

**SELF-KNOWLEDGE** is the official organ of Shanti Sadan, the Centre of Adhyatma Yoga in the West.

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### ADHYATMA YOGA

The highest spiritual wisdom experienced by the Seers of Truth in ancient times has been passed down to the present day through an unbroken line of traditional teachers. Its metaphysical side establishes, by reasoning, a strictly non-dualistic explanation of the universe; its practical side gives clear guidance as to how man should act and the means whereby the purpose of life may be fulfilled. The essentials of the teaching are:

1. That God alone is real, and all else is unreal (transient).
2. That the Self of man in essence is identical with God.
3. That the purpose of life is the conscious realization of this identity and that it can be achieved while actively engaged in the duties of life.
4. That it gives unbroken peace, poise and bliss, and the ability to impart these to others.

Adhyatma Yoga was introduced into Britain in 1929 by the late Hari Prasad Shastri, at the wish of his Teacher, the spiritually enlightened Saint, Shri Dada of Aligarh. The headquarters are at Shanti Sadan, 29 Chepstow Villas, London W11 3DR, where the teachings are given in the traditional way.

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### EVENTS FOR THE AUTUMN TERM 2008

#### Weekday evening talks at Shanti Sadan

Lectures will be given every Wednesday and Friday evening at 8pm from Wednesday 1 October until Friday 5 December 2008.

#### Autumn 2008 One-Day Course

The one-day course will be held on Sunday 2 November 2008 at the Columbia Hotel, Lancaster Gate, London W2. See the inside back cover for more details.

## SELF-KNOWLEDGE

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## The Heart of the Eastern Mystical Teaching

*A new edition of the spiritual classic, published by Shanti Sadan October 2008*

FOR THOSE who feel a pressing need to solve the riddle of life, *The Heart of the Eastern Mystical Teaching* — arguably Hari Prasad Shastri's greatest contribution to the spiritual literature of mankind — shows the way to peace, happiness and final illumination.

For a deeper spiritual understanding, theory is not enough. We need to see spirituality in action. This is why the Christian Gospels are so compelling. They give us, not just the words of a supreme illumined Master, but show him acting, responding, suffering and, not least, subtly evolving relationships with his close disciples.

It is this all-round view of a spiritually enlightened life that makes *The Heart of the Eastern Mystical Teaching* so pregnant a spiritual document. In this case, the sage, though born an Indian Brahmin, is not of a particular religion. When asked by a Sufi: 'O Teacher, what is

your religion? You talk like a Moslem and yet you wear no beard,' he explained:

Friend, my religion is to love. I was born a Hindu and a Brahmin, but Allah has accepted me as one of His servants. All religions point to the same goal. People adopt whichever path best suits their individual natures, but ultimately all paths merge into love. Hindus and Moslems, Christians and Jains are waves and bubbles of the same water of love.

This sage, known as Shri Dada, was a universal saint, and taught and lived the spirit of universality. Why? Anyone who has realized the ultimate spiritual Truth, by virtue of that limitless understanding, is a universalist. Once, when threatened by a miscarriage of justice, Shri Dada refused to blame anyone because: 'When there is only one Existence pervading all, blamer and blamed are fundamentally one.'

How is this great vision acquired? The book does not aim to be a biography, but covers what might be called Shri Dada's teaching ministry, beginning around 1890, when he was 36, and ending with his death in 1910. But late in the text, he himself briefly alludes to the instance when, as a young man, his own Guru, 'whispered the supreme secret of life, the wisdom triumphant, into my ears. I have, during this period, allowed no worldly interest to screen the holy light.' In the opening paragraph, we gain another clue to the divine Centre from which all Shri Dada's actions and words emanated:

His Atman [his inmost spiritual Self] was perfectly united with the Atman of his Guru and the universe. There was no trace of egoity left in Shri Dada. To him the trees, the grass, the birds, mountains, rivers, clouds and human beings, were all beads on the same thread, his own Atman. Having cast away his individuality, he found the Lord of the universe in his Self, identified with him. Now his words were the sacred texts. He was a universal saint. Whether from East or West, Buddhist, Mohammedan, Christian or atheist, there was no sinner in his estimation.

Teachings, incidents in life, evolving relationships: this is the

context through which something deeply spiritual, pure and unfathomably rich is being conveyed. The author, though present throughout the events recorded, does not appear as a character in the text. Nor is there any attempt to promote Shri Dada as *the* Teacher. There were several God-realized Mahatmas dwelling in the Ganges-Himalayan regions at the time, and some, like Swami Mangalnathji of Rishikesh, play a key role in these pages; all are given equal reverence, not least by Shri Dada himself; all are contributing to the good of the whole of humanity on the invisible plane of spirituality.

Part of Shri Dada's appeal and approachability is that he was a 'lay' Mahatma, an illumined sage living in the world, with a family, a livelihood to make, and all the restrictions that such a life outwardly entailed. Living in society, he served man indefatigably on all levels, and was particularly mindful to help the downtrodden. He taught himself the basics of Ayur Vedic medicine at an early age in order to help the so-called 'Untouchables', whom no orthodox doctor would treat. This dimension of *The Heart of the Eastern Mystical Teaching* is fundamental, for it is one of countless practical expressions of the inner vision of universal unity and identificative love which is enlightenment translated into active life.

But all social, economic and educational improvement was, for Shri Dada, a means better to fit individuals to pursue the great goal of life, spiritual illumination. Sometimes, to his disciples, he preached liberation-in-life with such simplicity and directness that the profundity of his utterance might be easily missed:

The Mahatmas say that this goal, which is your own Atman, is ever attained. Who indeed can deny his own existence? It is impossible for him to imagine that he will become something essentially different. The unchanging Witness of all experience, Paramatman, the one omnipotent Lord, is your own Atman. When you try to 'attain to' Him, you artificially create a distance between jiva [one's individuality] and Atman, but like the all-pervading ether, He neither comes nor goes in reality, nor is this eternal abode of peace ever other than your own Self.

The same clarity, magnanimity and essential joy, runs through all

his short expositions, as when a local school teacher, ‘who had assimilated a little Western culture and was bewitched by it, bluntly fired the following question: “Are you the man called Dada who is said to be crying his wares all over the city? What is it you teach that people have not already heard? Mind you, hearing is not believing.”

The holy man calmly and smilingly answered: ‘Brother, first sit down and compose yourself. If your motive is a quest for information, then I will say that I teach the way to inner peace and joy by which people can perform their worldly duties successfully and bear cheerfully the vicissitudes of fortune. I teach what I have experienced. Most people have not heard that all great religions point to the same goal, that the purpose of life is to realise infinitude within and that goodness is a worthier aim than pleasure. I love my fellow men and I cannot see them going the wrong way towards suffering and discord in life. Something prompts me to speak, and so I do.’

At the centre of our spiritual endeavours, working our weal or woe, lies a single organ of experience that is at the heart of the practical training of Yoga: the mind. ‘Do not be angry with your mind, and do not condemn yourself. Your mind is what you have made it; you can unmake it and remake it.’ This text provides innumerable teachings on how to deal with the mind, and this matter is covered comprehensively; a glance at the topics listed under ‘mind’ in the vastly expanded Index will confirm this. As the Upanishads teach, it is through our mind that the deeper spiritual Truth will reveal itself, once that mind has been purified and tranquillized. In this book, people of all temperaments will find, perhaps as soon as they flick open the pages at random, the required help and guidance. For Shri Dada teaches that the human mind is nothing to be afraid of or to despair about; on the contrary, ‘it is constructive, a way to peace, a source of illumination’, and this is the right approach to lead us out of our imagined bondage to the very real freedom that is ever-achieved at the substratum of our being.

## Light from the Chandogya Upanishad

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HUMAN LIFE in this ever-changing world is often compared to the struggles of a swimmer or a sailor in a vast sea, over which he has very limited power and in which he can easily drown. Yet man can be rescued from this predicament by awakening to a deeper life experience. In this deeper life experience, called enlightenment or God-realization, the surrounding world, with its complexity and menace, is robbed of its power to intimidate us. Compared to the deeper life experience that now fills our consciousness, this sea of *Sansara* [becoming] is known to be an illusion, a play of surface appearances only and not a substantial reality. The truly substantial reality is the Self of man in its deepest sense, which, in the Upanishads, is declared to be ‘greater than earth....greater than heaven, greater than these worlds’. Hence, the spiritual teachers of all times and climes are those who come to deliver man from the turmoils of this sea of becoming, by awakening him to a deeper reality, a deeper truth, and that deeper truth is the true nature of his own Self. “May you be successful in crossing to the farther shore beyond darkness”, is the benediction of the holy Rishis, the ones who provide us with the means to this spiritual awakening.

Man before his spiritual awakening clings to his own particular supports in this ocean of being. Each has his particular raft. Some rafts may appear huge, safe and full of attractions, like ocean-going liners. This is the raft of wealth. Other rafts seem to be slender props that we can barely hold on to; these are the rafts of poverty and destitution. Everything that we depend on for support and meaning in this sea of becoming is a kind of raft: the raft of our skills, of our knowledge; the raft of our position, the raft of our home and our relationships. But however sturdy our supports may appear to be at this moment, they do not transcend this all-surrounding ocean of transient being in which we, as transient creatures, abide and struggle during the few decades that make up the span of our life. In the *Chandogya Upanishad* it is said: ‘O Indra, this body indeed is mortal. This is covered by death.’ In his comments on this phrase, Shri Shankara points out that it is not enough for man to realize that his body is mortal; to promote true

detachment, the Upanishad rouses him by saying that the body is 'covered by death' or 'grasped by death', that is, this body may surely die at any moment. This is one of the conditions that attend our stay in this ocean of becoming and a good reason why it is crucial to awaken to a deeper reality as soon as possible.

What can we do to banish this darkness, to escape this turbulence and uncertainty, so that our hearts will be set in peace, bliss and freedom? Is there a way to transcend the sea of sansara? We can seek a solution within the sea, through manipulating conditions by skill and with the material to hand. Some may seek to build a bigger and better boat. This is the economic solution, based on wealth and possessions. Others may think more broadly and decide to rope their rafts to neighbouring rafts, and form a whole network of linked rafts that may more easily withstand the fitful winds and choppy waves. This is the attempt to arrive at a social and political solution. Still others may resort to praying to the God of the ocean, for peace and calm in the ocean generally, or perhaps only for the little stretch that involves their self-interest or that of their group, clan or creed. This is the religious solution. But all these solutions assume one thing: that the ocean is real, that it stands over and above us as a vast power, and that our own being is not itself the ocean, but a mere drop in it.

Does man possess a deeper faculty which, when awakened, will enable him to see beyond the sea of becoming and realize the peaceful, immortal, infinite and blissful basis underlying this illusion? Can he realize his essential identity with this basic reality and that his innermost being is never in danger of being harmed or destroyed — that there is That in him which is not 'grasped by death' and never can be? There is such a faculty in man, which can be awakened, and when it is awakened, he will be a knower of Truth, not a victim of illusion. This is the faculty of spiritual understanding, and its fruit is conscious immortality.

In the *Chandogya Upanishad*, this divine knowledge is praised as being immeasurably superior to anything we may gain within this ocean of becoming. In ancient times, it was a knowledge that was not passed on lightly; a father who knew this Truth was authorised to speak of it to his eldest son or to a competent disciple who came and lived with him for the purpose of learning the holy Truth. 'He should not

impart to anyone else at all, even though he is offered this earth surrounded by water and filled with wealth. This knowledge is greater than that; this indeed is greater than that.' (III.1.5-6) In one of the stories found in this Upanishad, the king of the Gods, Indra, as well as the king of the demons, Virochana, come as humble petitioners for this knowledge, and Indra, who possessed everything, underwent a long training before the subtle, imperishable Truth was finally realized by him. This is the true Self-knowledge, and his guru, Prajapati, summed up its benefit when he told Indra: 'He who, having known that Self, realizes it, attains all the worlds and all desirable things.' (VIII.12.6) That is, he is completely fulfilled and totally free from grief and want.

In the *Chandogya Upanishad*, there are several instances of one-to-one communications between teacher and pupil, and the stories that depict this indicate the attitude of mind that is most helpful to us if we wish to learn the spiritual Truth. For example, the pattern is clearly laid down that if we want the liberating knowledge, we have to approach a spiritual teacher in an attitude of humility and genuine quest. Then, the teacher will yield the nectar of the holy teachings. But if, on the part of the enquirer, there is the least antagonism, suspicion or pretence, then, through an invisible spiritual law, those teachings will not pour forth; or, if they are transmitted, they will not be adequately received. The kingdom of heaven cannot be taken by storm, nor does it open its doors to those who are not prepared to approach with the guileless receptivity and absence of pride that are found in the small child, as Christ has taught. Sometimes the highest teachings are held back, giving the pupil the chance to re-examine his own motives, and prove to himself whether he is prepared to make the necessary adjustments to his inner and outer life, favouring the pure and liberating knowledge far above personal profit and individual enhancement. The book, *A Path to God-Realization*, begins with the words: 'Spirituality signifies active realization of the fact that mundane interests are inferior and should be subordinated to the progress of the soul.'

In one of the stories, it is the king, Janashruti Pautrayana, who seeks out the destitute sage, Raikva, and not vice versa. For the king had been deeply moved by the saying: 'Anyone else who knows what Raikva knows, he is also like Raikva.' Bringing great offerings, the

king finds a man living under the shelter of a cart. He has to put up with Raikva's response, which is to address him: 'O Shūdra', that is, 'O, one of low caste', and with his refusal to accept the gifts. Yet the king's thirst for knowledge has dried up his personal pride. He perseveres in his quest and is given the liberating teachings. (IV. sections 1 and 2)

The sages have awakened to the deeper life experience called spiritual illumination. They do not impart the knowledge of how to build a bigger raft in this ocean of becoming. Nor do they offer ways and means by which we may appeal more effectively to the God of the ocean, in order to end our troubles and create conditions of calm in our own bit of the sea. Their sole purpose is to remove the cover from our inner spiritual eye, so that the whole experience of the present may be seen in a new light. They reveal that this ocean of becoming is in reality an ocean of pure being, one-only-without-a-second. That essential reality, concealed behind the spectacle of constant change, hidden under the waves of names and forms, is identical with the essential being of man. In truth, man has nothing to fear, because his true nature is the All.

This awakened understanding that man's innermost being is the infinite eternal Truth behind all experience, that even now he is experiencing nothing separate and unsupported by his own divine Self, has nothing to do with the extension of his physical and mental powers. These mental and physical powers are part of the transient ocean of becoming; they are illusory, and the seemingly individualized entity that delights in personal expansion and imagined superiority is indeed 'grasped by death'. The first lesson imparted to the pupil, Shvetaketu, by his father, a knower of Truth, is that the spiritual reality is subtle; it is beyond the grasp of the intellect. This young man had gained much learning and had become proud of his intellect. 'To him, the father said: "O Shvetaketu, now that you are conceited, proud of being a learned man, and immodest like this, did you ask about that instruction through which the unheard becomes heard, the unthought becomes thought, the unknown becomes known?" Shvetaketu asked: 'O venerable sir, in what way is that instruction imparted?' (VI.1.2-3)

In the Upanishads, the great spiritual reality underlying all appearances, the real thing, so to say, that is appearing in the guise of

millions of names and forms as the objects of the world and the forms of our thoughts, is called Brahman, the Absolute. The world, including our bodies and minds, is not separate from the Absolute; it is the Absolute partially or wrongly understood. It is reality 'seen through a glass, darkly', in the phrase of St Paul. The dark glass is the unenlightened human mind. Anything viewed through such a glass is bound to be darkened and distorted by the qualities of the glass. The purpose of Yoga is not to reconcile us to this life of filtered and distorted vision. It is to remove the veil, to lift away the glass mask; that is, to transcend the picture of reality imposed on us by the mind, and know our oneness with the reality as it is in truth. The Upanishads reveal to our confused gaze that this ocean of becoming, when seen with the eye of wisdom, is not other than the ocean of pure being, taintless existence, one-without-a-second.

To see reality is to be reality. Enlightenment does not mean that we, as individuals, who so often insist, 'I want enlightenment', will find ourselves in a position where we shall stand over and above the spectacle of the world and say: 'O yes, it is all pure being.' What is necessary is to learn how to dissolve the unit of our individuality itself in the pure being that is our root and source, and then the truth about all experience will be realized. This is to be awakened to the knowledge of That 'through which the unheard becomes heard, the unthought becomes thought, the unknown becomes known'.

The world is a spread of appearances consisting of name, form and movement, an ocean of becoming. But what are these appearances of? They are appearances of the Absolute, the one-without-a-second. In a sense, man already has knowledge of the Absolute. In It he lives and moves and has his being. But this knowledge is incomplete, like the view through the dark glass, and we have picked up the wrong impression. This wrong impression is that the world of multiplicity, this ocean of becoming, is real just as it appears to us, and that it doesn't stand for anything beyond itself.

The *Chandogya Upanishad* uses the example of ornaments and other objects made out of the same material. One man may collect ornaments made of gold, including some finely fashioned animals. To him, his pride and joy are in the fact that these things are gold and nothing other than gold. In fact, he knows that all these objects — the golden lion in

the posture of leaping, the elephant, the golden deer — are essentially all one, as gold. Then a child comes, who doesn't know about gold. All he knows is that it is such a fine lion, and he wants to play. He wants to create a drama with the lion chasing the deer and then leaping on the elephant, who cannot bound away as quickly and has to stand and fight for his life. It is all conflict and drama, and the gold, that makes all these things essentially one, is quite forgotten. But if we see through the form, if we forget the names 'lion' and 'elephant', the names that human beings use to divide up the world into millions of hard little packets, if we can only focus on the gold, then it is a new way of seeing. We may miss out on the detail, but we have grasped the essence. If we really know gold, we know what is fundamental and true about all things that are made of gold; for the individual forms are perishable; they can be melted down and reformed into new shapes with very different names; but the gold remains as gold throughout all these transformations.

When Shvetaketu is asked if he had learnt That 'through which the unheard becomes heard, the unthought becomes thought, the unknown becomes known', he has not yet been introduced to this new way of knowing. We may ask: 'How can you know just one thing, by knowing which you effectively know everything?' The Teacher gives a clue when he says:

O my son, as by knowing a lump of gold all things made of gold become known, all transformation has speech as its basis, and it is name only. Gold as such is the reality. (VI.1.5)

This teaching is extended to include the whole universe. In this Upanishad, in so many ways, the holy sages are pointing out that what our mind and senses pick up as the perishable and ever-changing forms, are all phenomenal appearances of the same underlying substance. That substance is not in fact material at all; it is the supreme Spirit, Brahman, the Absolute; and that Absolute is the underlying reality in man, his inmost Self, called Atman. Man himself is, at it were, an 'object made of gold', that is, a creature who, superficially, seems labelled with a particular name and encased in a specific and unique form, yet who is essentially identified with that one-without-a-

second, the divine Spirit, the Absolute, Brahman, and, as the Upanishad teaches: This Atman, this innermost Self of man, is Brahman.

Is it a mystery? The English philosopher, F H Bradley, thought deeply about the nature of experience, and concluded that all names and forms, all limited things, were phenomenal appearances of a deeper reality. He tried to reach the great all-embracing knowledge by means of his intellect. He writes: 'I am so bold as to believe that we have a knowledge of the Absolute, certain and real, though I am sure that our comprehension is miserably incomplete.'

It need not be so. A Mahatma of recent times, who had realized this Truth, declares:

Hundreds of articles made of gold, though each be different in size, form and appearance, are yet nothing but gold; similarly, all that has any form or shape is my own Atman: nothing else exists. I am the sun shining in the sky. I am sky. I am space. I am the denizens of a dark cave. Though I am all, yet I am immutable. Rivers wind their way to the sea, oceans ebb and flow, rainclouds fall and I am not wetted. Volcanoes belch forth fire, forests burn and blaze and I feel no heat. I appear to be born, I seem to die and yet I am unaffected. I am Shiva. I am Shankara. The highest and holiest knowledge is summed up in the words 'Verily all this is Brahman'. If it is not Brahman, then what is it? What name will you give to the material substance which is fashioned into the names and forms which comprise the objects of the world? What is matter, who created it and why? And what is its substantial form corresponding to gold as the essence of all gold objects? If you accept the dualistic hypothesis of God on the one hand and the world on the other, you limit God and reduce Him to the state of a super-man.

Why is the Veda considered an unique authority? Its uniqueness lies in the fact that it postulates non-duality, which no book, sage or poet of other religious sects has ever proclaimed.

What man is experiencing here and now is Brahman alone, the Absolute, but through the dark glass of the mind, the experience apparently presents itself as the endless complications of worldly life. We have to cope with these complications, and learn to live wisely in this ocean of becoming. But it is a mistake to think that there is no

higher knowledge or deeper vision available to us, and that our little raft is destined to capsize while we are still in the dark.

It is true that in this ocean of becoming, we don't know what will happen next; we don't even know what we ourselves will be thinking the next moment. All is motion, change and uncertainty. Yet the deeper reality, the gold in the objects made of gold, transcends all division and change. The Brahman-nature is behind all phenomena equally, and man can discover it by first seeking it at the core of his own being.

In one of the stories in the *Chandogya Upanishad*, the teacher accepts a sincere pupil, but then sends him away to the forest in order to rear his herd of four hundred cattle and not to return until the herd had reached a thousand. The pupil, Satyakama Jabala, has such a deep yearning for true knowledge that, in the story, he is symbolically shown to have moved the hearts of the gods with his longing. The gods are then inspired to enter non-human forms to impart to him insights about the deeper reality.

From the bull he is told that each of the four directions, north, south, east and west, when truly understood, is Brahman, the Absolute, and nothing but Brahman. The fire tells him that the earth itself, as well as the sky, the heavens and the oceans, are in reality the undivided, limitless Brahman. Similarly, from the swan, he is taught that fire, the sun, moon and lightning, are, as it were, 'parts' of Brahman and have no independent existence. Finally, the diver-bird turns his attention to his own inner world. He is told that the very life-force that animates him is in reality Brahman; that the eye and the ear, through which he knows names and forms, are Brahman; that the mind itself is Brahman. For all these things are like the objects made of gold, while Brahman is the underlying Reality, the gold. Satyakama is expected to meditate deeply and long on these teachings.

After years of meditation and of tending the herd, Satyakama eventually returns to the teacher's house. The teacher addresses him: 'O Satyakama, you shine verily like a knower of Brahman. Who has given you instruction?' He answers: 'Some who are other than human beings.' But he adds that it is the teacher himself who should now give him the final instructions that lead to absolute fulfilment. The story ends by saying that the teacher did indeed impart the final teachings to him, 'with nothing left out, with nothing left out'. (IV. sections 4 to 9)

One of the great teachings of the *Chandogya Upanishad* is that we need to pay close attention to our own experience, because this is where the riddle of life will be solved. This does not mean paying close attention to outer affairs, which we have to do anyway in order to stay afloat in this ocean of becoming. But at the core of every experience, there is something like a subtle essence, an invisible support, a spiritual light. It is so subtle that it is easily missed. But if we subtract this spiritual element from experience, the world of names and forms, of thoughts and feelings, would vanish in an instant.

As the Upanishad informs us: 'That which is this subtle essence, this whole universe has That as its Self.' (VI.8.7)

We have to discover this essence in our own inner being. This inner region is often called in the Upanishads 'the heart', but the term is not to be taken physically. It means the subtle realm within us where the thoughts and feelings manifest, and may also be called 'the mind'. It is here that the true Self has to be sought for.

At first, when we are told to seek for the Self within the inner realm of the mind, we are apt to think that the Self is something smaller than the mind, on the principle that anything that is said to be within something else must be smaller than its container. Conforming to our ordinary ideas about size and space, the Upanishad begins one of its verses: 'This Self of mine within the heart is smaller than a rice-seed, or a barley seed, or a seed of mustard or of millet.' This is pointing to something that is said to be even smaller than these tiny things. In fact it has no size at all. But then the verse continues: 'This Self of mine within the heart is greater than the earth, greater than space, greater than heaven, greater than these worlds.' (III.14.3-4)

This is a clear hint that we are not seeking anything with size at all, whether small or great. We are seeking nothing less than the supremely subtle and all-pervading spiritual principle, the essence, the invisible support of all, the spiritual light. No wonder Shvetaketu was told that he was now approaching a very different kind of knowledge, which would enlighten him about 'That through which the unheard becomes heard, the unthought becomes thought, the unknown becomes known'.

The great and subtle principle referred to as being within the heart is nothing less than Brahman, the Absolute. It is a teaching of cosmic significance; it has a bearing on our whole attitude to this ocean of

becoming, and on what really is the true basis of our experience. 'All this is Brahman (*sarvam khalvidam brahma*), as the great utterance declares. 'This universe is born from, dissolves in and exists in That. Therefore, one should meditate by becoming calm.' (III.14.1)

What is certain about our existence? Change, certainly. But isn't there something in us which does not change? What about this universal intuition, 'I exist, things exist'? It seems so obvious, 'I exist, things exist'. Is existence a property of things? We know perfectly well that things come and go, yet this sense of existence is not destroyed with them. It won't go away, and is merely applied to whatever remains in our experience. It is more true to say that things arise within existence, that existence is the great foundation of all experience anywhere. Men, animals and objects 'exist' associated with particular transient forms, and then die back into existence, while existence itself remains as the universal fact. In existence we live and move have our being. This being is essentially pure being, one-only-without-a-second, and the thronging population of names and forms which make up the visible universe, belong to the outer fringe of experience and not to its inner essence. This existence can only be Brahman, the Absolute, and anything that appears, that has a name and form, that moves and changes, has its rise, stay and end in Brahman. Therefore: 'All this is Brahman. This universe is born from, dissolves in and exists in That.'

Is there a lost paradise, a golden age that still lingers in our deepest memory, like some pure and perfect primal state that we have strayed away from, as we have become ever more enmeshed in this ocean of becoming?

The *Chandogya Upanishad* does speak of such a state, in response to Shvetaketu's need to receive that instruction 'through which the unheard becomes heard, the unthought becomes thought, the unknown becomes known.'

'In the beginning, my dear, all this universe was being alone, one-only-without-a-second. Some say that in the beginning there was only non-existence, and that existence arose out of non-existence. But by what logic can existence come out of non-existence? Surely, my dear one, in the beginning all this was existence, one-only-without-a-second.' (VI.2.1-2)

How did this ocean of pure being, one-only-without-a-second,

transform itself into the ocean of becoming, and thus initiate all this? When and where did it happen, and why? Has there really been a departure, a falling-off, from the sublime serenity of non-duality? Has perfection really become divided? Did it really happen, or is it all a special effect of the lens, the dark glass through which we appreciate experience? How real is this bondage?

When the Upanishad says: 'In the beginning, my dear, all this universe was being alone, one-only-without-a-second,' it is not speaking of long ago. It is indicating the situation that is the spiritual fact here and now. This is the reality to be realized when the dark glass no longer conditions our understanding. From this standpoint of spiritual knowledge, the apparent ocean of becoming, with its waves of names and forms, is known to be an appearance only, which never affects or breaks up the essential integrity of the pure being that is the origin and basis of this appearance. The transformations have gained a spurious reality, a pseudo-reality, through the wrong impressions and conclusions entertained by the mind that apprehends them, and the mind itself, with its continuous transformations, is in the same category. As regards this world of appearances, the Upanishad declares: 'All transformation has speech for its basis, and it is name only'. (VI.4.1) To name the golden forms as elephant, lion and deer in no way detracts from their essential nature as gold.

Where do we find this pure existence? In one sense, it can be said to be everywhere. It is the true substance, the thing-in-itself which wears the coat of colour, shape, smell, touch and taste, but itself transcends these sensible qualities; it is the essence that escapes all definition, the unseen ground of the seen. As Jesus said: 'I am the All, the All came forth from Me and the All attained to Me. Cleave a piece of wood, I am there; lift up the stone and you will find Me there.' (*The Gospel According to Thomas*, saying 77).

The stone we have to lift is the stone of our own mind, the stone which can serve as a thick coloured lens that distorts the nature of experience, or which can be made into fine clear glass, through which the true nature of existence is revealed in all its purity and perfection. That existence is never separate from our own existence. In fact, the term existence can only be understood with reference to our own existence. We appreciate existence generally, because of our own sense



of being, which can never be extinguished. We appreciate existence and know what it is 'to be' because we know at the deepest level: 'I am'.

But what am I? Shvetaketu is told repeatedly and with great emphasis: 'That which is this subtle essence, all this (universe) has That as its Self. That is Truth. That is the Self. That thou art, O Shvetaketu.'

What then? The bliss and freedom of Self-realization are indicated in the following verse:

The Self indeed is below, the Self is above, the Self is behind, the Self is in the front, the Self is in the South, the Self is in the North, the Self indeed is all this. Anyone who sees thus, reflects thus, understands thus, revels in the Self, sports in the Self, has union in the Self, has pleasure in the Self. He becomes a sovereign. He has freedom of movement in all the worlds. (VII.25.2)

Since the spiritual reality is one-only-without-a-second, the real meaning of this verse is that the Self is all in all. The ocean of becoming has become the infinite sea of pure being. There is nothing to fear, nothing to desire, because the plurality of names and forms, and the mental reactions which they stimulated, have been replaced by the supreme knowledge that 'All this is Brahman' and in my true nature, I am verily That. This is the realization of non-duality that is the culminating insight transmitted to us by the *Chandogya Upanishad*.

**B.D.**

### WHAT IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED IN LIFE?

What is to be accomplished in life? To be wise, to live wisely. What is meant by wisdom? To see Reality, to know an illusion to be an illusion, to pursue Reality with all one's intelligence. Anything more? Yes. To seek a moral and spiritual pattern of life; to help one's fellow men by serving them with wisdom and detached love; to bring the controlled personality to closer and closer proximity with the indwelling Lord.

There are two entities composing the human personality: the spirit

and the mind. The mind has innate desires and tendencies. In a natural state the mind is like a wild forest. There is in it disorder, danger and also wild beasts. It is subject to modification by social contact, experience and learning. It must occasionally be made still, and set on the source of all light and delight — God.

The spirit is Light and Bliss, and needs no modification. A quiet mind, at peace with all, friendly to all, devoted to the highest pattern of life and behaviour, God and his saints, reveals the light of the spirit.

Is not yogic life anti-social? A wife is expected to study and meditate, and withdraw herself from her loving husband, give up the afternoon card parties, and so forth. No. The yogic life is a preparation for the universal life, freed from blind attachment and devotion to the unreal. Suppose a young lady goes to college for study. She gives up, temporarily, her house, friends, social activities, and pursues a course of study. Will you call her anti-social? No.

Take the case of a stupid mother who is fanatically attached to her child. The baby has an attack of a contagious disease, and must be sent to hospital. But she wants to cling to the baby at home. She is not a wise mother. This is not the yogic life.

The main conflict in life is the spiritual conflict. The mind is a realm of the *Gunās* [the three principles comprising the phenomenal world: mass-inertia, energy, and law, expressed in the human personality as] inertia, pleasure and ambition-struggle, and the peace of benevolence, unity, worship and self-sacrifice. The spirit is pure light and consciousness, ever free, immortal and unchangeable, bliss-absolute.

Under a certain delusion called *Nescience*, which makes the world possible, the individualized form of the Spirit identifies itself with the mind, and imposes its nature on itself. This is the root cause of suffering, and unless this conflict is resolved, there is no peace, even for a short while, for the spirit. To part with the mind and to be wise, is the only way to perfect peace and wisdom. Love, in the true sense of the word, is possible to the wise. Nobody is excluded from the compassion of a yogi sage. He has no prejudices, fanaticism or narrowness of the heart. He lives to love and serve the Lord in all, and all the time.

Renunciation of all self-interest in favour of the Lord who abides as Reality in all living beings, is conformity to a great spiritual law. The

world cannot go on without the practice of renunciation. Can a student acquire learning without renouncing his sleep, his social instincts, his pleasure-sense? No. The spirit must renounce the three gunas. Then, it will be its own real Self.

The mind being a composition of the three gunas, they will play their parts in it. Sometimes the desire for rest, sometimes love of power and pleasure, sometimes the joy of devotion and study will appear in the mind, in the form of motions, called 'vrittis' [literally, 'turnings' of the mind]. The wise man keeps a watch over the mind, and modifies love of rest and pleasure into love of Truth, God, compassion, study and meditation. During the period of the spiritual practice, all social relationships which draw the mind lower and produce love of empirical self-interest, must be modified. No disturbance of the mind is helpful. We must differ, if we have to, in a spirit of peace and equanimity.

Study and meditation are vital daily practices. Sit quiet. Think of the Guru, Jesus, Rama or Krishna, and set your mind on one of these mental forms. Watch the mind and practice modification of the vrittis.

Meditate on 'I am not the mind or its vrittis. I am all-good; I am Shiva.' Repudiate the suggestions of the mind to the contrary.

Cover the flame of the ego with infinity and pure knowledge. In spite of the struggle of the gunas, assert: 'I am the Spirit.' Then, bless all. Cover all with your love. Give up criticizing others. It is a most important discipline.

Remember, before the peace of the spirit, great storms may arise in the mind. If your love for the guru is not unconditional, you may have invasions of scepticism, love of leadership and feel inclined to mock the great ideal. You may even have tendencies to suicide and inordinate satisfaction of the narrow love-instinct. What to do under the circumstances?

Watch and pray, do *japa* [repetition of a name of God] and *manana* [constructive reasoning on the spiritual teachings].

Do not read opinions; read the spiritual facts and experiences. Trust the Lord and take refuge in Him.

'When I am dead to the world, I am alive in Jesus,' says a great Christian mystic.

**H.P.S.**

## Al-Ghazali — A Great Light of Islam

THE SUFIS may justifiably be called the yogis of the Islamic tradition, if by 'Yoga' is meant the quest for union with the Divine. A fraternity of spiritual seekers and knowers, their lives are driven by a thirst for first-hand experience of God in their own being. To the Sufi, life is a gift of God, and our resources of body and mind are meant to be slowly trained to be instruments in a higher quest: a quest for spiritual experience, certainty and fulfilment.

Whenever the religious urge in man expresses itself as a thirst for actual experience of the Divine, those who are inspired in this way may find themselves misunderstood and even opposed by the orthodox religious authorities. In the early centuries of Islam, Sufism was regarded with some suspicion. This was because its way of divine love often prompted a spirit of independence from the recognized norms and rules of the orthodox. If you are taught that God is everywhere, and that He is pre-eminently present in the human heart, then worship in a particular place, like a church or mosque, is no longer indispensable. Thus the mystical way may easily be viewed as a threat to the ordered and decreed religious life of the community.

Yet the Sufis could claim that they were following the inner teachings of Mohammed, who said, in a famous verse in the Quran: 'Allah is nearer to thee than the jugular vein'. This was a clear hint that the Lord was to be discovered within the being of man himself. This and many other traditional sayings of the Prophet convinced the Sufis that Mohammed taught this higher path to those who were attracted to it and were ready for it.

Al-Ghazali, or, to be precise, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, lived from 1058 to 1111 AD. He hailed from a region in north-east Iran which was famous for Sufi mystics and poets. No less a figure than Mansur al-Hallaj came from the same part: Hallaj, who had been executed in Baghdad in 992 AD for openly declaring the highest spiritual Truth of the identity of the Spirit in man with the supreme Spirit, Truth, or God. Another God-realized Sufi, Bayazid, or Abu Yazid al-Bistami, came from the same part, as did the poets Firdausi and Omar Khayyam. So this region, about a thousand miles north-east of Baghdad, the chief centre of Islamic learning and power, was itself a heartland of a rich

cultural and spiritual tradition.

Before examining Al-Ghazali's life and teachings, it is worth saying at the outset that his main contribution to Islamic culture is that he reconciled Sufism with orthodox Islam. This took time, but it is now widely accepted that, as a result of Al-Ghazali's writings and example, the Sufi way of life and of love was shown to be fundamentally in harmony with the central traditions of Islam. This meant that if there were people who wished to follow a traditional spiritual path leading to inner illumination or God-realization, they were, on the whole, not persecuted for doing so. Naturally there were exceptions. Al-Ghazali's books were banned in certain parts of the Islamic empire, and his ideas did not go unopposed. But in due time, his many writings came to be studied with sympathy and assumed a profound significance. More importantly, many different orders of Sufism were allowed to spring up and flourish in those parts of the world where Islam held sway.

At the start of his short work called *The Alchemy of Happiness*, Al-Ghazali writes: 'Know, O beloved, that man was not created in jest or at random, but he is marvellously made and for some great end....Though his body is mean and earthly, yet his spirit is lofty and divine.' He cites two particular examples of the ineffable designership that inspired the making of man: the wonderful formation of the human mouth, and that of the human hand. Such exquisite artistry and functionality, he feels, can only be the work of a divine intelligence. In fact, unlike some spiritual thinkers, this sense of wonder at the Creation and the creatures in it, whether plant, animal or human, is typical of Al-Ghazali. He was a mystic and philosopher who was not afraid to look closely at nature, whether it was a tiny ant or the starry heavens, and see, in the miraculous order and symmetry of its details, evidence of the divine intelligence behind it. He went so far as to say (in his *Confessions*): 'No one can study anatomy and the wonderful mechanism of living things without being obliged to confess the profound wisdom of Him who has framed the bodies of animals and especially of man.'

This attitude towards the visible universe imbued Al-Ghazali with what would now be called the scientific spirit. For him, as for any Moslem, the Quran was the ultimate holy book. But his spirit of intellectual enquiry ranged far and wide through the philosophical and religious sources available at that time. These included the writings of

Jews and Christians, and also the mystical treatises of the neo-Platonists, as well as the writings of Plato himself that were available in Arabic translation. His aim was to think things out for himself, and to find the central and certain truth that would fully satisfy his thirst for knowledge. If the orthodox theologians declared that a certain school or doctrine was wrong, and should be shunned, Al-Ghazali was impelled to study that doctrine completely to find out why it was wrong. He did not want to take received opinions on trust. Everything was subjected to his acute powers of reasoning and independent insight.

With this bent of mind, and the ability to express himself clearly and sincerely, he was in due time to make another great contribution to the evolution of Islamic thought. This was to present the Sufi doctrines of the nature of the soul and God on a sound philosophical basis.

Despite Al-Ghazali's admiration for the divine handiwork evidenced in the form of man, he was sharply aware of the transiency of human life, that man's body is 'mean and earthly'. Alongside his sense of wonder at the Creation was the realization that 'Everything is perishing except His Face', as it is said in the Quran. Everything known to us in experience is perishing — except the 'Face' of God, of Allah, meaning not literally a face but the Being of God.

The world and its creatures may manifest beauty and skill for a time. But the entire realm of time, space and causation is in continuous flux, leading ultimately to the disappearance of all earthly forms in the change called death. Al-Ghazali says that this Quranic verse, 'Everything is perishing except His Face', does not just mean that things will eventually come to an end at some future date. Through the undeniable fact of minute-by-minute change, however imperceptible, a process of dying is going on all the time. We are not as we were yesterday, and our thoughts of the moment have already vanished, displaced by new thoughts equally transient. How then can we discover something truly dependable in this realm of change?

The riddle of the meaning and purpose of existence applies just as much to man's mind as to his body. Al-Ghazali observes that the human mind is particularly a puzzle because it offers us nothing we can actually measure, as we can do with things that have colour, shape or size. This mental life, so transient and insubstantial, cannot in itself provide us with the highest end of life — that 'great end' for which

man is 'marvellously made'. Man may master all the branches of knowledge, he may occasionally find himself in a condition of self-satisfaction, but if his experience is merely mental or intellectual, it will pass. If we want certainty and durable fulfilment, we have to look beyond physical conditions or particular states of mind.

At this stage, it is relevant to recount an episode that took place in Al-Ghazali's own life and which changed its course completely. Al-Ghazali was familiar with Sufism from an early age. He had sat with eminent teachers and attempted to set foot on the spiritual path of inner transformation which leads to enlightenment. In his 20s, he once made an earnest attempt, through solitary meditation and prayer, to achieve a higher state of consciousness, as expounded by the Sufi masters. But life often diverts the seeker from the spiritual quest. The ongoing process of education, eventually leading to an academic career, appears to have swallowed up most of Al-Ghazali's attention. This was not without reason. His academic achievements were outstanding. His mind was so bright and penetrating that he swiftly mastered the orthodox Moslem curriculum of that time, and was ever seeking deeper and wider knowledge. By his late 20s, he was widely recognized as man of rare talent, a precious gem in the circle of the learned. Like many people thus equipped, he concedes that at this time he was a vain man, often contemptuous of lesser talents around him, and that he delighted in his growing fame, worldly glory and budding powers of leadership.

His career reached its peak when, at the early age of 34, he was appointed to the Chair of Theology at one of the great centres of learning in Baghdad. Baghdad was the capital of the Islamic empire and the seat of the Caliph of Islam. Al-Ghazali rose to the occasion, and his fame as a scholar and lecturer spread far and wide. Men of learning and religious authority were eager to hear his expositions, and quoted from his lectures and writings.

But worldly success and happiness are not identical, and Al-Ghazali came increasingly to feel that all was not well with his inner state. He lacked a feeling of spiritual security and certainty. He had painstakingly examined all the known philosophical doctrines of the age, but remained frustrated and unsatisfied. At one stage he came to doubt the validity of all experience and felt that life was hollow and meaningless. He began to research more thoroughly than before the

wisdom of the Sufi masters. This was spiritual wisdom, different from intellectual knowledge, and could only be approached through a process of inner purification of the heart and mind. This wisdom shed light on the spirit of man.

Al-Ghazali had a good intellectual understanding of the Sufi path to higher knowledge. He knew about its practices and to some extent had tried them out. He was conversant with the spiritual states that awaited the aspirant. He also had some idea of the exalted state of consciousness that was the goal of the spiritual path. But this familiarity was indirect. It was academic knowledge, not based on any direct and living experience of his own. He now realized that only spiritual experience, the living experience of the presence of God within, would slake the thirst of his soul and relieve its present agonies.

At this stage, he experienced a serious tug-of-war between his spiritual aspirations and his earthly habits and ties, as well as his attachment to name and fame. He writes that an inner voice was prompting him: 'Up! Up! Your life is nearing its end, and you have a long journey to make. All your pretended knowledge is nothing but falsehood and fantasy. If you do not think now of your salvation, when will you think of it? If you do not break your chains today, when will you break them?'

Yet it proved difficult to heed this voice. He tells how, in the mornings, he would resolve to renounce all and dedicate his remaining days to the quest for inner illumination, but in the evenings he would succumb to earthly thoughts. These were connected not just with his career and eminence, but with the fact that he was a family man, with several young children to add cheer and warmth to his domestic life.

At length, after five years of increasing fame in Baghdad, he reached a point of spiritual crisis. He was smitten with a mysterious illness which robbed him of his power of speech. He regarded this illness as a sign from God that there must now be an complete change in his life. He spread the word that he wished to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. By doing so, he felt, his departure would not be challenged or blocked. But his real plan was to leave Baghdad for good, to renounce all, to become a wandering ascetic and to devote himself entirely to the quest for higher knowledge. He therefore gave away his considerable wealth, except what was necessary to sustain his family. Thus it was that this great centre of Islamic culture lost its leading academic light, and the

Caliph of Baghdad was deprived of his most prestigious public speaker.

For two years Al-Ghazali journeyed as a poor man, often dressed in rags and hiding his worldly identity. He spent much of this time in retreat at a certain mosque in Damascus. He is also known to have visited Jerusalem, Egypt and Arabia. But his main purpose during this time was to strive intensely to purify his mind and his heart, to free himself from worldly thoughts, vanity and egoism, and so qualify himself for the great experience of inner peace and light known to the dedicated guardians of the Path. On the theme of happiness and fulfilment, he would later write:

True happiness and everything else that is worth while, which remains with you when your ship is wrecked, consists in two things, one of which is peace of mind, with the heart's freedom from all save God, and the other is the filling of the heart thus freed with the knowledge of God Most Glorious, for it was to this end that all things were created. The result of combining these two things is a fine personality.

Al-Ghazali was now clearly aware that a higher knowledge existed, a knowledge that conferred real happiness. At last he was on the way to gaining this knowledge, or rather, to uncovering it within himself.

During this time he recorded his experiences and insights impersonally in a book that would be called *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*. This great work is a collection of short spiritual reflections on all conceivable aspects of the spiritual life. It includes wise sayings, stories of the saints, calls for the ordinary man to take the spiritual life seriously, and advice to the disciple who wishes to intensify the spiritual quest. No doubt reflecting the intensity of his own spiritual practice at this time, the whole work is inspired with a spirit of utter detachment from the world and self-surrender to God. More than once in this work, Al-Ghazali says that those who follow religion in order to obtain the joys of paradise are missing the mark, and their aspiration is mean and unworthy. The real purpose of the spiritual quest is vision of God, divine knowledge. It has since become a classical text of devout students of Islam, and is a classic beloved by the Sufis.

Al-Ghazali is a wonderfully imaginative writer, and we may well

owe to him the story of the painting contest that is later found in the *Masnawi* of Jalaluddin Rumi. The story expresses, in a simple way, Al-Ghazali's realization that spiritual knowledge, gained through purifying the heart, is far superior to intellectual knowledge. Before relating the story, much as Al-Ghazali presents it, let us quote a statement from the Shanti Sadan publication, *Power Behind the Mind*, which might help us to grasp its meaning: 'The destiny of the mind is not to be enriched and loaded with powers, but to be unloaded and absorbed into the great Power which stands behind and within it — the Power of Consciousness.'

As told by Al-Ghazali, we hear that the Chinese had challenged the Greeks to a painting contest, and this was arranged by the Sultan. Special rooms, like temples, were prepared opposite each other, and the artists set to displaying their skills. Each day, the Chinese called for more and more colours, but the Greeks asked for nothing at all. Both groups worked in silent absorption, until the Chinese, with a crash of cymbals and blast of trumpets, announced the end of their work. Immediately the king with his courtiers rushed to their temple, and were wonderstruck at the artistry and exquisite use of the colours. Meanwhile, the Greeks had devoted their labours, not to adding to the wall any colours, but to removing all trace of colour from the wall, and vigorously polishing it until it shone like a mirror. Now it was their turn to remove the veil, and 'wonderful to relate', says Al-Ghazali, 'the manifold variety of the Chinese colours was seen still more delicately and beautifully reflected from the walls of the Grecian temple, as it stood illuminated by the rays of the midday sun.'

The Greeks represent the Sufis. The story hints at new sources of knowledge, originating in the being of man himself. The Chinese artists added colour upon colour, just as man fills his mind with worldly knowledge, preoccupations and cares, and finds no deeper level in himself, no place of rest or peace. But the method of the Greek artists was to remove the dust and stains from the wall, and polish it until it became a pure and untarnished reflecting medium. This is like the mind that has been purified of worldliness and selfish thoughts, and has learnt to bring itself to a state of quiescence. Then the divine miracle happens, and the divine light, issuing from the being of man himself, is clearly reflected in the mirror of the stilled mind. This, we are told, is a realization of infinity and bliss, and is true

self-knowledge, leading to the certain conviction of the immortality of one's innermost being. Commenting on this experience, after his own telling of the tale, Rumi wrote:

The perfect saint holds in his bosom the formless infinite form of the Unseen reflected from the mirror of his heart. Here the understanding becomes silent or else it leads into error, because the heart is with God, or indeed, the heart is He.

To Al-Ghazali this was the real experience to be sought, the great end of life, and it was a realization of inner light, the light of divine knowledge.

This theme of Light was one that deeply engaged Al-Ghazali. Like the yogis, he held that God was the ultimate light, the light of lights, and source of all light. This light is present in the being of man, though in most people it remains veiled and seems not to be there at all. But through prayer and meditation, selfless benevolence and reflection on the teachings of the spiritual masters, and, even more, through seeking their proximity in an attitude of service and reverence, the inner veils can be thinned and finally dissolved completely. Al-Ghazali held that such a discipline would open up new powers in the human mind, powers of spiritual intuition, leading to the inner vision of spiritual reality. In *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*, he puts it very simply: 'The purpose of human life is to have vision of God.'

In a sense, God is manifest everywhere in Creation, but man absorbs himself in particular details, and becomes blind to the spiritual wholeness in which he lives, moves and has his being. In his great mystical treatise called the *The Niche of Lights*, Al-Ghazali declares: 'Glory to Him who hides Himself from his own creation by his utter manifestness, and is veiled from their gaze through the very effulgence of his own light.' As the story of the painting contest suggests, the unveiled vision of reality is approached through the process of purifying and emptying the mind.

It would be a mistake to think that Al-Ghazali was a purely mystical teacher. His teachings include much down-to-earth advice, and often take the form of a call to holy living in the orthodox sense. In speaking of meditation, for example, he writes: 'A little practice performed regularly is more effective than much done at intervals. Water, if let

fall regularly, even in drops, will melt a stone slab, but even if a hundred buckets of water are thrown on the slab at one time, it shall remain unaffected.'

As regards anger, he has written: 'When one is angry whilst standing, let him sit down. If he be seated, let him lie down. He should observe silence when invaded by anger, and, seeing the sky and the earth and remembering the majesty of the Lord, he should fall on the earth and offer obeisances to the Lord. He should pour water on his nose.'

Although he himself was impelled to renounce the world, at least for some years, he taught a path to spiritual progress that could be integrated with everyday life. Later in his own life, he came to feel that it was important to be in contact with other human beings, with a view to practising goodwill, virtue and service. Renouncing the world, he held, was not necessarily a sign of spiritual maturity. He gives a little story about Jesus to make this point:

Jesus passed a person who was sleeping by the roadside. He asked him to wake up and contemplate on the Lord. The man replied: 'Why do you instruct me thus? I have renounced the world and left it for those who love it.' Jesus said: 'Then you can sleep on.'

Al-Ghazali states that he spent ten years in a state of withdrawal from the world, or else of semi-retirement. He actually returned to his family in Baghdad after about two years, to help them arrange their affairs. But he did not resume his position at the university. He turned for a time to preaching, but his preaching had little in common with the dazzling, learned expositions given in former years. He now called on men to look to their spiritual interests and turn to God and the highest quest for inner illumination while there was still time.

It was probably around this time that seekers of spiritual Truth were attracted by his depth of insight and sincerity, and attached themselves to him as disciples. But there were also further periods of withdrawal, until in 1106-7, at the age of 48, he was induced by a local ruler to take up the post of lecturer at a college in Nishapur, not far from his native town of Tus. Al-Ghazali, having consulted his own heart in this matter, as well as some of his spiritually-minded friends, accepted this re-entry into public life as in harmony with the Divine Will.

This period at Nishapur, which lasted about a year, gave him an opportunity to promote his spiritual message, which he regarded as a necessary service to God. He then returned to Tus, and devoted his remaining years, as his English biographer, Margaret Smith, relates, to reading the Quran, to studying the traditions afresh, to associating with the godly, to teaching work, and to prayer, so that he should not waste a single moment of his own time or of the time of those with him.

For the Sufis, and also for Al-Ghazali, the highest realization entails a forgetfulness of our local limited self, and absorption and identification with that innermost Light of lights, the Light of Allah. This hallowed realization is called fanā in Sufism. It is not that this dimension of experience leaves its trace in the form of some such notion as 'I have forgotten myself'. As Al-Ghazali taught: 'For perfect absorption means he is unconscious not only of himself but of his absorption. For fanā from fanā is the goal of fanā.' That is, the limited self-forgetfulness matures into the absolute self-forgetfulness of non-duality.

It is observations and insights like this that prompted Hari Prasad Shastri to comment that 'Imam Ghazali, the most brilliant philosopher of Islam, is a pure upanishadic teacher.'

A.H.C.

*He is poor who knows nothing. A man ought to be empty of his own knowledge as he was when he did not exist.*

Meister Eckhart

## A SHANGHAI EPISODE

In the city of Shanghai the Continental Hotel was a place for Bohemians and those who could not find accommodation or credit anywhere else. Actors without a stage, barristers without briefs, preachers without pulpits, doctors without clinics, used to live there in a sort of fraternity of their own.

The dining room was the common meeting parlour where men who had not been shaved for some time and women needing combing sat at the tables devouring their beefsteaks and underdone pork chops. There was hardly any quarrel among the inmates because each was too exhausted to start a quarrel.

My companion at the table was a man named Leigh. He was more anatomical than muscular and he looked like a scare-crow dangling in the field. I discovered that he was an opium smoker, because one day, finding me rather tired and holding a packet of new books which the editor of the *China Weekly Review* had given me to be reviewed for the journal, Mr Leigh kindly said to me: 'How can you wade through all these pages of uninteresting and brainracking stuff? Come with me and have a few smokes of opium and you will be able to do your literary work very easily.'

Mr Leigh had a dislike for alcohol which gave him a certain reputation among the dwellers of the hotel. He was employed in an English firm as an accountant and used to earn about \$500 a month. He spent all the money on opium in about two or three weeks of the month and passed the remaining days by living on credit. He was a man of some education and used to call himself a rationalist, a logical positivist. His talk was not uninteresting.

After a stay of about one year in this hotel, my friend, a young man of great promise, elegance and culture, took me to his mother-in-law's house where I was given a dark dingy room for which I paid 50 per cent more than I used to do in the Continental Hotel. Mrs Ida, the wife of my friend, was really kind to me; but this is out of the point.

One day while walking with my wife Yachiyo near the market I met Mr Leigh going hand in hand with a pretty dark girl about 25 years his junior in age. He cut me and pretended not to know me. I was not amazed.

After another two years when I returned home one evening I found Yachiyo entertaining Mr Leigh in my drawing-room. Now, though fortune had not smiled upon me, an exceedingly rich friend began to smile upon me, and had provided me with an up-to-date furnished apartment, servants and a car. Mr Leigh told me that he was sorry for having cut me once in the road because the girl with him was an Italian aristocrat and she felt it beneath her dignity to talk to a common oriental and his wife. 'But that happened a long time ago, my friend. No, no, please listen to me. I married that girl and lived with her for a few weeks very comfortably because I loved her. I made over my monthly salary to her of which she relieved me. Owing to her interference I lost my job. She has left me now and lives with her parents and disowns me completely.' 'But how do you live now, my friend?' 'By begging. I go to the racecourse and stand in a corner and some charitable people drop a few coins in my hands. I am most miserable.' Mr Leigh burst into a flood of tears. Yachiyo gave him a bill of \$10 and he went away. He frequently called on me and never went back empty-handed.

One morning when I was in the office of the *China Weekly Review* I had a phone call from the commissioner of the police who intimated that a man by the name of Leigh had been run over by a car and was lying mortally wounded in a hospital. Leigh had given my name to the hospital authorities. I came into touch with his wife over the phone who denied all knowledge of any Mr Leigh and called herself Miss Parchini. I went to the hospital and found Mr Leigh slowly expiring. He was looking at the door, hoping for his wife to come and see him for the last time. I patted him on the head and said: 'Old man, take heart, the world is a dream.' He whispered: 'So it seems to be. When in the Continental Hotel you used to tell me the world was a dream, I thought you to be a lunatic. But now I know you are not. Alas, alas....'

**Hari Prasad Shastri**

## Indian Thought and Western Philosophy

### Schopenhauer's 'World as Representation'

IS PHILOSOPHY a useful tool in helping us to understand the real purpose of life, and how best we can utilize our own lives and not let the opportunity, which human life offers us, slip away unused and wasted? Or is it really little more than a kind of game, a sort of crossword-puzzle for intellectuals which bolsters up the ego but is otherwise of little use?

Dr Shastri, the founder of Shanti Sadan, read a lot of philosophy and often referred to European thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Kant and Hegel in the talks he gave. He did not think philosophy a useless pursuit, but he regarded it mainly as a matter of lighting upon occasional grains of truth, in the midst of much other material which was often not really helpful. He did not expect to find a complete exposition of the truth, or anything that one can really live by, in the writings of the philosophers — at least, when the word 'philosopher' is understood in the western sense of someone who tries to find wisdom, the truth, by means of thought and the use of reason alone.

In conformity with the main tradition of Indian thought as it is found in Advaita Vedanta, Dr Shastri believed that reason is a very valuable tool, but that it can only take us so far. It can clear the ground, as it were, get rid of misconceptions and of many mistaken and limiting ideas which might otherwise hold us back, but it cannot bring us the whole way to the truth itself. Because of this, he thought, those who rely on reason alone tend to go round in circles — and we can see this very clearly in the history of philosophy, where the same old problems come up century after century in slightly changed forms: the twentieth-century German philosopher, Martin Heidegger, pointed out that almost all the great problems faced by philosophy in his day had already been discussed 2000 years earlier by the Greeks.

Shankara, the great Indian thinker whose teachings guide us at Shanti Sadan, compared those who rely on reason alone to a sight which was common in the India of his day, and which in fact may still be seen if one travels there: the buckets going round and round on a wheel which has been constructed to draw up water from a well. The buckets are moving, but in reality they are getting nowhere — they are



just going round and round interminably on the same spot. The real knowledge, the Truth itself, Reality itself, Shankara held, cannot be found by reason alone, although it is perfectly compatible with reason. It is found by direct intellectual intuition, what Christianity and Islam call 'revelation' — which really means the experience of the mystics, those men and women who, by means of self-discipline, and by following with concentration and determination the path they have chosen, have gone beyond reason and have attained a direct and immediate experience of their own innermost nature, and with this, of the nature of ultimate reality itself.

Nevertheless, the subject of this article is a philosopher and not a mystic — the German thinker Arthur Schopenhauer, who lived from 1788 to 1860. There is, however, a good reason for choosing this particular philosopher, for Schopenhauer was the first western philosopher of note to come into contact with Indian thought. And not only is he the earliest: he is also, even today, the western philosopher who has shown the keenest and most persistent interest in Indian thought, who has studied it most carefully and has sought most consistently to relate it to his own ideas and to European thought generally. The contemporary writer on philosophy, Bryan Magee, in his excellent study of Schopenhauer, has written that 'he remains the only great Western philosopher to have been genuinely well-versed in Eastern thought, and to have related it to his own work'.

What makes this all the more interesting is the fact that Schopenhauer was at the same time very much a European thinker. He himself wrote in 1820: 'What I have to present agrees very precisely with the ancient Indian utterances. Yet it is also connected with the entire development of philosophy in the Occident; it is a continuation of its history'.

Schopenhauer regarded himself as the successor of Immanuel Kant, and he is thus in the main line of the European tradition of thought going back through Hume, Berkeley and Locke to Descartes and earlier figures. And it was also Schopenhauer, perhaps more than any other single person, who carried forward into the later nineteenth century the keen interest in the thought of India which, at the start of that century, had been generated among the thinkers of the Romantic movement in Germany when they first discovered the Sanskrit literature of India.

He was aware of the similarity of Indian ideas — and particularly the idea of *Maya* or illusion — both to his own thought and to that of Kant, and indeed to that of Plato; and in this way he constructed a bridge by means of which Indian thought started to become a part of the consciousness of educated Europeans and Americans. During Schopenhauer's lifetime the main elements of Indian thought, in both its Hindu and Buddhist forms, were being uncovered and understood in the West, and he carefully kept abreast of everything new that was published. He became one of the earliest Europeans to acquire a good knowledge of Hindu and Buddhist philosophical and religious ideas, and at the time of his death in 1860 his library contained almost as many works on India and the East as on the classical civilizations of Greece and Rome — and we must remember that this would be something very unusual indeed in the nineteenth century. In the Preface to his principal work, *The World as Will and Representation*, we find the following significant words:

If ... the reader has dwelt for a while in the school of the divine Plato, he will be better prepared to hear me, and the more susceptible to what I say. But if he has shared in the benefits of the Vedas, access to which, opened to us by the Upanishads, is in my view the greatest advantage which this still young century has to show over previous centuries, since I surmise that the influence of Sanskrit literature will penetrate no less deeply than did the revival of Greek literature in the fifteenth century; if, I say, the reader has also already received and assimilated the divine inspiration of Indian wisdom, then he is best of all prepared to hear what I have to say to him. It will not speak to him, as to many others, in a strange and even hostile tongue.

It is not important to enter into Schopenhauer's life in any detail, and we need to do no more than briefly fill in the background. He was born in 1788 in what was then the free city of Danzig and died at Frankfurt in 1860. He belonged to an old and wealthy family, a sort of merchant aristocracy which had long been one of the principal families of the city. Danzig — which is now called Gdansk and is in Poland, but was then part of the German cultural area — was one of the most important centres of the great Hanseatic League of independent cities, through which for centuries most of the trade of the Baltic Sea passed. When

the Tzar of Russia, Peter the Great, and the Empress Catherine visited Danzig in 1716 they stayed overnight as guests in the house of Schopenhauer's great grandfather, Andreas. The story is told that Andreas, inspecting his guests' rooms at the last moment and finding the air in them a trifle chilly, ordered brandy to be poured all over the floor and then set alight, thus introducing an instant warmth and a luxurious aroma into the rooms immediately before his guests' arrival, but leaving the floors bone dry.

The family motto was *point de bonheur sans liberté* — 'no happiness without liberty' - and they lived up to this. The Prussian ruler, Frederick the Great, once spent two hours in private with Schopenhauer's father, trying to persuade him to leave Danzig and move with the entire family business to Prussia. In spite of the considerable inducements offered, Schopenhauer's father refused; and when after Frederick's death the Prussians invaded and occupied Danzig, Schopenhauer's family left the city for good and, at considerable loss, transferred the whole of their family business to Hamburg, which was at that time another free Hanseatic city. Schopenhauer showed the same spirit of independence throughout his life, but transferred from the field of politics and commercial life to that of thought.

In fact, Schopenhauer had no interest in commerce, and as a young man had to struggle hard to escape from a lifetime in the family business. As a result, he got to university when he was already in his twenties, much later than most young men. Yet by the time he was thirty he had formulated his philosophy and published his most significant book, the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation*. The second volume of this work was published much later, in 1844. It is in fact a kind of supplement: it adds a great deal of very interesting further evidence and argumentation, but does not alter the principal ideas contained in the first volume.

When it was first published in 1818, *The World as Will and Representation* was for Schopenhauer a bitter disappointment. Hardly anyone noticed it or reviewed it. The work was neglected, and most of the copies were sold off as scrap paper. Perhaps this was in part Schopenhauer's own fault, for he seems to have carried his independence of spirit too far as a young man. During his university

years he came into contact with some of the leading thinkers of the day in Germany, among them Fichte, Hegel, Ludwig Tieck and Goethe, but of all these it was only with Goethe — a thinker in whom, incidentally, our own teacher, Dr Shastri, had a great interest and to whom he often referred in very positive terms — that he was able to establish a good relationship.

Schopenhauer met with Goethe in 1814, in the town of Weimar. He was twenty-five at the time and had just obtained his doctoral degree; Goethe was already well past sixty. Weimar, largely because of the presence of the great Goethe, was one of the leading centres of intellectual life in Germany at that time, and Schopenhauer's mother, Johanna Schopenhauer, who soon after became famous in her own right as a novelist, had moved there after the death of her husband. Goethe was a frequent visitor to her house — and in fact the star turn of her literary *salon*. He was at that time working on his optical ideas and theory of colours, exploring theories which were quite different from those of Newton, and he became interested in the young Schopenhauer who had put forward somewhat similar notions about the nature of perception in his doctoral thesis. Goethe showed the young and unknown philosopher his own optical experiments, even lending him his apparatus so that Schopenhauer could repeat them for himself at home. The relationship between the two was close for a time, but ultimately it did not last. Schopenhauer was too independent a thinker, and was not prepared to simply follow in the path of the elderly and famous Goethe. It was, Goethe wrote later, like the parting of friends who wish to go in different directions: 'We dealt with many things in mutual agreement', he wrote, 'but at last a certain division became inevitable, as when two friends who have hitherto gone together say goodbye — the one, however, wanting to go north, the other south, so that they very speedily lose sight of each other'.

For his part, Schopenhauer retained a lasting admiration for Goethe, writing later that 'Goethe educated me anew'. He wrote a short work called *On Vision and Colours* which he sent to Goethe in 1815, and later in life he often quotes passages from Goethe's great play *Faust* in order to illustrate or support his own ideas.

Schopenhauer did not marry and was fortunate in having inherited sufficient private means to live on. After the neglect which followed

the publication of his principal work, he lived alone in Frankfurt, studying and writing systematically and working largely in isolation. Only in the final decade of his life did he start to receive recognition, and it is interesting to note that this first came from an English critic, John Oxenford, whose long and perceptive essay on Schopenhauer's writings appeared in *The Westminster Review* in 1853, and was soon after reprinted in Germany. *The Westminster Review* was at this time being edited by George Eliot, the great Victorian woman novelist, who must therefore have been almost the first in England to become aware of Schopenhauer's thought. Subsequently, both Richard Wagner and Nietzsche were among Schopenhauer's earliest and most enthusiastic admirers. Wagner wrote to him, but he did not meet him personally.

After Schopenhauer's death his fame grew rapidly, and he became the most widely read and discussed philosopher of the second half of the nineteenth century. The list of significant figures, particularly among creative artists and writers, who came under his influence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is a remarkable one. In addition to Wagner and Nietzsche, it includes Tolstoy, Turgenev, Emile Zola, Proust, Strindberg, Gustave Mahler, Conrad, Thomas Hardy, D.H. Lawrence, Thomas Mann, Wittgenstein and many others. Nevertheless, a reaction set in and for much of the twentieth century Schopenhauer was decidedly out of fashion, while it was Nietzsche, who had turned against Schopenhauer and in effect reversed his ideas, who was favoured. Bryan Magee wrote that of 'the distinguished people who taught me philosophy at Oxford in the 1950s, scarcely any of them had read Schopenhauer'. More recently the situation has changed again, and there is at present a renewed and growing interest in Schopenhauer's ideas.

In most respects Schopenhauer was well removed from the Romantic thinkers and writers who were his contemporaries, but in one way he was close to them. This was the idea, which can be traced back to the Florentine Renaissance and even earlier, that there is a single core of inner truth which links together the great religions as well as much of the philosophy of the past; a great truth which has now become obscured and lost, but which in its pure form perhaps still lies hidden in some far off Eastern land and is capable of recovery. The notion of a rediscovery of ancient wisdom is undoubtedly present in

Schopenhauer's writings, as well as in those of the Romantics, and it has much to do with the interest which Indian thought held for him.

He first came into contact with Indian ideas while he was staying at Weimar and moving in the circle of Goethe. Here, at the end of 1813, he met one of the earliest Germans to study and write on Indian thought, an orientalist and Romantic thinker called Friedrich Majer. Majer introduced the young philosopher to a book which was to be of the utmost importance to him for the rest of his life. It was the first translation into any European language (the language, in fact, was Latin) of the Upanishads, which up to then had been completely unknown to Europe. The Upanishads stand at the very heart of Hindu thought, and this translation, which was called the *Oupnek'hat* — a Persian corruption of the word 'Upanishad' — contained not just the twelve or thirteen principal texts which is what we usually mean today when we speak of the Upanishads, but many of the lesser and later ones as well, a total of fifty Upanishads in all. It was by far the most extensive presentation of Indian thought then available to Europe, and Schopenhauer speaks of it as 'the greatest gift to the nineteenth century'. He studied it carefully throughout the remainder of his life, writing more than 45 years later:

How thoroughly redolent of the holy spirit of the Vedas is the Oupnekhat! On every page we come across profound, original, and sublime thoughts, whilst a lofty and sacred earnestness pervades the whole. Here everything breathes the air of India ... It is the most profitable and sublime reading that is possible in the world; it has been the consolation of my life and will be that of my death.

Having briefly sketched our philosopher's relationship to Indian thought it is time for us to turn to his ideas. First, a word is perhaps in order about Schopenhauer's philosophy as this relates to ultimate reality. In common with Kant, Schopenhauer maintained that human thought exists to handle the world of experience, the everyday world of subjects and objects, the world of duality — of great and small, and good and bad — and that because ultimate reality is of a quite different order, any attempt to grasp it by thought and describe it in words can only mislead us. For this reason Schopenhauer, like Kant, carefully abstains from trying to describe the nature of ultimate reality. It is, he asserts, the legitimate territory not of reason and the philosopher, but

of the mystics who have known it directly by means of their own inner experience. For Schopenhauer, as for the Upanishadic sages whose words he studied, final reality is 'that from which words turn back, together with the mind'. What philosophy can do, Schopenhauer believed, is tell us about the world we live in, and in particular the degree of reality it has, and in the remainder of this article, this is what we will explore.

Let us begin with what he called the world as Representation. What does Schopenhauer mean by this expression? The German word translated as representation is *Vorstellung*, and it means something which is 'placed before' one. A representation is not an external object but a mental picture, an internal idea in the mind. What Schopenhauer wishes to convey by his use of the word is the fact that the world we experience exists for each of us as a mental picture which arises in or is placed before our consciousness: all that each one of us actually knows or experiences of the world is what appears in our consciousness. Schopenhauer writes:

For only after men had tried their hand for thousands of years at merely objective philosophizing did they discover that, among the many things that make the world so puzzling and precarious, the first and foremost is that, however immeasurable and massive [the world] may be, its existence hangs nevertheless on a single thread; and this thread is the actual consciousness in which it exists.

Schopenhauer places a great deal of emphasis on the fact that perception, as opposed to mere sensation, is a function of the mind, and that in consequence the world which is experienced is essentially mental in origin — it exists in and is created by the mind. Here he draws upon the conclusions which Kant had reached. Kant, he believed, was the greatest thinker the West had produced since the collapse of the ancient Graeco-Roman world, because he had succeeded in demonstrating incontrovertibly that the world which stands before us in consciousness is dependent upon the inborn structure of our minds; on what Schopenhauer calls 'an exceedingly complicated physiological process in the brain of an animal, the result of which is the consciousness of a picture there'. It is these pictures in the mind which form the world that we experience — the world of Representation:

Thus the world must be recognized [he writes] from one aspect at least, as akin to a dream, indeed as capable of being put in the same class with a dream. For the same brain-function that conjures up during sleep a perfectly objective, perceptible, and indeed palpable world must have just as large a share in the presentation of the objective world of wakefulness. Though different as regards their matter, the two worlds are nevertheless obviously moulded from one form. This form is the intellect, the brain-function.

Schopenhauer, like Kant, believed that the human mind plays an active role in shaping and organizing the material supplied to it by the senses. In particular, our ideas of time and space do not, as earlier thinkers had assumed, come to us from outside and as the result of observation. They are, on the contrary, something we are born with, a part of the mind, the way it is structured, the way it operates. The ideas of time and space provide the framework by which our sense impressions are given form and organized into a meaningful pattern. The human mind, Schopenhauer thought, is certainly not a 'tabula rasa', as the English philosopher John Locke had claimed; a 'clean slate' which is later conditioned by our experiences of the world.

Equally important, Schopenhauer argued, is the fact that the idea of cause and effect is likewise inherent in the mind. Causality is not something we deduce from observation, as had been supposed by Locke and others, but something we already know, knowledge we are born with. Just like the ideas of time and space, the idea of cause and effect is inherent in the mind. We simply know, every child and every animal knows, that each physical event will bring with it a result, that one thing causes another — that if I step over a cliff, for example, I will have a nasty fall. This knowledge is inborn, and without it no animal could survive. Without it, we could not link together and interpret sense impressions and relate them to ourselves for our own physical safety and good.

In this way, as Schopenhauer puts it, Kant '[took] to pieces the whole machinery of our cognitive faculty, by means of which the phantasmagoria of the objective world is brought about'. He showed that time, space and causality are not drawn from experience. They are part and parcel of the mind's structure, and therefore belong to the subject and not to the external world. Kant writes: 'if the subject ... be

removed, the whole constitution and all the relations of objects in space and time, nay space and time themselves, would vanish. As appearances, they cannot exist in themselves, but only in us'. In accordance with this, Schopenhauer argues that space, time and causality are laws which stem not from the existence of things, but rather from our representation of things. They are, as he puts it in a characteristically blunt turn of phrase, 'in man's head' — internally existing mental structures, and not, as previously assumed, external realities having an objective and absolute validity. 'Before Kant', he writes, 'it may be said, we were in time; now time is in us.'

Recalling, perhaps, his work with Goethe on the theory of colours, he writes, 'Just as our eye produces green, red and blue, so does our brain produce, time, space and causality (whose objectified abstraction is matter)'. Matter, he argues, is nothing but the creation of our inborn notion of causality. It is something which we project as a cause, in order to explain the various sensations which come to us. It is not a substance existing independently of mental perception, but an appearance. It exists in the mind of the perceiving subject, and is not truly an external reality although it appears as such. And so, in a striking formulation, he tells us that, 'Materialism is the philosophy of the subject who forgets to take account of himself.'

For Schopenhauer, then, it is within the subject, and not in the world of objects, that reality is to be found. He writes, in a passage strongly reminiscent of Indian thought and the teachings of Advaita Vedanta:

That which knows all things and is known by none is the subject. It is accordingly the supporter of the world, the universal condition of all that appears, of all objects, and it is always presupposed; for whatever exists exists only for the subject. Everyone finds himself as this subject, yet only in so far as he knows, not in so far as he is the object of knowledge. But his body is already object ... Like all objects of perception, it lies within the forms of all knowledge, in time and space, through which there is plurality. But the subject, the knower, never the known, does not lie within these forms; on the contrary, it is always presupposed by these forms themselves, and hence neither plurality nor its opposite, namely unity, belongs to it. We never know it, but it is precisely that which knows wherever there is knowledge.

For Schopenhauer, then, it is upon our inborn ideas of space, time and

causality that the whole of our experience of the world rests, and it is by means of them and the laws belonging to them that the entire universe takes on shape and form in our consciousness. The world we know and live in is appearance and not true reality. It exists as a creation in the minds of living beings. Here it is real enough, and in the collective consciousness which we all share it can certainly be said to have a provisional existence — just as the events of a dream have a provisional existence whilst the dream lasts. But it is not absolutely real; it has no objective reality outside our consciousness. It is the shadow-world which, in Plato's famous myth of the Cave, the prisoners perceive — and indeed it is this doctrine of the illusory nature of the world which, in Schopenhauer's view, lies at the very heart of Plato's thought.

This, then, in brief outline, is the meaning of what Schopenhauer calls the world as Representation. Here is his own summary:

If in the information that is given to the world by the marvellous depth of Kant's mind there is anything that is true beyond all doubt, it is the Transcendental Aesthetic, the doctrine of the ideality of space and time — their existence as ideas in the mind, and not as external realities... It is Kant's triumph, one of the extremely few metaphysical doctrines that can be regarded as actually proved and as real conquests in the field of metaphysics. According to it, space and time are the forms of our own faculty of intuitive perception; they belong to this, and not to the things that are known through it ... Outside this consciousness, the phenomenon does not exist.

What especially interested Schopenhauer was the fact that this teaching, that phenomena, the whole world of matter and all plurality is only apparent, and that behind it there stands a reality of another order — a non-dual Reality, as the Vedanta would say — is not something new. Although only recently arrived at by European philosophy in the person of Kant, it was, he considered, the rediscovery of a great truth which had been known long before. It is, Schopenhauer believed, the central idea underlying the thought of Plato, and, as he often points out, it is still more clearly evident in the ancient thought of India. Here it takes the form of the notion of illusion or Maya, and of the doctrine of Two Truths, in which a clear distinction is made between the 'relative truth' — that is to say, the apparent 'truth' of the

empirical world and of our experience as a jiva or individual being forming part of it — and the ‘highest’ or absolute truth, known to those who transcend their individual nature and identify with the true Self or *Atman* which is ultimate, non-dual Reality.

The relative or lower truth is the knowledge of the world experienced by everyone prior to enlightenment. It consists of a network of relativities; it is the world of subject-object relations, of names and things named, and of apparent physical realities. Quite different from this is the ‘highest truth’. This is truth itself, truth absolute; knowledge of the real as it is in itself, without any distortion and beyond the intervention of the mind. It knows that which is ultimately Real directly, and is free from conceptual constructions such as time and space and causality. The teaching is stated by Shankara, the great interpreter of the Upanishads, in the following words:

The entire complex of phenomenal existence is considered as true as long as the knowledge of Brahman being the Self of all has not arisen; just as the phantoms of a dream are considered to be true until the sleeper wakes ... The case is analogous to that of a dreaming man who in his dream sees manifold things, and, up to the moment of waking, is convinced that his ideas are produced by real perception without suspecting the perception to be a merely apparent one.

Here we see the idea, deeply rooted in Indian thought, of illusion or appearance, Maya: the idea that the world we live in is like a collective dream which we all share, having only a temporary and provisional reality; and that beyond it there lies another order of being, Brahman or absolute Reality, which we have access to only when, seeing through the veil of Maya, we free ourselves from our individual nature.

Throughout his life Schopenhauer drew strength from the belief that the concept of the world as representation which he had formulated was essentially at one both with the thought of Plato and with that of India. For him this was important because it meant that his teachings were unlikely to be merely his own subjective inventions, but belong to the perennial and unchanging tradition of human wisdom. It meant that, after centuries of wandering in the dark, European philosophy had rediscovered the same fundamental insights which had been perceived by the greatest minds of the past. He writes in *The World as Will and Representation*:

In essence this view is old. Plato spoke with contempt of that which for ever becomes, but never is. Spinoza called it mere accidents of the sole substance that alone is and endures. The ancient wisdom of the Indians declares that ‘it is Maya, the veil of deception, which covers the eyes of mortals, and causes them to see a world of which one cannot say either that it is or that it is not; for it is like a dream, like the sunshine on the sand which the traveller takes to be water, or like the piece of rope on the ground which seems to be a snake’.

S.C.

### **The Fruits of Renunciation**

by Swami Rama Tirtha

When I renounced enjoyment of the flowers  
For my personal pleasure,  
The whole world became my garden.  
When I renounced joy in taste,  
The whole world became a delicacy.  
When the eyes gave up yearning for beauty,  
Beauty displayed herself before me.  
When I ceased to desire the delights of the open air,  
The morning breeze became my own.  
When I gave up desire for listening,  
All music and song became mine.  
When dreams of personal advantage left me,  
I myself became all beautiful dreams.  
Strange, I own nothing at all,  
I lay no claim to body or personality;  
If I have eyes, hands and feet,  
They belong to everyone;  
Yet the whole world has become my own.

## BOOK REVIEW

Many readers of *Self-Knowledge* will be familiar with the series of articles on *The Spiritual Awakening of Science* that has been published in recent years in the journal. Before his passing in March this year, the author of this series, A. M. Halliday, was preparing an article on the physicist James Clerk Maxwell, which it is hoped will be published soon. Dr Halliday's sources included the biography of Clerk Maxwell reviewed by him here.

*The Man who Changed Everything: The Life of James Clerk Maxwell* by Basil Mahon. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd. 2003 (hardback). Paperback 2004. Price £8.99, \$14.95. Pp. 226.

Here at last is a clear, straightforward book about the greatest figure in nineteenth century science and his amazingly rich legacy of contributions to twentieth century science. Hitherto the main available source of knowledge about his life has been the volume published by two of his closest associates, Lewis Campbell and William Garnett, three years after his death in 1879, a rich source of information about his childhood, youth, education and main subsequent achievements. But much of the significance of what he had discovered was not to be fully appreciated until many years after his death.

Why should we be interested in him now? Suffice it to say here that Basil Mahon in the Introduction to his book, written in the early years of the third millennium, is able to quote tributes from Albert Einstein and Richard Feynman which leave no doubt about the importance of his achievements. In the words of Einstein: 'One scientific epoch ended and another began with James Clerk Maxwell'. And an even higher assessment comes from the eminent American physicist Richard Feynman when he writes: 'From a long view of the history of mankind — seen from, say, ten thousand years from now — there can be little doubt that the most significant event of the nineteenth century will be judged as Maxwell's discovery of the laws of electrodynamics.'

In the brief introductory paragraphs to his book Mahon gives an admirable summary of Maxwell's many other contributions to science:

Maxwell's ideas were so different from anything that had gone before that most of his contemporaries were bemused; even some admirers thought he was indulging in a wild fantasy. No proof came until a quarter of a century later, when Heinrich Hertz produced waves from a spark-gap source and detected them.

Mahon points out that over the past hundred years we have learnt to use Maxwell's waves to send information over great distances in fractions of a second. A world without radio, television and radar is scarcely imaginable today, so profoundly have our lives been changed by his brainchild. His theory has now become one of the central pillars of our understanding of the laws of the universe. Maxwell opened the way to relativity and quantum theory, those two great triumphs of twentieth century physics, and his theory survived both revolutions intact. In the opinion of another great physicist, Max Planck, Maxwell's theory must be numbered among the greatest of all intellectual achievements. Yet most of us take it wholly for granted and its author remains unacknowledged, because its results are now so closely woven into the fabric of our daily lives. The situation is still more poignant in that Maxwell would be among the world's greatest scientists even if he had never set to work on electricity and magnetism. Mahon continues:

His influence is everywhere. He introduced statistical methods into physics; now they are used as a matter of course. He demonstrated the principle by which we see colours and took the world's first colour photograph. His whimsical creation, Maxwell's *demon* — a molecule-sized creature who could make heat flow from a cold gas to a hot one — was the first effective scientific thought experiment, a technique Einstein later made his own. It posed questions that perplexed scientists for 60 years and stimulated the creation of information theory, which underpins our communications and computing. He wrote a paper on automatic control systems many years before anyone else gave thought to the subject; it became the foundation of modern control theory and cybernetics. He designed the Cavendish Laboratory and, as its founding

Director, started a brilliant revival of Cambridge's scientific tradition which led on to the discoveries of the electron and the structure of DNA.

But what sort of a man was James Clerk Maxwell? From the first he was fascinated by the world around him and determined to find out how it worked. As a three-year-old, everything that moved, shone or made a noise evoked the question: 'What's the go o' that?' and if his parents' answer did not satisfy him, 'but what's the particular go of it?' Both his parents came from talented families. They created a harmonious, stimulating atmosphere at Glenlair, the Scottish family home, full of jokes and free from pomposity. Religion was an important part of James' childhood: every day the whole household assembled for prayers and on Sunday they went to the Presbyterian church at Parton, five miles away from Glenlair. His mother died when James was only eight. Her younger sister, Aunt Jane, arranged for James to attend catechism classes in Edinburgh where he was, now aged ten, a pupil at the Edinburgh Academy. James' faith was the guiding principle of his life but, as Basil Mahon points out: 'it was an intensely reflective personal faith which could not be contained within the rules of a sect. Institutional politics, whether of the church, the state or the university, was a topic that never engaged his interest.'

His interest lay in contributing to the good of humanity. Engineers received direct practical help from some of his work. He demonstrated how polarised light could be used to reveal strain patterns in a structure and invented a graphical method which was both neat and powerful for calculating the forces in any framework: both these techniques became standard engineering practice. He was also the first to suggest using a centrifuge to separate gases. He was, in short, the man who changed everything, as Basil Mahon illustrates so clearly in this first-rate study of James Clerk Maxwell.

**S.D.S.**

## **LOVE IS THE WAY TO SELF-TRANSCENDENCE**

A person whose ability to respond to the stimuli offered by exterior objects ceases to exist for a long time, the temperature of whose body becomes the same as that of the room he is in, is said to be dead; but man before meeting with total death often dies in parts. There are some who are morally dead like a typical Bolshevik or like Iago of Shakespeare's *Othello*, or Ravana. There are others who are aesthetically dead, who are not moved by an autumn sunset or a May dawn. Then what is this death? Evidently it means a permanent paralysis of the sensibility on the physical as well as the other planes.

There are many who seem to be very much alive, who are in fact dead because they do not respond to the flashes of light from their spirit. Talleyrand, Metternich, Wolsey, Hitler, were men of this category, who, though outwardly very active, were in fact living and moving tombs.

There is an urge in the heart of man to love, to appreciate, to pursue beauty, to lose himself in the arms of truth, to melt in an embrace in the moonbeams of goodness. A desire for self-transcendence is innate in a living man. Is that life useful in which the spiritual wealth is not acquired? The Shruti [revealed scriptures] says: 'A knower of Self goes beyond sorrow.' As long as there is any consciousness of a want, of a restriction, of our freedom of appreciation, as long as our soul is subject to the invasion of ignorance in the form of malice, envy, jealousy, our soul is not fully alive. Power needs murders and massacres for its upkeep, propagation of lies for its preservation, and moral suicide for its stability, if there can be any stability at all.

It is the life of the soul that matters, because there is a possibility of a real enjoyment of life in its manifold aspects if the soul is fully alive. A man, to save his life, permits the amputation of his arms. So must a man, to keep his soul alive, permit the eradication of the cancer of inordinate desires, of enjoyment, possession and power.

The soul thrives in the inner solitude and in outer sympathetic affection for all. Knowledge is the food of Gods. Plato calls inquisitive-ness the very source of life.

As a bud opens into a blossom, discarding its narrow form, so does



the soul grow into *Jivanmukti* [spiritual liberation in life] by disidentifying itself from the superfluous coverings of worldly possessions and desires for power. Once Shri Dada was asked to see a patient who was suffering from many diseases. There were several Vaidyas in attendance, each prescribing a treatment for a malady he was supposed to be suffering from. They asked Shri Dada what he prescribed for. He said; 'My friends, don't prescribe for any disease, but save his life, which is most important.' Similarly, they teach their children to be wealthy, famous, powerful and sometimes learned, but what everyone needs is the means for an expression of the whole soul of man.

What is the value of love? Why should we love at all? Because it makes us forgetful of our little self and makes us offer our life as a sacrifice at the altar of the happiness of our Beloved. Love is the way to self-transcendence through annihilation of the empirical self. As mercury cannot exist in a fire, so love cannot exist when there is any selfish desire. For the health and expression of the light of the Self, let us learn to love, as did the holy gopis of Braj [the cowherd maidens in the region where Shri Krishna first lived], or Rama Tirtha [a God-realized Adhyatma Yogi, the subject of H. P. Shastri's *Scientist and Mahatma*], and to know that nothing but love will satisfy the soul. This is the way to be really alive.

**Hari Prasad Shastri**

### TEXT FOR MEDITATION

OM. HE WHO SHINES IN THE SUN  
HE WHO WAVES IN THE GRASS  
HE WHO SINGS IN THE NIGHTINGALE  
HE IS MY REAL SELF.  
I AM THAT. I AM THAT. I AM THAT. OM

### SHANTI SADAN NEWS

Shanti Sadan's publishing activities in recent months have been focused on the new edition of *The Heart of the Eastern Mystical Teaching*, Dr Shastri's account of the life and teachings of his own Guru Shri Dada. The book has been redesigned, the larger and clearer typeface effecting a marked increase in the number of pages, while the improved binding should withstand the most frequent usage. An article in this edition of *Self-Knowledge* considers the significance of the great work. This book has a special place in the hearts of Dr Shastri's pupils and it is with gladness that this new edition is now being made available.

Elsewhere work has continued in preparation for the customarily busy Autumn term. The Wednesday evening talks at Shanti Sadan this term will again be a series with practical guidance on meditation, including explanations of the principles on which the practice is based, together with meditations that can be taken away and adopted by sincere enquirers. Different aspects of meditation are highlighted in different talks, but care is taken to ensure that each one would be of benefit to first-time visitors.

And there will be an opportunity to spend a day imbibing the theory and practice of the spiritual Yoga at this term's one-day course, on 2 November, of which details are below. *Self-Knowledge* readers and their friends will as always be very welcome at this and all the events organised by Shanti Sadan.

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### ONE-DAY COURSE AUTUMN 2008

#### **Yoga of Self-Knowledge - *The Key to Everlasting Freedom***

Morning

Talk One: *Where is Real Freedom?*

Meditation Practice

Talk Two: *Finding Inner Strength*

Afternoon

Talk Three: *The Light Behind the Mind*

Meditation Practice

Columbia Hotel, 95 Lancaster Gate, London W2

Sunday 2 November, 11am to 4pm.