

Shirley du Boulay
The Cave of the Heart
The Life of Swami Abhishiktananda
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This is the fascinating story of a dual vocation which, after a lifetime of struggle, became a single one. This can only come about through the complete resolution of the enlightenment experience - in Hindu or Buddhist terms - or of the self being lost in God - in Christian terms.

Henri le Saux was born in Brittany in 1910. His first vocation came as a call to join the Benedictines. From there he felt the call to start a Christian community in India, living not as a European Benedictine might live, but in the much harder poverty of a Hindu ashram. (As a Franciscan, it made me curious to know more about our own Indian roots in the Christa Seva Sangha.) For the rest of his life Abhishiktananda, as he now became, struggled between the clear doctrine and observance of a pre-Vatican II priest, and the call to a deeper sharing in community with his Indian friends, and the still more severe demands of a Hindu hermit, a Swami. This struggle almost broke him, torn, as he said 'between Arunachala and Rome'. 'I often dream of dying, for it seems there is no way out for me in this life. I cannot be at the same time both Hindu and Christian, no more can I be simply Hindu or simply Christian'.

At the end of his life he transcended this impossible divide, for in the experience of Awakening, the self lost in God, these distinctions, so important to him before, seem to melt away completely, 'transparent to the divine Presence ... his countenance glowing with the light'.

Shirley du Boulay has brought this important saint of the twentieth century to life with skill, humanity and with a deep spiritual understanding of Abhishiktananda's journey. She sees into the importance, for all of us, of the Awakening experience, the loss of self by which we gain All. It is a wonderful, enjoyable book.

Giles Charrington TSSF