

# Book Review

## THE YOGI AND THE DEVOTEE.

By *Ninian Smart*.

(George Allen & Unwin, 30s.).

Review by **J. C. Cooper**.

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Sub-titled "The Interplay between the Upanishads and Catholic Theology", the book is an expansion of lectures given in the University of Delhi and is a study of religion in general and Hinduism and Christianity in particular in the context of the devotional and intellectual aspects of religious experience. The first section examines the various developments within the Indian tradition in Jainism, Buddhism, (more particularly of the Theravada) Madhva's dualistic theism, the non-dualism of Shankara and the Ramanuja system of theistic and qualified non-dualism, showing their similarities and divergencies. It is suggested that the varieties of teachings in Indian theology can be explained by the different patterns of religious experience and that "there is some correlation between types of doctrine and patterns of religious experience". These differing patterns are largely explained by the polarity of *dhyana*, or the yogic path of contemplation, and *bhakti*, or the path of devotion and individual dependence on a personal Lord. Most religions lean towards one or the other of the two paths; Christianity being largely *bhaktic*, while Hinduism is predominantly yogic, but Mahayana Buddhism is seen as a synthesis of the two though with the *dhyana* influence remaining the stronger, as is also the case with the Advaita of Shankara. On the other hand the Madhva of Ramanuja places the emphasis on *bhakti*; but no theology can be considered adequate which does not do justice to both aspects which have their own vital functions to perform and which must "live in harmony and equality".

Professor Smart sees a need for a new approach to Natural Theology, finding the Catholic tradition over-intellectualised and rationalised, while Protestantism rejects Natural Theology in favour of revelation and salvation by faith rather than works. He also exposes the weakness of the Secularist off-shoot of Protestantism, pointing out that it must face the fact that the Christ whose message it purports to preach in no way expressed himself in secularist terms and was steeped in the religion it professes to supercede. "What is objectionable about the dogmatism of this secretly theistic secularism is that it makes use of the heart of religion while professing to be against religion. It uses 'religion' in a loaded sense, to refer to superstition, and to refer to the wrong kind of dependence upon God... While making use of *bhakti* it yet claims to transcend religion and therefore religions. While bathing in the light of the experiential

dimension of religion, it pretends to evade the real challenge presented by the universality of religious experience. It addresses itself to the condition of some Western men, at the expense of neglecting the condition of other great traditions. Thus this secularist alternative does not help in the dialectical interplay between faiths".

The two aspects of religion must not merely live in harmony and equality, but must be complementary; for instance, it is necessary to balance the Christian moralistic emphasis on will with the Indian view of ignorance as being the source of man's troubles and mistakes. In Ramanuja's qualified non-dualism, with its combination of the ways of *dhyana* and *bhakti*, the author sees an approach to Christian theism which, nevertheless, does not break with the "Upanishadic doctrine of the Holy Power, Brahman, and includes the theism of the Gita", thus providing the synthesis of the Indian tradition and a basis for "Indian Christianity" and a natural theology of religious experience equally relevant to modern Western religious needs. He also sees in a complementary relationship between Hinduism and Christianity the contribution each can make to the understanding of the other in the "doctrinal and experiential dimensions of religion" and maintains that "the Christian experience as hitherto understood can be enriched by the insights of the multitudinous traditions of India".