

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.

EVENTS FOR THE SUMMER TERM 2008

Weekday evening talks at Shanti Sadan

Lectures will be given every Wednesday and Friday evening at 8pm from Wednesday 23 April until Friday 27 June 2008. The Wednesday meetings this term will be a series focusing on meditation practice.

Summer 2008 One-Day Course

The course will be held on Saturday 7 June 2008 at the Columbia Hotel, Lancaster Gate, London W2. For details see the inside back cover.

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VOL. 59 No. 2 SPRING 2008

CONTENTS	Page
Meditation — Focusing the Mind	53
Teachings of Swami Akhandananda	59
Rouse Up the Mind	69
The Way of Chuang Tzu	72
Love and Logic	84
The World Viewed from Within part 2	87
Amir Khusro	98
The Message of Adhyatma Yoga	102

Meditation — Focusing the Mind

A talk given recently at Shanti Sadan, followed by meditation practice.

Meditation begins when the mind makes a courageous and determined effort to come into contact with the light of Truth latent within itself.

Meditation — Its Theory and Practice

MEDITATION is about laying down seeds in the bed of the mind—seeds of spiritual truth which yield, at first, a hint of the divine nature which is within and without us, and finally, through deepening insight, complete recognition, dissolving the false notions we have entertained about what we are. Even in the early stages there is positive and creative benefit, because we have made the conscious choice to come into contact with the foundation of reality and peace within us.

Some people complain that they cannot effectively visualize an image or a text for meditation, let alone hold it in the mind for long. The same people, however, may be able to converse about the characters and events of last night's episode of their favourite soap

opera and imaginatively anticipate coming events, or spend half an hour or more describing and explaining plans for their garden or future work intentions.

What is the difference between our difficulties with meditation practice and the effortless concentration and visualization skills we display in many of our ordinary worldly affairs? The answer lies in the mind. The themes of our commonplace ruminations have been spontaneously chosen by us, and absorb our attention because they lie close to our heart's desires. Our will and feelings have been engaged. The chosen themes are something with which we identify.

We participate with warmth and concentrated interest when there is a subject we are keen on and have some knowledge of—art, literature, science, whatever it may be. In the case of a meditation practice, the mind may resist and cause obstructions, because the image, text or instruction is an unknown quantity, a subject prescribed by others rather than a familiar one we have chosen ourselves. And this seeming imposition may produce anxiety, tension or resistance.

We all have the power of concentration, but are we able to focus the mind at will, and for as long as we choose? The mind is our chief instrument in life, but for most of the time we are hardly conscious of its influence or its activities. On the spiritual path of Adhyatma Yoga, the first requisite is to become aware of the mind and to control and direct it. A verse in the *Bhagavad Gita* instructs: 'Let a man raise himself by himself, let him not lower himself; for he alone is the friend of himself, he alone is the enemy of himself.' While the mind remains untrained, it can be our enemy, because we will be led a merry dance by its whims, instincts, emotions and reactions. If, on the other hand, the mind is trained, it becomes capable of revealing hitherto hidden depths, powers and treasures.

A group of tramps met on a hillock each evening to talk, drink, carouse and share their pickings of food. The place was littered with their accumulated debris, and to all appearances was an unattractive spot. But unbeknown to them, that very site turned out to be archaeologically significant, because it concealed, beneath the soil, an ancient burial chamber of extremely valuable artefacts. They took the place for granted, but had they removed the clutter and probed below the surface, they would have been wealthy indeed.

How may the mind be controlled in order to approach the spiritual treasury at its source? Even in the course of our daily life, we can learn to use our innate power of concentration and visualization *consciously*. A simple but effective way of self-training is to choose a particular subject—not necessarily a spiritual one—and deliberately think about it for five minutes. Try and keep the focus on our chosen subject alone, dismissing thoughts and associations that are not directly related to it. Then, strict to time, stop thinking about it; 'drop the subject', withdrawing attention from it, and allow the mind to range freely as it did before undertaking the practice. This is a valuable practice for controlling and consciously directing the mind, and it employs the very skills needed for our approach to spiritual meditation, namely, directing the attention and maintaining the practice for a given period of time. Those who practise meditation find they do develop the capacity to observe the mind's behaviour as if from a distance, and during daily life they make efforts to direct it, as far as possible, towards activities and environments that conduce to its tranquillity and purity.

Control and direction of the mind are not sufficient in themselves to approach and respond to the power and beauty of these grace-infused meditation forms. All around us are radio waves, but if we want to hear a particular programme, we have to use the instrument of a radio and tune in to a specific wavelength to receive the transmission. The mind is the instrument and meditation is the means whereby we can learn to attune ourselves to the spiritual life and light that is indicated in the traditional meditation text, and which is a pointer to the higher and immortal life that is subtly present at the core of our being.

The meditation practices will remain dry intellectual concepts unless our heart is engaged in the undertaking, and meditation is associated with our deepest spiritual need. This partnership of mind and heart is the key to sensitizing our being to the spiritual dimension. Students of meditation are encouraged to take an interest in the beauty of nature, great art, music, edifying literature and poetry, philosophy, in the beauty and magnanimity expressed in human thoughts and actions, as well as the study of sacred texts such as the Gospel of St John, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the Upanishads. This is the way to refine the mind, raise its receptivity and heighten its response to abstract concepts of

beauty and truth.

Broadly speaking, we learn to focus the mind by becoming consciously aware of its activities, by controlling and directing it, and by refining its diet, so that it grows receptive and responsive to spiritual thought. All this helps to make the mind tranquil, by lessening the noise of thoughts and associations which disturb or deflect our concentration. The aim is to create a laser-like beam of focused attention that can be brought to bear on a spiritually dynamic thought or symbol of higher truth. At some point you may have used a lens to concentrate the sun's rays on a pile of dry grass or tinder in order to ignite a fire. Using the fuel of the meditation practice, the focused mind can act as a lens to concentrate our inner psychological energies on the sun of Self, as symbolized in the theme for meditation, creating the flame of spiritual intuition and inspiration.

The Practices

Sit comfortably with the spine and neck erect and the chin held in. If possible, sit cross-legged on a cushion on the floor, or else on a firm chair.

To approach meditation in the right frame of mind, we need to set aside the ego and its preoccupations, and become aware that we sit on the threshold of our inner sanctum, for we are making an approach to the divinity within us, the Source of all. We must therefore pay reverence to that all-encompassing Power and remain alert and receptive.

Breathing Practice

Focus your attention on the navel. Take a deep breath in relaxation. As you breathe in, imagine that you are drawing the breath up from the navel so that you end the in-breath by thinking of the space between the eyebrows. The out-breath should be released normally. Take 21 breaths in this way. This practice is described in greater detail in Hari Prasad Shastri's *Meditation: Its Theory and Practice*. It will be found helpful in all the phases of one's spiritual life.

Visualization

Draw an imaginary line of light from the top of the forehead, down between the eyebrows, down the nose, lips, throat, heart-region to the navel. Imagine this line to be a line of light, and concentrate on it. In the beginning you can draw your finger down this line if it helps you to visualize it. Then sit and just think of this line of light. In his book on meditation, Dr Shastri explains how this central-line practice shields our mind from adverse and distracting influences, restoring its essential purity. When some facility is gained during the meditation period, the visualization can be performed occasionally during the day, for instance, at times of waiting; for it will draw our consciousness back to its divine centre.

Meditation Text

OM. IN ME THERE IS A LIGHT WHICH LIGHTS
THE WHOLE WORLD. IT IS RADIATING NOW,
PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING. OM.

In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, the sage Yajnavalkya speaks of the light of the Self. But he does not mean the intellect or the reasoning faculty. Our ever-changing intellect requires the presence of a constant, fundamental and unchanging inner light in order to function at all, and even to endow us with the awareness, 'this is my intellect, these are my thoughts'. This light of pure Consciousness is ever-present, undying, and it illumines our thoughts from within. It is our 'knowing' in its most immediate sense, formless, never objectified and not confined to the mind of an individual experiencer. It is this same inner light which enables the mind to think, the senses to receive impressions. This one light, the same in all beings, interpenetrates and enlivens the entire universe. It is the true, underlying nature of the Self of man.

The divine radiations of the Self are always present. Our minds become receptive to its presence when they are unclouded and stilled. The sage Shri Dada referred to it as 'a light which cannot be compared with the light of fire or electricity or the sun. The light by which you are enabled to see the whole dream world of yours is the one I mean—in other words, the rays of your Atman (Divine Self).'

Close the meditation period by extending your thoughts of peace and goodwill to all beings, without exception.

Newcomers to meditation are invited to set aside twenty minutes daily to do these practices, preferably shortly after rising in the morning. Devote five minutes each to breathing practice and the visualization, and seven minutes to the meditation on the text. Deepen your understanding of meditation by reading Meditation - Its Theory and Practice, which is a useful reference book at all stages.

S.M.

THE PROUD ELEPHANT

There was a mighty elephant which a great king used to ride. Its trappings were made of gold and silk, and it lived on sugar-cane and other valuable nutriments. The elephant grew proud and began to think of itself as high and mighty, superior to all the other animals in the menagerie of the king. It walked haughtily, uplifting its trunk and pouring out torrents of water on the horses, bulls and ponies of the king. In disdain it used to keep itself aloof from the other creatures, which it considered unworthy of association.

One day the elephant was rambling in the king's garden when an ant accosted the beastly majesty and said: 'Hello, you look sad today, O mule of the king.' The elephant was angry and said: 'Have you no eyes? You see a mule where there is a king of elephants.' The ant smiled and said: 'All right, time will prove it.' The ant dexterously made its way into the hole in the trunk of the elephant and, as the elephant-tamers have told me, it corroded the tiny brain, so that the elephant died.

Do not look upon anybody as insignificant, unworthy or too low for intercourse.

H.P. Shastri

Teachings of Swami Akhandananda*

THIS TALK is based on the commentary of Swami Akhandananda on a short Hindu work on devotion called the *Narada Sutras*, thought by Westerners to have been composed about the tenth century AD. Our own Teacher Dr Shastri has written an exposition of this short work in his own inimitable way, and you might wonder if there was any point in trying to gild the lily. In fact our teacher had superior qualifications for conveying the message of the work to a Western audience, on account of his broad acquaintance with all the great cultures of the world and his long residence in the U.K. The *Narada Sutras*, however, are at once so profound and penetrating and so brief that they demand a commentator who will draw on his own experience and study to bring the implications out; and no single commentary could exhaust all the implications.

Swami Akhandananda was of the same school as our teacher in the sense that he was a strict follower of the classical teacher Shankara. He was a learned man, well up in the Sanskrit literature of Shankara's and other schools. He died in 1987 and was perhaps born about 1905, old enough anyway to have had the personal acquaintance of Swami Mangalnath of Rishikesh, who is honoured at this centre. His Guru was Uriya Baba, a well-known holy man of Orissa, on the northern part of India's eastern coast. He appears to have lived the wandering life characteristic of the Indian Sadhu, until finally settling in Vrindavan. Although the speaker has several of his other books, he has no more information about him personally. His concern was with communicating the traditional spiritual message, not with expatiating on his own autobiography and personality.

We shall hear how the Swami develops the theme of devotion under six heads. First, what is devotion? Secondly, devotion is a relatively easy path. Thirdly, the means to devotion. Fourthly, the behaviour of the devotee. Fifthly, the different kinds of devotion. Sixthly, and last, the results of devotion.

First, what is devotion? In the long run, one cannot describe it in

* The Text of a previously unpublished lecture by Dr A J Alston

words. It is something that becomes deeper and deeper the more you pursue it, and this process is without a limit. Love in all its forms is often compared to a disease, and the Swami quotes an old Hindi verse, 'The more medicine you take, the worse the illness gets!' And again, 'He on whom contentment has descended, he who feels "Enough, no more", has not yet entered the street of love.'

The Swami refers to the Vedanta or Yoga philosophy in which the world is said to be indescribable, and God in supra-personal form—the Absolute, called Brahman—is also said to be indescribable. In this philosophy, the world is said to be indescribable as real, because eventually everything in it will dissolve and leave not a wrack behind, to quote Prospero in *The Tempest*. And the world is indescribable as unreal because all of us have direct experience of it in perception. On the other hand, God in his true supra-personal nature is indescribable in that He is, at the same time, so huge and so subtle that He lies beyond the range of speech and thought, as the Upanishad says. But if devotion is indescribable, says the Swami, it is not indescribable in either of these two senses. There can be no question of it ever being called unreal, as the world can be called unreal. It is the manifestation in us of the bliss aspect of Brahman or the Absolute, and it is ever present throughout all our experiences, though hidden in various degrees. So it is not indescribable in the sense that the world is, according to Vedanta philosophy. On the other hand, Brahman or God as the Absolute is said to be indescribable because it is beyond the range of the senses or the mind. But devotion is different because there cannot be devotion except through the mind. Devotion is indescribable in the sense that as soon as you describe it with a formula or a label, you limit it to the content of the formula, and the formula is always inadequate to do justice to the depth and complexity of devotion.

The Swami mentions seven characteristics of true love, both human and divine. It never diminishes—that is, if one's affection begins to fade, one can know it wasn't true affection in the first place. A lover never deals roughly with the object of his love. Nevertheless, as the full moon has a crescent moon latent within it that will emerge at a later time, so a certain element of teasing and provocation is latent in all love relationships, including that between human beings and God. Love is a drink that is always fresh and never goes stale. It is never fully satisfied but has the inherent tendency to grow. It cannot be

coupled with fear—what you are afraid of, that you cannot love. Love can be coupled with pain, but not with fear. Love notes the defects in the object of love, but it is not turned away by them; in fact, they prompt an impulse to service. Love overcomes delay, distance and seclusion. One day the true lover is destined to discover his identity with the true object of his love. In the end devotion and devotee, God and the Guru, all turn out to be names for the same thing.

Devotion includes the note of selflessness. As is well known, the Indian incarnation of God called Krishna grew up as a child and later a youth in Vrindavan. On the Jumna river, about 100 miles south of modern Delhi, Swami Akhandananda himself came to roost in Vrindavan in the latter part of his life, now a small town, but in Krishna's day a cowherd's village.

The Gopis or cowherd maidens of Vrindavan were struck by the beauty of the dark boy in their midst, and were inspired to such an austere form of love for Him that they have been celebrated as models of devotion ever since. They thought of the beauty of their own bodies, their virtuous behaviour, their clothing and ornamentation as something to be preserved and accentuated so that if they should find themselves in Krishna's presence, He would be pleased.

One day when Krishna had grown up and had moved away from the village of Vrindavan to play his part in the fighting of battles by great kings in the flat land around Delhi, his devotee Arjuna asked Him, 'Why are you always talking about the Gopis? What about the queens at Dvarak—aren't they worth talking about?' In those days, in classical India, it was the custom for kings to amass a whole harem of queens. Shri Krishna replied, 'Don't make objections to my talking about the Gopis. After I left them, they only kept themselves alive because they regarded their bodies as mine and not as their own. No-one has such close claims on my intimate feelings of love as they do.' To read about Shri Krishna's relationship with the Gopis is to get an idea of what ideal devotion to God in the personal form should be like. The classical account is in the *Shrimad Bhagavata*, which has been many times translated. Whether the Gopis were moving about or sitting down, eating and drinking or doing house-work, all the time they were thinking that whatever they were doing, they were doing for Krishna, as an offering to Him.

One last general characteristic is that devotion is regarded as, if not

exactly easy in itself, at any rate, easier than other pathways to what the Hindus call liberation from the evils of birth and rebirth. The aim in all forms of yoga is to learn to disidentify oneself from the individual body and mind, and identify oneself with the infinite Spirit that illumines them from within as consciousness. Our individual consciousness is a limited and distorted form of the one universal Consciousness, identified in the tradition with Spirit or God. This universal Spirit, being infinity, has no form on which the mind can be fixed. The strictly Upanishadic path is a path of increasingly abstract meditations, preferably pursued in the forests away from the haunts of men, in which the mind is gradually emptied of all content of finite images, eventually leaving the infinite Spirit to shine out in its pure form, leaving the world to survive as an appearance, but drained of all claim to reality. It is reckoned a hard path.

The Swami explains how devotion or bhakti is the easiest of the classical paths. If you follow Patanjali's yoga, there are strict limitations on the way you have to live your life. The breathing practices and the bodily contortions of the asanas, are not easy to practise properly. The stages of meditation that lead gradually up to samadhi are already hard and samadhi itself, implying the obliteration of subject-object consciousness, has to be intensified into samadhi without seed.

The path of rituals is hardly less demanding in its way. One needs to garner wealth in order to have to hand the materials and instruments for performing sacrifices. One has to keep one's body strong enough to collect the instruments, keep them clean and renew them as necessary and to perform the complicated sacrifices with attention to every detail of the rules. Any fault in the equipment used, the mantras recited, even if accidental, may result not merely in lack of any reward but even in positive mischief.

The Upanishadic path of knowledge through meditation and reflection requires the severe discipline of inner and outer control, withdrawal of the mind from external objects, endurance, faith, concentration and deep desire for liberation, and the intellectual power to make delicate distinctions.

But the path of devotion is simple. If you are illiterate and don't perform service or go to the temple for formal worship, it doesn't matter, as long as you faithfully repeat the name of the Lord with a

rosary. He who has the Name, that is, the Lord, is said to be the servant of the one who repeats the Name. Even if you can't do that, you can still listen to stories of the deeds of the Lord on earth as a Divine Incarnation. You do not need any formal qualifications, such as being a Brahmin or being able to handle Sanskrit texts to be a devotee. The Lord says in the *Bhagavad Gita*, 'Even if someone is of a very evil disposition, still, if he practises one-pointed devotion to Me, he is to be thought of as good. For he has come to a fixed right conviction.'

If devotion, then, is to be our spiritual path or part of it, what are the means to devotion? The Swami contrasts the metaphysical discipline of Vedanta, or the strict Upanishadic school, with the discipline of devotion. The follower of the Upanishads is concerned directly with acquiring a knowledge of the true nature of his own Self. The texts of the Upanishads give the student themes for meditation which gradually eliminate all objects as unreal. Devotional texts, on the other hand, are concerned with God as He appeared in objective form in his manifestations called Avatars. When the *Narada Sutras* call for the abandonment of objects, which they do, they only mean abandon attachment to objects other than the manifest forms God assumes in his various Avatars. Even here there is an exception. Attachment to objects, in the form of men and women of God and fellow devotees, is positively encouraged.

God is present in our hearts, but in the ordinary person, hidden. As devotees, we call upon Him to manifest in our hearts, but we have to clear away the rubbish we usually collect in our minds and hearts so that He can find somewhere to sit down. Further, we have to keep up the effort of trying to summon Him to manifest in our hearts, and to sweep away the rubbish. Unattended rooms fill up with dust and spiders and cobwebs, if not with ghosts and other ill-omened prowlers of the night. The Swami quotes the *Bhagavad Gita*: 'The three gates to hell and to the ruin of the soul are pleasure-desire, anger and greed.'

Pleasure-desire, anger and greed are hardly separable from the human condition. The problem is eased, says the Swami, if we try to live our lives consciously in service of God. It is possible to work, eat, sleep and wash with all these actions consciously conceived as ways to preserve the body in a condition to offer worship to God. The worldly person who yet retains some belief in God, tends to think of God as his personal servant, and to pray for various advantages or for

the healing of his son's illness. One might think that the Swami was addressing old-fashioned Indian beliefs that we had outgrown in the West. But this attitude still persists. We hear of the appalling experience of people who have had their loved ones kidnapped with a call for ransom, who pray to God that the one dear to them may be returned live and well.

According to the Swami, the call of Narada is for us to see that those who are dear to us are, in their true nature, God. It is a call to refocus all our feeling-states and relate them to God. This applies to the various unwholesome passions to which most of us are in more or less degree liable—lust, anger, greed, pride and so forth. If unwanted feelings of sex-desire arise, he says, we can soften them by remembering texts of the saints, such as that in which Kabir, speaking of God under the name of his Indian incarnation, Rama, says, 'Rama is my bride-groom, and I am his bride.' For the truth is, God is the only reality, both in our dear ones and in those whom we suppose to be our enemies. Every human being, as an organism, will come to an end and die, but God, the real element in him and support of his existence, will ever remain. We are not called upon to stifle our emotions towards our fellow human beings, but to soften those emotions by recalling that, in the end, their true object is God, the only reality.

If anger comes into our hearts, it is good if we think of it as anger with God. For a struggle with God will bring the thought of God into our hearts, whereas a struggle with a human being will impress on our hearts the idea of the reality of the world and block out the idea of the sole reality of God.

In short, we are not asked to stifle our human, all-too-human, emotions but to aim at refocusing them so that they penetrate right through to God as the core of the fellow human beings towards whom they are directed. But if this is the kind of psychological technique we need in order to pursue devotion, there is another activity we need to acquire motivation—and that is listening to or reading about or singing in chorus of the deeds of God, as recorded in the holy scriptures of the world; in the case of the *Narada Sutras*, the emphasis is on Shri Krishna. He, and the Swami after him, stress that this is a discipline that can be carried out by anyone living an ordinary life in the world. The Swami quotes a text in which Shri Krishna says, 'My opinion is that he who spends the day in considering and speaking about My

deeds on earth, is not subject to bondage from his actions, even if he lives in a house in the world.' That is, a person performing devotion in this way will not be required to undergo rebirth.

When we consider God in the perspective of devotion, we have to think of Him as present within our hearts, indeed as being at present hidden there, but as being accessible in personal form outside ourselves as an incarnation, who lived long ago. We can cultivate love for Him if we read about Him in the scriptures and in this sense can 'invite Him into our hearts'—although, in the long run, this is only a metaphorical way of speaking, as He is already present there, though for the time being we are either only feebly aware of His presence there or not aware at all. 'O Lord', says a text in the *Shrimad Bhagavata*, the best of the scriptures dealing with the life of Krishna, 'surely you enter the lotus hearts of your lovers who have polished them through devotional practice. You enter them through the path of the ear when they listen to the accounts of your sports. You cleanse their hearts of all mud and filth, like the gentle autumn sun drying up the mud on the paths and fields at the end of the rainy season.'

The Swami says that the focus for devotion is God in personal form, in limited form, if you like, not to the formless Absolute of the Upanishads. You can cry out to the formless Absolute of the Upanishads, but it will not hear you. But the personal God, Krishna, is longing to hear the voice of his devotees, and will respond. The Swami quotes an old Sanskrit verse about the child Krishna in the midst of the Gopis or cowherd maidens. It runs: 'Mother Yashoda had given Krishna his milk and was rocking Him in his cradle. The Gopis came where He was, and sat round. Krishna thought He would listen to what the Gopis were saying amongst themselves. He put on his yellow loin-cloth and closed His eyes and pretended to be asleep. But there was no question of the Gopis talking about anything but Krishna. When they thought they saw that He was asleep, they began to say to one another—"He charms the whole world with his beauty. Think of his glances, think of his smiles." When Krishna heard this, His whole body thrilled with joy. He slightly opened his eyes and took a peep at them. His eyes wanted to look more, but with an effort He sealed them up. But a smile spread across his features. He is keen to hear Himself spoken of in this way.'

We in the West think of the divine child Jesus at Christmas time,

and sing carols. So the Krishna-devotee thinks of the divine child Krishna every day throughout the year. As God manifesting as Christ has responded to the hymns and prayers of his devotees by inspiring them to holiness, as in the case of a St Teresa or a St John of the Cross, so has that same God, manifesting as Krishna, inspired many men and women to truly virtuous lives. If we neglect to hear and think and talk about God, we will relapse into hearing and thinking and talking about the perishable objects of the world, and our life is liable to be 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing'. So the Swami quotes a verse of the great Bengali saint, Chaitanya Deva, contemporary of Shakespeare. It says: 'The mind is like a mirror. Impressions gather on it like filth on an unkempt mirror. Singing the praises of God and repeating His Name cleanses the mirror of the heart. The world is a great forest fire. All living creatures are condemned to burn in it and die, with physical and other forms of suffering. Singing the Name of the Lord extinguishes this forest fire.' And this, says the Swami, is a practice that can be carried out while living normally in the world, though it will transform our attitude to the world.

The *Narada Sutras* give hints on how a devotee lives in the world. Of course, what it states is the ideal towards which we aspire, not a way of living we suddenly find we can take up tomorrow, but a goal towards which we must strive to travel, like the mountaineers striving to climb towards the top of Mount Everest in the early part of the twentieth century. First, Narada says we must live without giving heed to worldly loss. The Swami quotes a verse from an author of the devotional school of Ramanuja in support of this. It says: 'When we have sold an animal to another person, we no longer take trouble to protect it. Even so, when we have dedicated our lives to God, we are not too anxious over the fate of our body.' This text is a bit reminiscent of the words of St Paul: 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.'

The Swami records how, when a young man of 18 or 19, he went to a holy man and asked him about devotion. What the holy man told him he had to do sounded very difficult. He said he wouldn't be able to do it. The holy man's reply was: 'You're a Brahmin. You've acquired learning. You do your daily practices morning and evening.

You're young and strong. You want to tread the path that leads to the discovery of God. If you can't carry out the discipline, do you think some animal could do it?' And the Swami comments. 'Everyone can do what is easy. He is a hero who sees what is difficult and has the courage to try. To him alone can true joy result.'

He quotes another Sanskrit verse: 'The base man avoids tackling the difficult task because he is afraid of the obstacles. The mediocre man tackles the job but breaks off half way when he encounters some formidable obstacle. The best person encounters obstacle after obstacle, but does not give up the task that he has begun.' To practise devotion, says the Swami, you need conviction. Conviction brings what looks far, near, and makes what looks difficult, easy. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. The path seems difficult, but that is because you haven't taken it up. Bicycling is difficult if, so far, you have never tried it, but it becomes easy soon after you have taken it up.

The Swami notes another case of someone approaching a holy man and feeling he would not be able to carry out devotion. Here the holy man's reply might remind us of the teaching we heard earlier in the talk about harnessing our very instincts and weaknesses to the service of God. This man went to a holy man and said. 'I have no virtues whatever. How can I serve God?' The holy man replied, 'Can you tell lies?' 'Oh, yes, I can do that.' 'Well, whenever you tell a lie, imagine that you are a court-jester in God's court telling Him lies to make Him laugh.' It appears that the man carried out this idea and soon stopped lying and became a devotee.

We come finally to consider the results of devotion. Every human being feels love for something—whether it be merely for his body, or for his wife and family, or for wealth, or for status, or for his class or caste, or for his country or for some ideal expressed in the form of a name ending in the syllable 'ism'—socialism, communism, royalism, or whatever. But a full understanding of love would show that in the end it can only be love of God. Love of anything but God is love of the perishable. For those who know that true love can only be for God and not for anything else, the Lord is never far away, whatever their outer circumstances. It is then as if He were in your own heart, holding out His hands in blessing and He stands before you, as it were, beckoning you with His glance.

Narada says that the devotee crosses over the ocean of rebirth and

is saved, and is able to save others. This world, says the Swami, is a mere play of maya, a mere false appearance induced by a kind of magic. If you accumulate coins that are mere appearances induced by a hypnotist, will they have permanent existence and value? The men and women that can be made to manifest in a magic display by a mass hypnotist are just appearances. But the soul gets entangled in this world of maya and for him, it is real. How can he cross over this maya? He who is longing to cross over it, who is not attached to its contents in the form of wealth or relatives, who does not bind himself into bondage through feelings of 'mine', he who knows that the only purpose of life worth pursuing is to approach God—he will find God.

A king who had many queens once went abroad. While still away, he wrote back to each of them and asked what they would like him to bring back for them. He received their answers, and went out to the bazaar and purchased exactly what each had asked for—except that the youngest queen did not appear to have asked for anything. She just wrote the one word 'Ek' or 'One'. The king consulted with his minister, who told him: 'The young queen doesn't want anything. The only one thing she wants is you.' The king came back and gave to each queen exactly what she had asked for. The young queen who had asked for nothing but himself he installed in his own quarters in the royal palace.

He who does not want the toys to be found in this maya, says the Swami, he who only wants the magician who has set this maya up—he will get what he wants. No veil can resist sincere love. As knowledge dispels an illusion, so also can love dispel an illusion. He who follows this path attains to eternal and unbroken love, independent of the body. He crosses over maya. And he can help others to do the same. For the veil of maya has no hold over him who has found identity with the magician that has set this appearance up.

A.J.A.

Rouse Up the Mind

IT IS the right investment of the mental and physical energy that leads to good and desirable results. We all have some surplus energy. There is none who has just enough energy to satisfy his biological instincts.

Our energy grows by use and stagnates by disuse. Love of ease and comfort, and inaction on the mental and physical planes, is waste of life. They get no comfort and rest who live for them.

There are many remarkable men in history who started their life in a very humble way. The great Japanese general and conqueror of Korea, Hideyoshi, was a seller of food on a very small scale in his childhood.

Mere ambition is not enough; it is the employment of energy with patience and perseverance which helps. Some live for purely individual ends. They employ their energy in order to gain wealth, name and fame in disregard of the moral value of their ambition. Such men are like Hitler. They spread ruin all round and end their life in disaster.

We can never be too cautious about the choice of our career in early life and about the pursuit of the general interests which demand our attention. Not excitement but moral value and spiritual upliftment are the end of our action to be kept in view.

'What will you do in the Easter holidays?' asked a lady of a friend. 'I will go to Paris with my friend,' she replied. It is not bad to visit Paris, but with what purpose, what end in view? Paris is a centre of great art, science and beauty of architecture. But if your visit is only to satisfy the vulgar sense, and not the upliftment which visits to the works of Rodin in the Louvre and the historical sights give, you are wasting your time and energy. Ask what will be the net yield on the investment and how far it will affect you in the right direction, and permanently.

The field of consciousness is rich in the potentials of peace, power and upliftment. Apply the spark which will light up the obscure corners of the field of consciousness. Why do I insist on your study of Goethe, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Republic* of Plato? Because these great works contain the electric sparks which can rouse the hidden light in

your mind and lead it to peace and enlightenment.

Once William James was in a state of depression. His mind was eating up its own creative energy. He took up the poem of Tennyson, 'Locksley Hall Sixty Years After' and read it with interest. He suddenly came to a passage which inspired him with courage and hope, and detached his mind from the gloom. He got up and paced the floor with joy. What happened was that the field of his mind was suddenly aroused by the passage in the poem to hope and courage. This is a psychological law. By looking at a bud in his flower garden at a time of mental gloom, a certain Russian poet gained light and wrote a good poem. We disperse our gloom and must also help others at the same time. Such is the effect of the remembrance of Jesus of Nazareth and of the reading of *The Heart of the Eastern Mystical Teaching*. He knows how to live, who knows how to rouse the best and highest in his mind.

To think of getting married for the sake of individual satisfaction is like the desire of a fowler to entrap a bird for his own benefit. In the marriage vow of the Hindu Shastra, there is a sentence which both parties say: 'In order to cultivate dharma (righteousness), to serve God and to promote the spiritual interests, I take thee as my life-companion.'

What is self-interest, which occupies so much of our life? Is it purely economic or what contributes to our joy and comfort? No. The real self-interest is the selfless devotion to duty, the cultivation of virtue and the promotion of light in the mind.

King Shivaji attended a few Sat Sangs of the saint Tukaram and was highly impressed by them. He sent a special minister to the saint and invited him to his court to stay as the instructor to the king. Saint Tukaramji refused to go to the court of the king. He replied: 'I have no want and no need for any material thing. My mind is calm and devoted to God and the good of others. Why should I leave the life of freedom, in touch with woods, valleys, rivers and birds, and come to the royal court?'

What a valuable lesson this incident from the life of saint Tukaramji teaches! To read the book of nature as a writing of God, with a mind free and fixed in virtue and peace, is a far greater advantage than the

life in a court. The mind responds to the outer stimuli and also to the inner reflection. Our reactions are the parts of our real life. In the peace of nature, unity in diversity, freedom from greed, anger and attachment, keep the mind devoted to the inner reality. We do not need Paris or a visit to the horse-races.

To multiply our physical needs is dangerous. It absorbs our energy and produces nothing valuable. It is not a rich table which goes to satisfy our hunger, but a good appetite which turns a most simple meal into a banquet.

The wind singing through a pine grove on a summer afternoon, the grass dotted with daisies and butterflies darting in the air, give more real joy than the harem of a Mohammedan king.

Each desire other than the necessary biological ones must be thoroughly examined before being entertained. Then real life begins. 'O Lord, will it give me immortality?' asked the good wife of the sage of the Upanishad.

Let us live in time but not forget eternity and infinity.

H.P.S.

Coming to God

An aged woman once came to a holy man and said: 'O revered Sir, I have lived a life of extreme selfishness, and I now wish to learn the way to holiness. Teach me, and accept my body, mind and wealth.'

The Teacher was silent. Therefore the woman asked: 'Have I come too late?'

'No', replied the sage, 'You have come soon. Whoever comes to God before he is dead, comes soon—though he may be long in coming.'

H.P.S.

The Way of Chuang Tzu

THE AIM of Taoism, as of Adhyatma Yoga, is to awaken man to the divinity of his true being. Thus awakened, he becomes a sage. A sage is one whose psychological boundaries have been removed, and what remains is the consciousness of Infinity. Every man is destined to be a sage. The seeds of enlightenment are at the core of our nature. But these seeds will only germinate if the mind is cultivated on spiritual lines. Otherwise, our thoughts and feelings will range in limited circles, creating restriction and tension, confusion and ultimately despair.

Chuang Tzu was one of the supreme masters of Taoism. Many of his illustrations and comments hint at the radical transformation of understanding that is implicit in the whole teaching. This is sometimes put in terms of moving out of something small and confined, into something great and boundless, as when he tells us of a frog living in a well, who has no idea of any universe outside its limits. Viewing the tiny creatures who also live in that habitat, namely, the little crabs, insects and larvae, the frog feels immensely superior and thinks: 'Not one of them compares with me.' One day a great water turtle from the Eastern Sea happened to pass. The frog invited him in to share the comforts and amenities of the well, and enjoy the splendid view. Not only did the turtle get stuck as he tried to get in; he told the frog about the vast and boundless waters of the ocean and the infinite delights of swimming in it. Hearing this, the frog—who thought his little world was all—was bemused, dumbfounded and somewhat embarrassed.

There is also the story of the Yellow River, which gets over-excited during the autumn rains when its water level rises above its banks and floods the surrounding fields. At this increase, the river becomes quite proud, and thinks the whole world to be its oyster. But the great god of the ocean, observing the river's exuberance, leads him onwards to the land's edge. There the River is confronted by waters so boundless that they make its own flow seem a mere trickle. Once more, the small is introduced to the great.

Still exploring this theme, Chuang Tzu puts aside all analogies and speaks directly about small understanding and great understanding.

Great understanding is broad and unhurried.
Little understanding is cramped and busy.
Great words are clear and limpid.
Little words are shrill and quarrelsome.
During their waking hours, the bodies of men hustle about
anxiously.
With everything they meet, they get entangled.
Day after day, they use their minds in strife, sometimes grandiose,
sometimes cunning, sometimes petty.
Their little fears are mean and trembly.
Their great fears are stunned and overwhelming.
They bound off like an arrow from a crossbow, certain that they are
the arbiters of right and wrong.
They cling to their position as though they had sworn before the
gods, sure that they are holding on to victory.
They fade, like fall and winter.
Such is the way they dwindle day by day.
They drown in what they do: you cannot make them turn back.
And when they grow near to death, nothing can restore them to
the light.

This is a picture of a human life-cycle which, if not universal, is recognizable, and one which Taoism, as well as Adhyatma Yoga, helps us to transcend.

In these words about small understanding, Chuang Tzu has described a way of life and thought that characterizes man when he becomes self-important, apparently master of his surroundings and confidently barging his way through life. But he also shows that the whole process is accompanied by fear and anxiety. In this way, human minds become more and more rigid, and averse to any form of inner change. This narrowing of consciousness is contrasted with the grandeur of vision and insight that man can enjoy when his self-importance and narrow self-assertion are forgotten, when man cultivates what Chuang Tzu calls 'great understanding'.

In an extension of this same teaching, Chuang Tzu speaks of the Way of Man, and the Way of Heaven. Man, if he chooses, can remain simply human, spending his short time on earth trying to satisfy his

natural desires and making the best of life. Or he can learn to transcend these limits, take his stand on his spiritual nature, realizing his intrinsic identity with the Divine. Man then becomes ‘a true man’, an enlightened man, a man who follows the way of Heaven. He is at peace in all circumstances, fearless, transcending individual egoism, and spontaneously going along with what is right for things.

The primary text of Taoism, the *Tao Te Ching*, attributed to LaoTzu, starts with the lines:

The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.
The name that can be named is not the eternal name.
The nameless is the beginning of heaven and earth...

The word Tao has different levels of meaning according to context. The word Tao means ‘Way’. Ultimately, Tao is nothing less than the Absolute, the supreme Reality, which in the Indian tradition is called ‘Brahman’. In this sense, the Tao, like Brahman, is that nameless principle which is the ultimate non-dual reality transcending all appearances and limitations. Thus the Tao is the One-without-a-second, the inexpressible Brahman.

Within this ultimate meaning, there are other dimensions of meaning which are more approachable to human understanding. Tao is identified as the divine source and support of all. This view accepts a world of appearances and the Tao serves as the hidden support of all that appears to exist. This is a clear parallel with the teachings of Adhyatma Yoga. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* declares:

At the mighty command of that Immutable, the sun, moon, heaven and earth, are held in their positions, At the mighty command of that Immutable, day follows night, the seasons and the years go forward, and the rivers run their courses.

Chuang Tzu writes, poetically:

Heaven turns, circles, yes!
Earth sits firm, yes!
Sun and moon vie for a place, yes!
Whose is the bow that shoots them?
Whose is the net that holds them?
Who is it sits with nothing to do and gives them the push
that sends them?

Such is Tao.

We also find in the writings of Chuang Tzu such expressions as ‘When Tao was lost’ or ‘When Tao went into decline’. Here, we may suggest that Tao means something more like insight, spiritual wisdom, an enlightened understanding, something that can be cultivated—or ignored—by human beings. So when it is said: ‘Tao is in decline’ or ‘is lost’, it means that man’s capacity for spiritual vision has been temporarily eclipsed and people tend to live their lives in the realm of ‘small understanding’, based largely on selfish considerations, insisting on the validity of their own restricted vision, and seeing nothing beyond, like the frog in the well.

A further meaning of Tao is that it is the source of inspiration in human affairs. If only man harmonizes himself with the way of heaven, his actions become unselfish and inspired. This inspiration—this form of Tao—is available in any walk of life, as long as one is sufficiently dedicated to the task in hand. Such inspiration is quite natural to man, as long as he takes refuge in his deeper spiritual centre, effacing the sense of narrow egoism through absorption in the work.

Far from being an élite way of life, Chuang Tzu shows how this inspiration of Tao can bless any activity. The cook, Ting, for example, was congratulated by his master for his brilliant method of cutting up an ox. Hearing this, Ting turned to his master and said: ‘Method? What I follow is Tao, beyond all methods.’ Then he explained how his long experience had led him to a kind of self-forgetting concentration, enabling his work to proceed smoothly without interference. This he called ‘following Tao’.

Finally, Tao can also mean the way of spiritual theory and practice. The student of Tao is expected to put the teachings into practice, and so can be said to be ‘practising Tao’, much in the way that one adopts the values and carries out the practices that are prescribed in the spiritual Yoga.

These dimensions of meaning attached to the word Tao are expounded and illustrated in the ‘The Book of Chuang Tzu’. Its 33 chapters are filled with stories, dialogues and philosophical reflections. Chuang Tzu is nowadays considered to be the author of the first seven chapters, called for this reason the ‘Inner Chapters’, while the rest of the text is an extension of his own way of thought and expression, and probably includes further fragments composed by him.

In one of the dialogues, Chuang Tzu is asked: 'This thing called the Way—that is, Tao—where is it to be found?' Chuang Tzu, who often appears as a character in his own book, answers: 'There is nowhere it is not to be found.' Then his questioner, Tung-kuo, says: 'But you must be more specific.' Chuang Tzu answers: 'It is in the ant.' 'As low a thing as that?' 'It is in the weeds.' 'As low as that?' Finally Chuang Tzu says: 'It's even in what passes from the body.'

At this, Tung-kuo had nothing more to say. Then Chuang Tzu said: 'None of your questions is to the point. You must not expect to find the way in any particular place. There is no thing that escapes its presence.'

Then the sage teaches, in effect, that it is not by looking through one's physical eyes at this or that object that one can expect to see the Tao. What is needed, he says, is 'tranquil quietude, hushed purity, harmony and repose. Then knowledge itself will spring up in you, and this knowledge has no limit.' This echoes a meditation text used in Adhyatma Yoga:

OM. Wisdom arises from the depth of our being, when, from the stillness and purity of the heart, the finite meets the infinite. OM

In fact, Tao, when fully realized, turns out to be our true source and home, identified in Yoga as our real innermost Self or Consciousness. Chuang Tzu represents this poetically in the following lines:

Fishes are born in water. Man is born in Tao.
If fishes born in water seek the deep shadow of pond and pool,
all their needs are satisfied.
If man, born in Tao, sinks into the deep shadow of non-action,
to forget aggression and concern,
He lacks nothing, his life is secure.
All the fish needs is to get lost in water.
All man needs is to get lost in Tao.

How can this universal principle called Tao be awakened in ordinary life? Here we return to the ancient ideal of the sage—the spiritually awakened human being. This ideal is also at the heart of the Indian spiritual tradition. As the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* says: 'Knowing It alone, one becomes a sage.' The word 'It' denotes

Brahman, or Tao. The sage is one who has re-discovered his spiritual source, his true Self. This is why Chuang Tzu calls the sage the 'true man'. Sagehood is the completion and fulfilment of manhood.

Every human being is a sage in the making. The potentiality for enlightenment is latent in everyone, for Tao is the divine essence within all human beings. The sage is one who has broken the magic spell of appearances, and has sought out and realized his own essential nature.

We may note a contrast between the ideal of the sage and that of the saint. Saints are usually associated with a particular religion, and have earned their sainthood, in the eyes of posterity, through holy living based on faith, devotion and self-sacrifice.

The life of the sage may be equally holy, yet another dimension is emphasized: that of knowledge. Always, with the sage, the key thing is not so much: 'What has been done?' but 'What has been known, realized, understood through and through?' The sage has a particular kind of knowledge. This is not the knowledge gained from a book, but direct experience of Spiritual Reality. It is the same knowledge spoken of in the Upanishads as the basis of all knowledge, knowing which nothing remains to be known, and knowing which one's very thirst to know is satisfied for ever.

Those familiar with Chinese history will know that at the time of Chuang Tzu, another ideal of sagehood was being taught in China. This was based on the noble teachings of the great Confucius, who promulgated righteous conduct and behaviour, inspired by feelings of warmth and human-heartedness towards one's fellow men. The teachings of Confucius were an application of the principle known in India as 'dharma', the law of righteousness.

But for Chuang Tzu this ideal was not the goal of human existence. It was not enough in order to bring about that breakthrough in understanding which enabled one to realize one's essential unity with the infinite and blissful Tao. Chuang Tzu's writings sometimes humorously show Confucius sitting at the feet of the Taoist masters in order to learn true wisdom!

Here is a short description of a sage by Chuang Tzu, which shows how his ideal of sagehood both embraces and transcends that of Confucius.

The man in whom Tao acts without impediment
 Harms no other being by his actions,
 Yet he does not know himself to be kind or gentle.
 The man in whom Tao shines in its full glory
 Does not bother with his own interests,
 Yet does not despise others who do.
 He does not struggle to make money,
 Yet does not make a virtue of poverty.
 He goes his way without relying on others,
 Yet does not pride himself on walking alone.
 While he does not follow the crowd,
 He won't complain of those who do.
 Rank and reward make no appeal to him,
 Disgrace and shame do not deter him.
 He is not always looking for right and wrong,
 Not always deciding 'yes' or 'no'.
 The ancients said, therefore,
 'The man of Tao remains unknown.
 Perfect virtue produces nothing.
 No-self is true-Self
 And the greatest man—is nobody.'

This system of values differs from our normal way of thinking, where we tend to place more value on outer signs than on inner essentials. The contrast is illustrated in another story that is found in *The Book of Chuang Tzu*.

A certain sage lived in a tiny house. It was hardly more than four walls. The roof was thatched but broken in many places, so that the floor was damp. One day a grand acquaintance came to call on the sage. There he was, singing and playing his lute. The grand person drove up in his carriage, which was too high to come up the lane. He was dressed in a fine robe of royal blue. The sage, dressed in a hemp robe and with heel-less slippers, went to the gate to welcome his visitor. The visitor said: 'Goodness, what distress you are in, sir.'

The sage replied: 'I have heard that if one lacks wealth, that is called poverty. If one studies Tao, but cannot put it into practice, that is called distress. I am poor, it is true, but I am not in distress.'

How does the sage reach this position of divine repose and independence? If every man and woman is a potential sage, how do we

bring out this potentiality, so that the divine in us, the Tao, may express itself without impediment? 'Impediment' is a revealing word. It comes from a Latin word which means 'baggage': *impedimenta*. For Tao to work through us without impediment, we ourselves must be prepared to open our hands and let the baggage we are carrying slip away. What this letting go means in practice is illustrated in the story called Keng's Disciple.

A man approached the teacher, Keng-sang, complaining that he was quite unable to put his teachings into practice. All this instruction about inner stillness and reducing one's thoughts, made no sense to him. Keng, after a brief interview, decided that he himself lacked the necessary talent to transform this pupil, and said: 'Why don't you go south and visit Lao Tzu?'

After a seven days' journey, the man, Nan-jung Chu, approached the hermitage of Lao Tzu. Lao Tzu saw him coming and asked: 'Has Keng sent you here?' 'Yes sir'. 'Then', said Lao Tzu, 'who are all those people you've brought with you?'

The pupil spun round in astonishment to look. There was nobody there. 'Don't you know what I mean?' asked Lao Tzu. The pupil hung his head in shame, utterly confused. With a great sigh he said: 'Alas, I have forgotten the answer and I have also forgotten the question.'

The teacher, Lao Tzu, has begun the training of the pupil, where all spiritual training must begin. The crowd of people refers to the conventional concepts of right and wrong, good and bad, life and death, hopes and fears, which the pupil carries with him everywhere. These deep-rooted ideas form, so to say, a thick covering over our deeper spiritual nature, so that the light within us cannot be released. The spiritual teachings that we hear cannot penetrate very deeply. We have ears, yet do not hear.

In terms of Chuang Tzu's image, this inner crowd of fixed ideas and instinctive reactions needs to be thinned and finally dispersed. This is the first real challenge for any aspirant to higher knowledge.

The pupil then tells Lao Tzu about the distress and confusion he feels. He is convinced that the other disciples are much cleverer and quicker than he is. At this stage, his way forward not clear. However, looked at in a wider perspective, this man has taken a great leap forward in his spiritual evolution. He has become dissatisfied with his inner spiritual state. He knows something is wrong with his own under-

standing, and he knows that the solution must be an introvertive one, involving sorting out his own mind.

So here is someone who is very far from being like the frog living in the well. The frog was happy in the well and wasn't interested in investigating whether there was anything beyond the well. But this man intuitively knows that his own inner condition is limited, and that there must be a more desirable and fulfilling inner state available to him. This higher state, he feels, is something that can be taught to him by the Taoist masters.

This distress is a creative distress, one that is forcing him to move on spiritually—to actually do something to wake himself up. So he asks Lao Tzu to be allowed to stay, and then enters a monastic cell where he meditates for ten days. During this time, we are told, he tried to cultivate his good qualities and get rid of his faults. Then he came again before the teacher, Lao Tzu, who says: 'You have been very diligent in your washing and scrubbing, as I can see from your scrubbed and shining look. But there is still something smouldering away inside you. There are still bad things there....'

The pupil admits that in spite of all his hard thinking in solitude, he feels worse than before, like a man who has taken medicine which only serves to aggravate the illness. Lao Tzu then gives some teachings to lift his mind above personal considerations and the habit of comparing himself with others. He also hints that it is not by endless thinking that one gains inner relief, but by self-forgetfulness in inner stillness.

We might ask: Was it not a good thing to be wrestling with one's mind in the cell, engaged in self-examination, weighing up one's good and bad qualities, and brooding on what one should or shouldn't do? But the spiritual approach is different. Unlike psycho-analysis and other therapies that focus on the individual and his past, the spiritual meditations help us to quieten the whole of the mind, and to forget its present and past contents—at least, for the time being. Our personal history is irrelevant to the deeper experience we are now seeking.

Chuang Tzu rarely gives methods of meditation, but it is clear that one of his main practices is emptying the mind: the ability to say 'Not wanted, not wanted' to the thoughts and mind-pictures as they arise. In the *Tao Te Ching* it is said:

I do my utmost to attain emptiness.

I hold firmly to stillness.

...Returning to one's roots is known as stillness.

The best way, according to the mystics, is to forget ourselves, to dive deeper into ourselves, to get beyond the talkative level of the mind, down into the still, illuminated depth of our spiritual nature. 'In quality of mind, it is depth that matters.' (*Tao Te Ching*)

Chuang Tzu comes to the very heart of the teachings of Adhyatma Yoga in his story of the old woman of clear complexion. It is a direct illustration of the subtle subjective process known in Yoga as spiritual discrimination. This involves an acute self-examination to uncover the innermost principle of eternal reality, unchanging selfhood. It is done through setting aside those transient aspects of experience that our self seems to be identified with. This is not a physical process but an inner one of sharpening our psychological and spiritual insight.

A certain elderly woman who had a bend in her back, was asked: 'You are old in years and yet your complexion is that of a child. Why is this?' She replied: 'I have heard the Way'. She is asked: 'Can the Way be learnt?' And she answers, in effect, that the Way cannot be learnt in the way learning is usually understood—that is, by accumulating information about it. It is more a matter of unlearning—of disidentifying oneself from all that is limited and finite in experience.

The woman explains how she tried to transmit her mystical knowledge to a certain Pu-liang Yi. She said that after teaching him for three days, he was able to put the world outside himself. Then, she said: 'I kept at him for seven more days, and after that he was able to put things outside himself.' After further instruction, he was able to put life outside himself. Thus able to make this deep inner discrimination, separating his inmost consciousness from body and mind, he gained some degree of inner light.

After he had put life outside himself, he was able to achieve the brightness of dawn, he could see his own aloneness. After he had managed to see his own aloneness, he could do away with past and present, he was able to enter where there is no life and no death.

In this story, there was a transmission of teachings, from the woman who had 'heard' the Way to the man, Pu-liang Yi, whose mind was

also able to ‘hear’ properly the words of truth and put them into practice. He was taught, in inner stillness, how to separate his spiritual essence from the outer coverings of worldly thoughts and body-identification. Through this unlearning, this negating, he was able to realize his true nature as immortal and infinite. This is a precise parallel to the path of Yoga, leading to its higher practice of saying: ‘Neti, neti—not this, not this’ to all that is changing, limited and not the innermost Self.

Chuang Tzu’s vision is rooted in transcendence, while his practical teachings demonstrate how the influence of Tao well-lived will produce harmony in society, once we have overcome our narrow way of looking at things. This path to deeper insight involves seeing beyond appearances and being prepared courageously to drop conventional values, in favour of a wider and more loving spiritual vision.

A certain Taoist teacher, he relates, had a group that included both the Prime Minister and a man who had had one of his feet cut off as a punishment for a crime committed earlier in his life. The Prime Minister said to this disciple: ‘Now if I go out first, then I want you to stay behind. And if you go out first, I’ll stay behind.’ It was clear that the Prime Minister did not want to be seen with an ex-criminal.

The next day, they were sitting together on the same mat before the Master. When the lesson ended, the Prime Minister again made his request, announcing that he would leave first, and insisting quite firmly that the other fellow should remember that he was Prime Minister, and should stay behind for a while, as requested.

This disciple, whose name was Shen t’u Chia, then said: ‘Within the gates of our Master, is there such a thing as a Prime Minister? You take delight in being a Prime Minister and pushing people behind you. But I have heard that if the heart’s mirror is bright, no dust will settle on it. But if it is not bright, dust settles. When we keep company with a holy man long enough, no crime remains in us. You regard our Master as a great man, and yet you talk like this?’

At this, the Prime Minister replied: ‘I think you ought to look to your own virtues, or, to judge from your appearance, your lack of them!’

Then, Shen-t’u Chia said: ‘There are many who commit wrong-doings and are able to conceal them very cleverly, and thus escape what happened to me. However, I accept what has happened and make

no attempt to conceal it. But let me tell you this. I have been going around with the Master for nineteen years now, and was never aware that I’m a man with one foot. Now you and I are supposed to be wandering outside the realm of forms and bodies, and yet you insist on judging me by my appearance. Don’t you think that’s a crime?’ At this, the Prime Minister looked uncomfortable, and begged Shen-t’u Chia to say no more.

Although the Prime Minister comes out badly in this story, it would be wrong to judge him too harshly. Every human mind has its prejudices, which influence the way we look at people. Still, as his fellow disciple pointed out, both were walking a path which would lead beyond all prejudice and duality. The Prime Minister was fortunate to have this subtle inner obstacle brought to his attention, for he could now work on himself in order to transcend it.

This last story comes from the inner chapter called The Sign of Virtue Complete. Here, once again, Chuang Tzu, shows how our habitual ideas and judgements form a blindfold preventing us from seeing with the inner eye of wisdom, and from enjoying true rest and fearlessness.

‘If the heart’s mirror is bright, no dust will settle; but if it is not bright, dust settles.’ In Taoism, as in Yoga, the wonderful potentialities for this deeper knowledge are present in everyone. But to realize the bliss and infinity of our true nature, we have to pay attention to the heart’s mirror, and do our best to live according to the highest spiritual values. Then, in the resulting peace and purity, a new way of knowing will dawn, bringing completeness and fulfilment.

The ultimate nature of the Tao is the same as that of the Absolute, or Brahman, supreme but ultimately inexpressible. Chuang Tzu hints at its nature:

The Way has its reality and its signs, but is without action or form...It is its own source, its own root... It exists beyond the highest point, and yet you cannot call it high; it exists beneath the limit of the six directions, and yet you cannot call it deep. It was born before Heaven and earth, and yet you cannot call it old...

This ever pure and perfect spiritual reality is one without a second, and is the innermost Self of man.

B.D.

Love and Logic

MANY MEN fail to acquire the real love-consciousness for God—the inner as well as the outer Reality, expressed as Truth and Beauty—when they try to solve the problem of evil in the world. It is natural but very superficial and fruitless to ask: ‘In face of the wars, plagues, earthquakes and mass murders by a Hitler or a Stalin, it is difficult to think of a God who is a father of humanity or guardian of his creation. Is God powerless to stop this cruelty, waste and irrational destruction of human life?’

The problem of evil does exist, and it is not easy to solve on the empirical plane. You can stand in suspense for years and years, and turn an atheist or a Marxian Communist, imagining that you can change the world by revolutionary action.

The human understanding has its limits. In every branch of science, even in mathematics, there are many points which defy our understanding. But we do not give up our scientific research because a few points are not immediately understood.

The empirical truth is progressively understood. As the intellect unfolds its capacity to understand the phenomena, the matters which appear baffling are made clear. With the help of mathematics we understand many phenomena which otherwise appear riddles. Einstein has thrown light on many aspects of nature which before him, appeared mysteries. His curved universe upsets the Newtonian universe.

To an untutored eye the starry heaven reveals no order; the icicles seem to obey no law. A study of astronomy opens a world of law and order to us.

Shri Dada advised his pupils to create more and more light in their souls by the yoga practice and wait till the Self is realized. Then all the problems about the existence of evil will be swept away. ‘Love God, serve man; deepen the quest; discover the inner laws and cultivate love-consciousness.’ This was the advice of the Saint Universal. Blessed are they who have developed love-consciousness for the infinite, the True, the Real.

Love-force, like the intellectual force in the individual, must be conserved, trained, disciplined and rightly directed. The purpose of our love must be a real service, an improvement in your inner

consciousness and in the general good of the object of love. Love needs both self-assertion and self-submission. This is the dialectic of love, the experiences in the spiritual consciousness. Love-consciousness cannot be allowed to have its wild course. It must be disciplined, or it may grow egocentric or megalomaniac and destroy all that is finest and highest in man.

Shri Dada often said that one must contemplate the greatness and majesty of nature and the moral order. Then remember God as the source and sustenance of the universe. The mind may rebel and urge visits to a bar or a cabaret; it is for you to curb these urges and impulses and defy them by going into the study of the philosophy of Advaita, physics, biology and anthropology. One piece of advice which he offered insistently was: ‘Avoid the society which makes you go farther from God and goodness.’

The third stage in the expansion of love-consciousness is to meditate, without reasoning, that God, the source of the world, who projects beauty, law and harmony, has His abode in your soul. Your heart is the throne-room of the sovereign of the universe. This state is called fellowship with Truth. It can be created easily and be a source of infinite joy and peace, when you are withdrawn from all outer comfort, joy and security. It is a process of self-integration through self-denial. It is a vision of subjective love and identity. Love, in this state of conscious-ness, opens another vista of vision. All thoughts of difference are dissolved, and a perpetual stream of bliss, in the form: ‘I am That’, ‘I am That’ persists.

Intellect often misleads, love rarely. Unless our intellectual efforts are accompanied with love of self-denial in the sweetness of union, they mislead the soul. St Thomas says that love is an easier approach to God than pure intellect or will. He makes an important statement: ‘Through love-knowledge you possess the object. God becomes yours in this process.’

The march of love dialectic is through an attitude of aggressiveness and an attitude of submission. Thus, in the course of the life after realization, they enjoy the conquest of love and submission of all sense of separation. They see that all is the game of love with God. They demand a fellowship with God instead of seeking it. How the Gopis of Brindavan made Krishna dance for a cupful of fresh butter, how they submitted their total self to Him in the grand dance! This mystery is

above logic and reason and is revealed to him who unconditionally serves his Guru.

What more? The delight of the beloved is the sole delight of the Self. The highest state of love is the new experience of delight in the consciousness of being an instrument of service and delight. The loving-consciousness too must be denied in the Love-Absolute.

Before complete surrender and full resignation the love-consciousness is a revelation of God-consciousness. The highest form of self-denial produces God-consciousness. The Shruti (revealed scripture) says: 'By denial they attain immortality.'

According to the great Vaishnava acharyas (teachers) the highest form of God-love is to belong to Him in self-surrender as in the case of a man and woman who are in real love with each other.

In this paper the references to the philosophy of the Vaishnava teachers are made with a certain reservation.

H.P.S.

THE NECKLACE OF DEVOTION

The necklace of devotion is threaded by Thee.
Worship, save of Thee, is unlawful.

May he be silent who does not speak of Thee.
May all be forgotten which is not in remembrance of Thee.

Draw back the curtain and come out alone;
Even if I were that veil, rend it.

Burn the tables of the astronomers;
Close the eye of the matter-worshippers.

The birds hymn Thy praises, saying:
'We are Thy slaves, Thy minstrels.'

Roses are filled with life, saying
'We live by Thee.'

H.P.S.

The World Viewed from Within *Part 2*

FIRST LET us consider what the picture of the world arrived at by modern physics tells us about what we think we see around us. Bertrand Russell has written:

What we know about the physical world, I repeat, is much more abstract than was formerly supposed... We naturally interpret the world pictorially; that is to say, we imagine that what goes on is more or less like what we see. But in fact the likeness can only extend to certain formal logical properties expressing structure, so that all we can know is certain general characteristics of its changes. Perhaps an illustration may make the matter clear. Between a piece of orchestral music as played, and the same piece of music as printed in the score, there is a certain resemblance, which may be described as a resemblance of structure. The resemblance is of such a sort that, when you know the rules, you can infer the music from the score and the score from the music. But suppose you had been stone-deaf from birth, but had lived among musical people. You could understand, if you had learnt to speak and do lip-reading, that the musical scores represented something quite different from themselves in intrinsic quality, though similar in structure. The value of the music would be completely unimaginable to you, but you could infer all its mathematical characteristics, since they are the same as those in the score. Now our knowledge of nature is something like this: we can read the scores and infer just so much as our stone-deaf person could have inferred about music. (Russell: *ABC of Relativity*: pp.226-227)

Russell's views were written at a time when the classical view of atoms and molecules was being replaced by a recognition that the notion of matter was an out-of-date entity which had outgrown its usefulness, and that the operation of electricity and magnetism constituted the fundamental nature of the world.

Meanwhile the neurophysiologists were beginning to address the exploration of the body and the senses, both in animals and man. This led to a recognition of the way in which in living organisms, and particularly in man, the nervous system provided a means by which the information conveyed by sensory organs on the skin and the muscles

of the whole body was sent by neuronal pathways up the spinal cord and into the brain, where it terminated in the cortical brain areas of the parietal lobe on the opposite side of the body. Other pathways carried the information from the eye to the occipital lobes at the back of the brain, again arriving on the opposite side. Sensation of hearing went from the ears to the opposite temporal lobe.

Work soon began on examining, recording and understanding how the incoming (afferent) information was analysed and treated, and among the great pioneers of this work was Mountcastle in Baltimore, who concentrated on the information related to sensation from the skin and body parts, while two others, David Hubel and Torston Wiesel, working at Harvard, concentrated on unravelling the message reaching the occipital lobe from the eyes. Hubel and Wiesel's study of the visual system was later written up by them in their classic work *Brain and Visual Perception: the story of a 25-year collaboration* (Oxford University Press, 2005).

Professor Vernon Mountcastle, giving the Dean's Lecture at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, in October 1974, had this to say:

Each of us believes himself to live directly within the world that surrounds him, to sense its objects and events precisely, and to live in real and current time.

I assert that these are perceptual illusions.

Contrarily, each of us confronts the world from a brain linked to what is 'out there' by a few million fragile sensory nerve fibers, our only information channels, our lifelines to reality. They provide also what is essential for life itself: an afferent excitation that maintains the conscious state, the awareness of self.

[Sensations are set by the encoding functions of sensory nerve endings, and by the integrating neural mechanics of the central nervous system. Afferent nerve fibers are not high-fidelity recorders, for they accentuate certain features, neglect others.] The central neuron is a story-teller with regard to the nerve fibers, and it is never completely trustworthy, allowing distortions of quality and measure, within a strained but isomorphic spatial relation between 'outside' and 'inside'. *Sensation is an abstraction, not a replication, of the real world.* This principle was inherent in the thought and writing of John Locke¹. For three centuries it has posed problems for Psychology in defining a

story, for Brain Physiology in unraveling it, as well as epistemological problems in philosophical areas.

It was a major achievement of the brain sciences in the last decades to make penetrating discoveries concerning how our brains compose and update our central images of the world. So far, however, this has been achieved at the level of sensation, not yet at the level of perception...

My principal aim is to show the way towards study of more subtle aspects of brain function, to illustrate how we may seek the pathway from sensation to perception, and from thence to studies of higher functions of the brain...²

What about the view of Vedanta?

Unexpectedly, Swami Rama Tirtha echoes the thought of Mountcastle when he says that from the point of view of experience:

Vedanta says: 'All the world is within you'.

Just as in your dreams, you think yourself to be in the woods or forests, in the mountains, by the rivers—they seem to be outside, but all are within you. If they were outside, then the room would be weighed down and your bed would be wet with the water that you saw. Similarly, Vedanta says: 'All the world is within you'...

(In Woods of God-Realization, Vol.XI.148-9)

Does this mean then that the waking world is no different from the dream world? No! Certainly not! But it means that our knowledge of the external world of waking experience comes to us in the mind through the activity of the senses and in that sense we have only our mental experience to give us knowledge of either world...

Just as a woman carrying a mirror looks into the mirror and thinks she is in the glass, but it is just the reverse, so as a matter of fact, the world

¹ *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. 1690.

² From Mountcastle, V.B. *The View from Within: Pathways to the Study of Perception*. *Johns Hopkins Medical Journal* 136: 109-131. 1975.

[that you experience] is in you and you are not in the world although you think that you are. (*In Woods of God Realization IX.149*)

We are more or less in the same position as Tennyson's Lady of Shallot. We see the world through the mirror of the mind which is the one and only source of all our experience. It is as if we could only experience things displayed on a personal TV screen.

William Blake in Jerusalem, Plate 71, writes:

In your own Bosom you bear your Heaven
And Earth; and all you behold, tho' it appears Without, it is Within
In your Imagination, of which this World of Mortality is but a Shadow.

The mind mirrors [its experience of] the world through the senses by creating a representative image of the objects of the outer world which it is currently experiencing. These images are stored as memories and relived in recollection. They also provide the store of material which is worked up in imagination and re-lived in dreams. Works of art are 'images of felt life' which have then been objectified into artifacts.³ This is true even of the most ancient forms of art—the cave paintings—which are the most primitive form of 'written' (rather than spoken) communication and seem to pre-date the development of language in human history.

In the Vedantic view of perception, the mind forms a *representation of the outer object or quality* by taking on through the senses the form of the object. And this is then cognized by the consciousness of the Witness Self. Dream and memory depend on the re-experiencing in the mind of impressions previously experienced through the senses, independently of the outer world.

Consider, for instance, Shri Shankara's *Thousand Teachings*, 14.3-8:

Molten bronze poured into a mould assumes the form of the mould and, in the same way, the mind pervading objects such as colour, etc., in perception is certainly seen to have assumed their form. (3)

³ This theme is developed by Lord Brain in his Riddell Lectures, see Sir Russell Brain *The Nature of Experience*. Oxford University Press. 1959.

Or again, just as light, as revealer, assumes the form of that which it reveals, so the mind is seen in the form of all objects, since it is what reveals them. (4)

What the spirit in man formerly perceived was the mind itself, which had assumed the form of the object. Otherwise, how could he see it in a dream? And where could the image come from for one in the act of remembering? (5)

The mind reveals things in the sense that it assumes their forms. In the same way, the Witness is the ultimate seer in the sense that it pervades the cognitions of the mind whenever they arise. (6)

Because all cognitions in all minds in all bodies are illumined by me, as the light of mere consciousness, I am the Self of all. (7)

In dreams the person acting, the act, the instrument, the object and the result of the action are all modifications of the mind, and such also is the case in the waking state. The permanent Witness of both states must therefore be different in nature from the mind and its modifications. (8)⁴

Bertrand Russell says that 'Dreams are perhaps the most indubitable example of facts which can only be known by means of private data. When I remember a dream I can relate, either truly or with embellishments; I can know which I am doing, but others seldom can. I knew a Chinese lady who, after a few lessons in psycho-analysis, began to have perfect text-book dreams; the analyst was delighted, but her friends were sceptical. Although no one but the lady could be sure of the truth, I maintain that the fact as to what she dreamed was just as definitely such-and-such rather than so-and-so as in the case of a physical phenomenon.' (*Human Knowledge*, pp. 60-61)

How does perception differ from memory and imagination? Russell devotes one whole chapter of his book on *The Analysis of Mind*, written in 1921, to Introspection (p.108 ff). He points out there that 'As regards privacy, all images, of whatever sort, belong with the sensations which only give knowledge of our own bodies, i.e. each is

⁴ Cf. *Panchadashi* 4.26-31; 7.90-94; 8.4-26 ff.

only observable by one observer.’ This applies equally to sensations which provide public information about the outside world available to others, and private information of thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations, available only to ourselves...As regards localization, introspective data are either not localized at all, or they are localized, like visual images (e.g. the rainbow), in a place already physically occupied by something which would be inconsistent with them if they were regarded as part of the physical world. (Russell: *Analysis of Mind*, p.120 ff.)

This is what Mountcastle implies when he speaks of the view from within, which in his opinion is located in the brain within the area known to anatomists as the parietal lobe. The Closing Statement of his Lecture was as follows:

Each of us lives within the universe—the prison—of his own brain. Projecting from it are millions of fragile sensory nerve fibers, in groups uniquely adapted to sample the energetic states of the world around us: heat, light, force, and chemical composition. *That is all we ever know of it directly; all else is logical inference.* Sensory stimuli reaching us are transduced at peripheral nerve endings, and neural replicas of them dispatched brainward, to the gray mantle of the cerebral cortex. We use them to form dynamic and continually updated neural maps of our place and orientation in the external world, and of events within it. At the level of sensation, your images and my images are virtually the same, and readily identified one to another by verbal descriptions, or common reactions. Beyond that, each image is conjoined with genetic and stored experiential information that makes each of us uniquely private. From that complex integral each constructs at a higher level of perceptual experience, on my view in brain regions like those of the parietal lobe, his own, very personal, *view from within*.⁵

In Vedanta the real subject of experience is not the mind experiencing the world, but the Self (as witnessing consciousness) experiencing the mind. As Shri Sureshvara says in *Realization of the Absolute*:

Interiority is the very nature of the Self. [In the matter of cognition] it is without action, [or] its [associated] factors or results; it is one

⁵ Op.cit., p 131.

without a second [*advaita*]. The intellect, lit by its presence is [mis]taken loosely fo

The Seer in all creatures is one. It is only through the objects in which He is reflected that He appears to be many, as the one sun with his garland of rays becomes apparently multiple when reflected in the multiple vessels of water. (2.47)

Just as one and the same man is at the same time friend, enemy and neutral—but only through the imagination of other people—so all distinctions in the one undifferentiated pure consciousness are due to the intellect of man. (2.48)

Just as the sun is kidnapped by the waterpots and made to share their action, shape and position, so is the Self appropriated by the multiple intellects of men. (2.49)

The ego is not the Self because it is something which we experience, and therefore another object among the objects of experience. It cannot therefore be the witnessing subject.

One thing cannot at the same time be both seer and seen; the seer cannot be seen by the object which is itself the seen; nor can sight see the seer. (2.39)

The one of uninterrupted vision cannot ever be an object; if it were an object, how could it be the Seer? If it were, then the Seer would be the one seen or else the world would be devoid of a Witness. (2.41)

As the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* says: ‘there is no break in the sight of the Seer.’ (IV.iii.23)

Change is the very nature of the ego-sense, since it comes and goes. But essential properties which change imply necessary change in the substance to which they belong. (2.35)⁷

⁶ cf. Kant’s transcendental unity of apperception—that which unifies the multiplicity experienced into a single whole.

⁷ cf. Swami Rama Tirtha: *In Woods of God-Realization* VIII.146: Matter and Spirit have one and the same Self.

What about the Mind-Body Problem—the relationship of mind and matter?

There have been two favoured views in the West since the 17th century. One, following Descartes, has felt that the mental experiences are so different in their quality from those of the outer physical world of matter that they must be totally different in kind. They draw attention particularly to the ‘interiority’ of our experience of the world of ideas; and the fact that it is an entirely private world which we view from within.

The question then arises as to how the two worlds of body and mind manage to interact as they appear to do all the time. Our experience tells us that we think about what to do and then do it. We experience external events and they arouse feelings and thoughts in us as we react to them mentally. We are both affected psychologically by what happens to us in the world, by outer events, and we affect the world by what we decide to do in it. There is therefore the clearest evidence for a two-way interaction between our body and our mind.

Cartesian dualism

Descartes thought the mind interacted with the body by a single structure which was discovered by the anatomists at the centre of the human brain—the pineal gland. The fact that it was single and central seemed to qualify it as the likely site of our *sensorium commune*, our common sense, where all experience was unified in a single stream of experience.

There are still brain scientists today—and very competent and knowledgeable ones—who believe in the interactionist theory of mind and matter and locate the site of this interaction somewhere in the brain (e.g. Eccles and the cortex of the dominant hemisphere). Others have proposed a parallelist model. They feel that matter and mind are so different that they must somehow exist in quite different spheres, but behave in parallel. (See Popper’s discussion in *The Self and Its Brain*, pp.175-185. Springer. 1977.)

William James and neutral monism

Mountcastle writes in 1995:

Now, every neuroscientist is his own amateur philosopher. Each of us looking upon this disputatious arena forms opinions about this wordy world. It is my own that no form of dualism will do, whether in traditional Cartesian form, whether parallel, or interactionist, or in any other derived format. The idea that a nonmaterial essence exists that interacts with, controls, or is controlled by the brain seems to me to be so unlikely as to be outside the realm of scientific discourse and action. But remember, one can never prove a negative!⁸

Dualism is dead! And what a relief! However, this puts a heavy responsibility on those dedicated to the study of the function of the brain and how it controls and generates behavior. Indeed, dualism had one saving grace, for it provided a face-saving escape from unsolvable problems. The death of dualism evokes in the neuroscientist a pervasive sense of modesty, for he more than any other understands how difficult these problems are, and how far we are from their solution.⁹

Science has proved that matter and mind are one and the same. Atoms are simply centres of force, as Leibniz first pointed out in Europe and as was known in India 10,000 years ago. Kelvin showed matter and force to be the same. So matter and mind are one and the same.

Swami Rama Tirtha disposes of the arguments for Cartesian dualism and interaction, favoured by such modern thinkers as Sherrington, Popper and Eccles, coming down firmly on the side of neutral monism, as do William James and Mountcastle: ‘If matter were different from mind, the mind would not affect matter and vice versa.’ (*In Woods of God Realization* VIII. 147.)

The modern identity theories of Schlick, Russell and Feigl describe the

⁸ V.B.Mountcastle: The evolution of the ideas concerning the function of the neocortex. *Cerebral Cortex* 5, 289-295. 1995.

⁹ Cf. Swami Rama Tirtha: *In Woods of God Realization* VIII.146-7.

‘mental’ as *an inside view* (knowledge by acquaintance) of some brain processes. As in Leibniz’s theory, this inside view is *real*; it is a view of a *thing in itself*. The corresponding brain process is an outside *appearance* of the same thing ‘knowledge by description’. (Popper: *The Self and its Brain*, 1977, p.188)

What speaks in favour of neutral monism? It is, I believe, true that nearly all the things which a naïve view would consider as simply existing are in a sense theoretical interpretations or constructions. However, while neutral monism might seem attractive, especially to a thoroughgoing empiricist, I do not think that it is a satisfactory theory. Its allegedly neutral elements are only called ‘neutral’: they are, unavoidably, *mental*; and so is, clearly, the procedure of the ‘construction’ of physical objects. Thus ‘neutral’ monism is so only in name. In fact, it is subjective idealism, very much in the Berkeleyan manner. (Popper, *ibid.* p.199)

Where does consciousness come from?

What is the special state of matter which allows consciousness to emerge and manifest itself? The great Sufi classic of Moulana Rumi, the *Masnavi*, describes the ‘evolution’ of consciousness. *Sattva*, harmonious equilibrium, purity, allows the truth to manifest itself. As Claude Bernard remarks: ‘La fixité du milieu intérieur est la condition de la vie libre.’

Reflection theory (*Chidabhasa*)

Mind is part of matter with special properties (excess of *sattva*) providing a medium (*upadhi*) which reveals or ‘reflects’ consciousness. This is the *buddhi* of *vijnanamaya kosha*. The reflection of the Witness consciousness in it is *jiva* or *chidabhasa*.

In *Atma bodha* 16 it is stated: ‘Though all-pervading, Atman does not shine in everything; it is manifest only in the *buddhi* (intellect), like the reflection in clear water or in a stainless mirror.’

In *Panchadashi* VI.154: ‘Maya in association with the reflection of consciousness, which is not fully visible, assumes the form of intellect; and in the intellect the reflection of consciousness becomes plainly visible as the ego.’

In *Thousand Teachings* XVIII.83: ‘But our view is that when the mind, which is not itself conscious, shines with reflected consciousness, its ideas shine with reflected consciousness too, as the sparks emerging from a burning iron shine like the fire within it.’

Note that for the Vedanta *consciousness is the nature of the Reality* underlying the material world, even the world of inorganic Nature. All that exists, exists within and superimposed on this reality. It is an appearance created phenomenally. The relative world of becoming, made up of names and forms (*nama rupa*), exists by virtue of that underlying Reality and is an object of knowledge, since it has consciousness or awareness as its true nature, even though it may be latent, as the life in the seed is latent.

So it is by no means clear, or even probable, that the appearance of consciousness and a Self has to be relegated only to Planet Earth and the later stages of cosmic evolution. This reality which underlies the universe is also the basis of the feeling of joy (*ananda*) which is the motive power driving all living things. This is the view of the Upanishads—the oldest surviving works on the philosophy of Yoga. In their view the Reality out of which the universe was made was itself of the nature of consciousness absolute.

Earth, water, fire, air, ether, thought (*manas*) and reason (*buddhi*), egoism (*ahankara*)—thus is my Nature (*Prakriti*) divided eightfold.

This is the inferior nature (*Prakriti*); but, as distinct from this, know My higher nature, the very life by which this universe is upheld.

Know that all beings have their birth in these two. So I am the source and dissolution of the whole universe.

There is naught else higher than I, O Dhananjaya; in Me all this is woven as clusters of gems on a string.

(*Bhagavad Gita* VII.4-7)

S.D.S.

Amir Khusro

KHUSRO is the greatest of the Indian poets who write in Persian. He has laid the foundation of Urdu poetry, and his Persian verses rank as high as those of Hafiz. He flourished in the thirteenth century. He was not only a great poet but also a great mystic. The following account of Khusro is based on a broadcast given in Delhi by Hassan Nizami.

Khusro was a Turk by nationality; his mother was Indian. He was born in Patiala in the Punjab, his father being a high state official who came of a military family. In his time India was ruled by Turks.

Khusro received his early education at home in both Arabic and Persian. At that time there was a great spiritual light in Delhi, who had cast his halo over the whole of the Islamic world; this was the saint Nizamuddin Auliya, who counted among his disciples not only men of scholarly and artistic eminence but also seven emperors of Delhi. He lived a life of great purity and the utmost simplicity, and was credited with numerous miracles. His verses in Persian are still admired as classics of devotion.

When Khusro was nine years old, his father took him and his brother, Hassan, to the monastery presided over by Saint Nizamuddin, and he wished him to be accepted as a pupil by the saint. When the three came to the door of the monastery, Khusro said to his father: 'I shall not enter the monastery unless my heart longs to be a pupil of the saint.' The second son, Hassan, said: 'You are my father, and if you wish me to be a disciple of the saint, I will do so.'

Khusro sat at the door and also set his heart on the holy saint, imploring his grace to convert him. He composed a Rubaya and began to sing it. In translation it runs as follows:

Thou art such a King that, if a pigeon perched on Thy wall, he would be turned into a royal hawk.

A poor man has come to Thy door; give Thy grace that he may come in.

At that time the saint was addressing an assembly of his pupils; thousands were present, listening to him with rapt attention. Suddenly a silence fell on the assembly. Nobody spoke a word. Then the saint stretched his neck upward and sang the following Rubaya, saying first:

'There is a little Turkish child waiting outside; call him in.' The Rubaya in translation is:

O hero of the field of Truth, come in and be a sharer with me in the great secrets. But if thou art still ignorant, then better go back.

The servant repeated the Rubaya of the saint to Khusro. He ran and fell at the feet of the saint and expressed a desire to be enrolled as a disciple. He was given an initiation. The saint said: 'Stay in the monastery, learn Arabic and Persian; I will give you lessons in spirituality.' Khusro, therefore, stayed in the monastery, receiving secular and spiritual education.

The famous historian Farishta tells how, one day, Saint Nizamuddin, accompanied by a crowd of disciples, walked through the main street of Delhi. Khusro was also with him. On the street a beautiful boy was seen in a baker's shop, selling bread. Khusro was smitten with love and went up to him, saying: 'At what rate do you sell your bread?' The baker's boy looked into Khusro's eyes and said laughingly: 'I sell my bread by weight; I put the bread into one scale and ask my customer to put gold coins into the other, and I let him take my bread when the scale containing the gold coins goes down.' Khusro said: 'If one has no gold coins to give, what then?' He replied: 'Then I take the agonies of the heart.'

Hearing this, Khusro burst into tears; and, returning to the monastery, he told his tale to the saint, but the saint gave no reply. Khusro entered his cell and wept for three nights and days without either food or sleep. On the fourth day the baker boy was seen in the presence of the saint, saying: 'I have sold my shop and given away the proceeds in charity to the poor. Please enrol me as a disciple.'

The saint replied: 'First receive some education, my son, then I will give you initiation.' The saint sent for Khusro and said: 'Take this boy under your care and teach him grammar and rhetoric.' The name of the boy was Hassan.

According to the historian Farishta, when Khusro was still a student, his father died. He composed an elegy which is still considered a masterpiece. At this time the heir apparent of the Emperor Balban was appointed governor of Delhi; he was a patron of letters. The fame of Khusro and Hassan reached the court. The ruler asked the saint to let him have the services of the two youths. Permission was granted, and

both the young poets became courtiers.

The Mongols invaded India and Khusro was taken prisoner. After suffering long tribulations under the Mongols, Khusro secured his release and returned to Delhi. He was appointed a high official in the state. Now Khusro had position, wealth and name; yet every evening he came to his Guru and served him with his own hands. Once Khusro presented the saint with a pair of slippers specially made for him. They were set with pearls and embroidered with gold. One day the saint was praying, having left the slippers outside the mosque, and a man, overcome by temptation, made off with the slippers. As he was running along, looking admiringly at the slippers, Khusro met him and recognized the slippers. He called the man and said: 'Will you sell these slippers to me?' The man said he would, but that he wanted three thousand rupees for them. Khusro called him to his house and bought the slippers for that sum. That evening he quietly restored them to his Guru.

Hassan fell into bad society and became a drunkard. One day when the saint, accompanied by his disciples, went to pray at the tomb of that greatest of all the Mohammedan saints of India, Qutub, he saw, in a garden, Hassan drinking with his friends. He was half drunk and, seeing his Teacher, he approached him, saying: 'O saint, I have heard that one who keeps good society is never lost. I have been so many years in your society, but look to what a wretched condition I am reduced.' The saint did not reply, proceeding a little further; then he said to Khusro, who was in the company: 'Hassan has become mad, wine has ruined his brain. Look, it is the nature of water to wash away dirt and dust and evil smell from an object which is immersed in it; but the evil-smelling fish which dwell in the water do not lose their bad odour. The evil nature of Hassan was too much for my society, and he did not live in complete faith and submission to me.'

Then the saint looked at Hassan very affectionately and said: 'O child Hassan, the society of the good is full of influences.' This sentence had a magical effect. Hassan ran and put his head at the feet of the saint. The saint said: 'O Hassan, thou hast repented at the time when thy capacity to sin has gone.' Khusro with joined palms and tearful eyes begged the saint to give initiation to his friend Hassan. The saint smiled and said: 'So far he has indulged in an intoxication which is impermanent and leaves behind sufferings. He needs the intoxication

which abides forever.' He said to Hassan: 'Come near me, my son.' He embraced him and said: 'From today thou art mine and I am thine.'

So Hassan was converted and became one of the great disciples of the saint. He has written a diary in Persian, the title of which is 'Profits of the Heart'. Today it is considered a great mystical classic, and thousands of Sufis read it every morning.

Khusro acquired greater and greater eminence as a courtier and statesman, and his verses became popular in Persia. The king of Persia sent him an invitation to come to his court, but Khusro said: 'I am not free, I am a slave to Nizamuddin Auliya. I prefer to live and die at his feet.' Once Nizamuddin wrote the following verse:

If a saw is placed at my head and I am told, either save yourself or give up your Turk (sweetheart), I would say, let the saw do its work. I will not give up my Turk.

On one occasion, looking at his Pir (spiritual Teacher), Khusro said: 'I have become thine and thou art mine; I am the body, and thou art the life in it.' The saint replied in verse:

So that nobody from today may say,
I am different from thee or thou art different from me.

Once a poor man came to the Saint Nizamuddin and asked for a sum of money to defray some urgent expenses. The saint had nothing to give, and so he gave him his turban. The man did not sell the turban but used it himself.

Khusro went with the emperor to Bengal. When he was staying in an inn in a small town, he suddenly said: 'There is the fragrance of the body of my Guru here.' An enquiry was made, and the man with the turban was found there. Khusro exchanged the turban for his horse, his slaves and all the jewels that he was wearing, and walked all the way from Bengal to Delhi. When he came to his Guru, the saint said: 'My beloved, you have bought the turban too cheaply.'

It is written by a historian that at the time when the Saint Nizamuddin was dying at the advanced age of one hundred and twenty, Khusro was in Bengal with the emperor. The saint said: 'Do not let Khusro come near my tomb. My tomb will be rent, and my heart will jump out to kiss my beloved disciple.' When Khusro returned, he tore his garment and cried bitterly. He stood at a distance from the tomb of

his beloved Teacher without shoes, without a shirt, crying bitterly. He read the following Hindi verse of his own composition:

The Beloved is sleeping alone on the bed, her face is covered with a shawl. O Khusro, go to thy home, as night has fallen over the world.

He cried, heaved a sigh and fell dead. Today he is buried about a hundred yards from the tomb of his Guru.

When the emperor of Delhi sent an invitation to the great poet Sadi in Persia, he wrote in reply: 'Your Majesty, I am too old to travel; besides you have Khusro, a poet far greater than myself.'

The life of Khusro is a sea. This is merely an introduction to it.

H.P. Shastri

The Message of Adhyatma Yoga

THE UNIVERSE of manifoldness has no independent existence. It is an expression of the One-Without-Second. This 'One' can be described as Pure Consciousness. It is neither long nor short, neither white nor black. It has no attributes whatsoever. It is free from change, death, birth or dissolution. In the terminology of the Yoga metaphysics, it is called Chit, Chetana and Brahman. In the end it is described as the essence or consciousness in man, by means of which he hears, sees, smells and tells tales. The holy Upanishads, while trying to describe the Infinite, the Attributeless, the Immutable, end by saying, 'That Thou Art', 'Tat Twam Asi'. This knowledge of the Self is called Jnana.

Imagine that you are in a city in which millions of electric lights are on—some are red, some blue, some round, some triangular, some in motion, some fixed. What a variety is there! There are trains worked by electricity, lifts, cars and a thousand other objects, each worked by electricity. Is this manifoldness real? No. There is one electricity, which is expressed in all. It is the essence of each and every object. Electricity is neither long nor short, neither red nor blue, nor green. It is in fact indescribable. Nobody knows what it really is.

Imagine if the objects in the city, worked by electricity, became self-conscious and asked, 'What am I? What is Truth? What is the

Ultimate Reality? What is electricity?' The only reasonable answer would be, 'Tat Twam Asi', 'That Thou Art'.

Now imagine that these electric objects are conscious. What will they say, feel and know? If the object is wise, it will say, 'I am electricity. Though I see millions of lights of every description, each one in fact is my own Self. All verily is electricity.' Such a wise electric object, identifying its essence with electricity, will not feel sorrow if a few of them cease to burn. Even if all lights were extinguished, electricity would remain, the same, unaffected.

This knowledge of identity of all with the individual will produce tranquillity, fearlessness and a feeling of deathlessness and bliss. The object, thus Self-realized, will say, 'I am the immortal and immutable Electricity. I am the life of all.'

You see some persons who are ignorant, some wise, some loving, some calmly contemplative, some eager to court disaster by rushing rashly into marriage, some saints, some sinners. But it is one Consciousness which is the essence of all. He who, by the grace of his Guru, knows that, in essence, he is Chit (Consciousness Absolute) will say, 'I am Shiva (the highest Good), I am Shiva, I am the One who knows, and also the one who does not know. I am the light and essence of the remotest star. I am the colour and form of the wise. I am the heart of Jesus, the mind of Shankara. I am Rama.'

This great realization will make the individual free from death, birth, all misery, all limitations. He will have the feeling, 'I am all-good; I am Bliss; I am Shiva.' In himself, such a yogi will feel he is the infinite Atman (the true Self), which transcends both sin and virtue. In society he will be all love, all forgiving, all compassionate, all hopefulness, free from pride, pleasure-desires, glory or majesty of the individual. He will be a jivan-mukta (one liberated in life), a Dada, a Rama Tirthaji, a Satchitanandaji [illuminated sages of the tradition of Adhyatma Yoga].

The spirit in the individual shines through the mind, as the electricity shines through the bulb that has a vacuum in it. The mind too is fundamentally an illusory appearance of the principle which is called maya or avidya (spiritual ignorance), and which the Chit impresses on itself in sport, and which is not different from Brahman.

This maya or avidya seems to limit consciousness, but it depends

for its very appearance on Chit. It is a potentiality of Brahman made manifest. As the light-bulbs differ, but the electricity manifest in them is one and the same, similarly the bodies and the minds seem to differ, but the abiding essence of each individual is the same Brahman.

According to modern physics and cosmology based on science, all matter, all the universe extended in the utmost space, is nothing but electro-magnetic flashes. Similarly, according to the holy Upanishads, the universe is Brahman, Chit; man is Chit; the beast is Chit. The dictum is well expressed in 'Kham Brahman' (All is Brahman, the Absolute).

Old habits of thought die hard. We know the sun never rises and never sets, yet we talk daily of a sunset and a dawn. We know the blue colour of the sky is not real, yet we say, 'How blue the sky is!' Let us then know that the essence in you, in me, in the fluid water and in the granite rock is Chit. Attachment, ambition, greed, anger and possession are all illusions, like the blueness of the sky. All our pain, fear and anxiety are due to the feeling of duality.

In the *Katha Upanishad* it is said, 'He suffers death, who sees diversity.' To get rid of the illusion of duality we must keep our mind still and pure, detached and all-loving. As a dusty bulb does not throw out the pure rays of light, so the mind, loaded with desires, ambitions, worries, pride or narrowness, does not realize its identity with Chit. This state is called nescience. A bad dream, though unreal, causes delusions and pain to the sleeper. This nescience is a bad dream which causes fear and anxiety to the mind.

A man suffering from a long and unnerving headache, consults doctors and surgeons. The only doctors who can rid our mind of the headache of duality are the illumined sages who have realized this Truth in their direct experience. When will man become wise and work for the good of others? When he realizes 'I am the Universal Self.'

We have only one great duty. It is to carry the light of Advaita to others, in a spirit of love and to live it at the same time. Duality is an illusion, hate is unnatural, greed is a self-induced fever. The search after joy in the external world is a great delusion. Sit quiet, O mind, and meditate on 'Kham Brahman' (All is God).

H.P.S.

During the Spring term at Shanti Sadan a series of talks was given on meditation with detailed directions on how to take up traditional meditation practices. The series included talks on *How to Approach Meditation*, *Meditation — Finding Your Inner Support*, *Stages in Meditation*, and *Meditation — the Key to Higher Knowledge*.

The talks covered the importance of preparation and approaching the meditation in the right spirit, as well as the practices themselves. They also reminded us that little progress is possible without the foundation of ethical living, which is the essential affirmation that ultimately all is one and none is to be excluded from our goodwill. The talks made clear the importance of study of the philosophy of non-duality which teaches in a fully rational way the fundamental identity of human consciousness with Divine consciousness, which is the principle underlying traditional meditation texts. Such was the interest in the talks that another series on meditation will be given in the Summer term.

The Spring one-day course took place on Sunday 2 March with three talks on the theme of *Yoga as the Path to Inner Freedom*, as well as two practical meditation sessions. The first talk on *Seeking the Self* considered how psychological development culminates in the spiritual enquiry, the second talk, *Cross the Ocean of Suffering*, looked at practicalities, and the last talk on *The Truth at the Centre of Life* presented the eternal truths on which the Yoga is based.

One-Day Course Summer 2008

Yoga of Self-Knowledge — A Way to Perfect Fulfilment

Saturday 7 June 2008, 11am to 4.00pm

(Books and coffee will be available from 10.30am.)

Columbia Hotel, 95 Lancaster Gate, London W2

Talk 1: *The Purpose of Life*

Meditation practice

Talk 2: Taking Positive Steps

Talk 3: *Seeking Truth — Finding Peace*