who used it to assist the mankind and presented the same to the mankind as a guide for the way to act in this world. SPANDA, vibration. The SPHUTA of the Vedas vibrated as SPANDA and was felt by Brahma.

Professor von Brück

Of course, what you quoted now is the pre-Vak of the Isha Upanishad. And this was how I wanted to start my talk today. But I was told I should focus on the Western point of view.

The moderator

I must say only when we had dinner together we realized that Professor von Brück had prepared a different speech. He wanted mainly to put his focus on the Eastern part. But the Eastern part is represented by Sri Swamiji. So he has made this wonderful fusion of Eastern and Western tradition.

Swami Manasa Datta

Professor, my due respect to that great flow of what you have brought on non-duality. I was really wondering, when you started the academic career as such, where did you begin, where was the field of interest for you. Can I get a note on that?

Professor von Brück

I am happy to answer also personal questions and I can tell you that I started with music. I actually grew up as a musician and I feel like a musician. It was only because I was too lazy to practice the piano properly that I thought I should go into the academic career. So in fact what I learned about the Western tradition I learned through music, which I think is probably the most distinct expression, besides the philosophy of Trinity, of how non-dualism works in the Western sentiment. It is in the Gregorian chant first and then goes into the Renaissance, into the polyphonic expression. And here we have a very interesting experience. Listen to Mozart, listen to Bach, Beethoven, or Mahler. In Mozart for instance, you have an expression of total joy, pure ANANDA. However, the sadness, the suffering is also there. There are a few other smaller pieces of Mozart that might not have this fusion, but the masterpieces reflect the integration of the human suffering into the light of bliss. And here you can experience it, without perhaps being able to express it in words. In Bach's music for instance I experienced the spirit, the spiritual presence of Christianity and it was only much later that I reflected

on it. Till today I can sing most of the parts of the Bible. I cannot speak it. If you ask me what is there, I have to start to sing it, then only it comes.

When I came to India for the first time in the 1970's, I wanted to learn Indian philosophy, Sanskrit, Yoga and so forth. I already had done my doctorate in Christian studies and I came to Bangalore, where I went to the Rama Krishna Mission. In the Rama Krishna Ashram I met Swami Bhajanananda and I asked him for instructions. I wanted to read Shankara with him. He said, 'No, no, before we study the Indian mystics together, you better look at the Christian mystics.' So he was the one who introduced me to Eckhart, Sausso, Tauro and Mechthild of Magdeburg, and also to the Eastern mystics of the East Orthodox Church. It was very interesting to get to know them through a Hindu Master. Only after we had read it all, and not only read it, but imbibed it, we chewed it and we digested it together. Only then did we go into the Upanishads and Shankara's and others' writings. That to me was very significant and shaped not only my mind, but my experience of what I was thinking and reading about it.

I lived long enough in India to have several Gurus, and I started with a great Shankaran scholar. Then I went to Japan in order to study Zen. Only later after having the practice I went into Buddhism as an academic subject. You see, I learned so many things in India, but I learned basically two things. First of all there is a tremendous variety of spiritual experiences, rituals. The whole SMRTI aspect is so widespread and there are so many forms and expressions, limitless, and in fact I call it the pan-sacramentality of reality. Everything can become a sacrament, an experience of the Divine presence. Really everything. It depends on your mind, on your mental attitude, your approach with attentiveness, with care, with respect.

Secondly, when you have realised this, when you have gone through this, you have to go beyond forms. This is the idea of SANNYASA. You have to go beyond forms, beyond rituals, to the 'neti neti', it is not this not that. Even the most lofty expression of God, even the most beautiful image or even the most beautiful chant or whatever, is something which still has to be overcome. It is the total silence. The total silence is not a dead silence. It is a speaking silence. Like in the Mandukya Upanishad, the silence after the three sounds A, U, M, is the state of consciousness where everything comes from. It is the source. And there is no division. There is no division between human beings among each other, there is no division between human beings and animals. There is no division between cultures, religions, languages and so on. On that level there is total oneness, total joy and when you are focussing your mind on the depth again and again, beyond name and form, beyond NAMA and RUPA, then you can appreciate the differences in every form. And then you do not need to fight anymore. You really can enjoy. You are not as if challenged by the otherness of the other in a negative way. You dance with it. This is my spiritual path.

The moderator

Thank you so much for this answer. I think we can all feel that you are not just talking about something but that you have experienced it. And this is the difference. Thank you.

A participant

Truly, when the speech and speaker is one, like in this case, the message comes through. My question is how to present this message to the young people. What is your idea?

Professor von Brück

How to present it to young people? It will be different in different stages. If you go into the pre-school age, the basic creative expression of human beings at this age is play, LILA. And here we have such wonderful imaginary in the Hindu tradition, because the divine LILA actually is an image of God. Look at all the naughty things Krishna did. It is so beautiful. In this spirit we have to approach our young girls and boys. I think to them it is important not to be prohibited to do anything, but to be encouraged to be creative, even if it is mischievous sometimes. Like Krishna and the butter and all his plays. Of course, adults are there to govern behind the scene. But let them play creatively and appreciate their creative pictures, drawings, buildings, whatever they do. This is enough. My wife was with me in India and she adopted a lot from India. She has a saying on the refrigerator stating, 'No point to try to educate the children, they imitate us anyway.' So this is what we should do to our young kids. If you actually will be what you are, with certainty children will take it.

When it comes to the slightly older ones, what is very important is to be accurate, to demand accuracy in thinking and speaking. Not too much information, but accurate information. Learning attentiveness, concentration, and of course you have to practise it yourself. I remember I had to give a talk once at a gymnasium in Sicily, southern Italy. There were about 2,000 young students aged 16, 17, 18, who wanted everything else but to listen to a talk by a German professor on Indian spirituality. It was in a big sports hall. So I came in. You can imagine 2,000 Italians, southern Italians from Sicily, making a lot of noise. I came in, standing right there, and I waited. Gradually I looked to this corner, to the middle, to that corner. It took about five minutes, before they became quiet, a long time. And then I started. And again someone started to talk a little bit. I immediately stopped and looked. This happened two times, and never again. They were totally attentive for two hours. Of course there was translation. The school director and the mayor of the city asked me later, 'What did you do?' I said, 'Nothing, I was silent.'

A participant

I have no question. I studied physics and looking at your wonderful speech merging the East and West I think it merges also perfectly to the new physicist science, the elementary physics. It is so great to see that if you look into the modern physics, it is really merging, it is not contradictory. Maybe you can give some more words about it and make that more clear to the audience.

Professor von Brück

Indeed you are completely right. The great creative physicists in the 20th century, starting with Schrödinger, Eisenberg, Einstein, von Weizsäcker, Pauli, all of them were fascinated by the philosophical non-dualistic views of Indian tradition. The Western mind thinks in substance and the coordination of substances. The Indian mind thinks in energies out of which substance emerges. I think this is the more profound view. But the point is, it is not enough to understand the cognitive principles which are similar, for there are consequences, not only for our world view, but world action. Now, take the example again. If the other is not the other, but a reflection of which I am a reflection too, there is a basic, what we could call solidarity, or oneness. And this changes our lives, our attitudes, the very way we are with each other.

A participant

How to deal with the hostilities in Universities and in the public media that are shown against religious ideas and matters? One journalist commented on a scientist's presentation of his research, "But is it not questionable that this person is so religious?" How do you explain this and how do you deal with this?

Professor von Brück

Well, I think the explanation of this hostility is the bad experience with religion during the last 1'000 years and more. Religion being used and misused as a part of the power games of a minority, the mighty. So I do have understanding for such a view. However, I try to show with joy, I am a teacher after all, so I try to show that there is something else. And in recognising something else we can overcome the history of violence. I think the pattern of violence is there in human history over the last maybe 150'000 years. I don't know. At least as long as human history can be followed up, by the way, in all cultures, in China, India, everywhere. However, this pattern of history can and must come to an end. Why? Human beings by their very nature, we were talking about that today, are not just caught up by greed, hatred and anger. This is just an immature state. By spiritual education gradually they can overcome it. This is what I tell my friends who argue with me daily. Of course there is hostility, but this is to be expected. I don't mind it. Gradually this can be overcome by love and insight. You see love is not an emotion. Love is an insight, GNANA. It expresses an emotion and may be expressed by emotion, but in depth it is an insight into the structure of reality. And these friends will sooner or later recognise it.