

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 AUTUMN TERM 2008

Weekday evening talks at Shanti Sadan

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

Autumn 2008 One-Day Course

The one-day course will be held on Sunday 2 November 2008 at the Columbia Hotel, Lancaster Gate, London W2.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

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Inner Communion with Reality

Yoga is inner communion with reality. It is something like learning to shoot at a target with bows and arrows — and how long a man has to practise! In the Yoga he practises through benevolence, or karma, through worship, or upasana, and through the study of metaphysics.

H.P. Shastri

THE OBJECT OF the practice of Yoga is to learn to commune with reality in our innermost being, because that reality is divine and immortal. When a man is in communion with it, then, as the *Upanishads* say: ‘He goes beyond all sorrow’. But at present we are not fully conscious of our inner being, but only of our personality through which it is expressed. It is that personality which has to be trained to focus its attention on the subtle underlying reality pervading all.

The main aspects of the personality are the will, the emotions and the intellect. In Yoga, the basis of the training of the will is the practice of

universal goodwill — without it all efforts are vain. The emotions are expanded through different forms of worship, and the intellect receives light through the study of the highest truth. All three aspects of the personality are of course interdependent, and they strongly influence one another. When they are jointly focused on the supreme target, the personality becomes harmonized and steady, which allows the inner being, as it were, to burst through and taste the delight of expansion, freedom and bliss. The arrow has ‘hit the target’. In the stages of practice it will fall away again, but the experience purifies the mind and prepares the way for something quite different. The consummation of Yoga is not an attainment, but the falling away of illusion, the realization that the arrow has ever been one with the target. Our inner being (*Atman*) is non-separate from the ultimate reality (*Brahman*), though veiled by its finite vehicle of expression. One who awakens to this truth experiences conscious immortality. Henceforth he lives only to serve others, and is the greatest benefactor of mankind.

Such a spiritually enlightened Teacher transmits the art of inner communion with reality through his exposition of the spiritual truth. In reality he communicates it silently, from spirit to spirit, but we have become addicted to words and therefore have first to be taught through the medium of words in the form of metaphysical teaching. Unlike speculative metaphysical teaching, which aims at an intellectual conclusion only, the real purpose of the yogic teaching is to turn the consciousness of the pupil more and more inwards, until finally he is brought back to his innermost centre where the spiritual awakening takes place.

The teaching is that there is but one reality, eternal, infinite, ever perfect and blissful, existing within and without all beings. That supreme reality, *Brahman*, is the inner essence of all that exists, and is therefore called the Self of all. It is our Self, the one Self, our real infinite immortal being, but we do not recognize it either in ourselves or in the universe because it is covered over by finite forms which we take to be independent realities. We are rather like little children who, seeing a marionette show for the first time and not being aware of the manipulator behind the scenes, take the figures to be real.

What then is this universe? The Teacher tells us: ‘All this universe is *Brahman*’ — that is to say, it is not what it seems to be; there is but one reality. When we penetrate to the reality behind the universe, to its

essence, we shall find it is our own essence also and that it is divine, eternal and immortal. We suffer from an illusion which penetrates our senses, our mind and emotions, and also our intellect. But there is one element in us which does not suffer from illusion; it is the eternal spirit in us which is aware of all this illusion, and which drives us to seek the truth.

The Teacher explains that this illusion is a cosmic one; we are born into it and initiated into it and mutually uphold it. But there has to be a second birth, a second initiation, when we are born in spirit and in truth. We can overcome our individual illusion and then help others to overcome theirs. The first signs that we are ready for it are a sense of dissatisfaction with what is finite and transitory, a longing to know the eternal, and a willingness to discipline our mind and senses to that end.

Such a pupil is taught that the root of illusion is the sense of limited individuality — the ego-consciousness. All our worldly experience revolves around it, and therefore stands or falls with it. One yogic teacher has called the ego-sense ‘the main pillar of the dancing hall of *sansara* (finite experience)’. Our sense of individuality appears to be a firm reality, and therefore the finite worldly experience to which it relates appears to be a firm reality also. If in a dream we believe we are a king, we will find ourselves in a palace surrounded by courtiers — the inner illusion supports the outer one. But as soon as the illusion of the dream is dispelled and we reassume our waking individuality, the outer scene changes also. The yogic teaching is that all sense of limited individuality is false — it has through error been superimposed on our real Self, which is infinite, blissful spirit. When we realize the Self in its true nature, irradiating yet transcending the finite body, then we shall see it as the one reality shining through the outer forms of the universe also. The Sufi mystic Jalaluddin Rumi says: ‘The earth looks dull and sour-faced, but there is laughter and radiance in the heart of every atom.’ That laughter and radiance is the one reality, *Brahman*, but to realize it we have to overcome the illusion of the individual ego-sense.

What is the individual ego? We think of it as a real entity, our own being, but the teachers say that it is a notion and a complex notion at that, made up of the fusing together of two aspects of experience. Furthermore, those two aspects are as contradictory in nature as, for example, darkness and light. Yet we fuse them together in our imagination as if they were one entity, our own self, and call it ‘I’. Such

an 'I' must be an illusion.

To explain: What do we mean when we say 'I'? We are referring to the experience of self-consciousness in which there are two elements, that which knows and that which is known — the subject and the object. 'I know myself', we think — that is to say, I am both a subject and an object. But this is a contradiction. The subject is superior to the object and radically different in nature. It is the conscious element in experience, which is aware of all that is devoid of consciousness, changing, limited, perishable and multiple. It is itself unchanging, unlimited, imperishable and undivided, because to possess these characteristics it would have to become an object of consciousness, and so change its nature; and what consciousness would be left to know it? It is only the *mind* that can play the role of both subject and object, on account of the fact that, though made up of inert energy, like the body and the rest of the universe, the consciousness of the real Knower, the Self, is reflected in it. It is rather like a burning glass which, though possessing no heat and light of its own, can yet reflect the heat and light of the sun and burn other inert objects, such as grass. So the ego-notion, which arises in the mind claiming to be the Self, has both a subjective and objective element in it. We think: 'I was born, I shall die, I am old, I am ill' — falsely identifying the Self, of the nature of eternal consciousness, with the changing conditions of the object, the body.

Similarly we think: 'I am learned, I am happy, I was afraid', and so on — falsely identifying the Self with the changing states of the essentially inert mental instrument. Yet our deeper consciousness, our Self, is ever aware of all limitations, and knows that it transcends them. That is why, as long as the ego-notion has not been exposed as false, through a realization of the eternal Self, we shall always be restless.

The Teachers call the ego-notion 'the knot of the heart' since it is firmly established in the deepest layers of the mind and has been tightened by all our habitual ways of thinking, feeling and willing. It is a confused notion, a mingling together of the eternal and the transient, the conscious and the non-conscious — an illusion, sustained by lack of spiritual enquiry into reality. How can it be untied? By the opposite procedure: enquiring into the nature of reality, discriminating between the eternal (consciousness itself) and the transient forms it illumines, and by learning to focus the arrow of our inner longing for freedom on the supreme target in every aspect of our conscious life.

The *Katha Upanishad* says that we have to draw out the eternal essence, the *Atman*, from the illusory notions with which it is entangled, like drawing out the central pith from a stalk of grass: 'One should know it as pure and immortal — yea, one should know it as pure and immortal.'

In practical terms, what it means is that the ray of consciousness in the mind, which we experience as 'I', has to learn to dissociate itself from the different mental moods and cognitions which come and go, and focus itself on its own source, the Light behind the mind. It is of this Light that the Lord Shri Krishna speaks in the *Bhagavad Gita* when He says: 'I am the Self, seated in the heart of all.' Through the practice of meditation, prayer and worship, we can learn to commune with Him, draw strength from Him and find union with Him, but for the ultimate awakening of identity-consciousness — Self-realization — to take place, the practice has to be carried into the daily life also. In his book, *Wisdom from the East*, Dr Shastri remarks that if we have heard the spiritual truth and yet do not give up the habit of complaining about our health and feelings, and burdening others with our daily difficulties instead of trying to remember the divinity of the inner Self, then we are strengthening our own error and inflicting it on others also. Likewise, in our relationships with friends and relatives, we could save ourselves many difficulties and sufferings 'if we could only realize that the reality in our friend or relative is neither his body nor his words or feelings, but it is something much deeper, and that what his body is expressing (either by word or gesture), his thoughts, words and feelings do not come from the reality in him. This gives us an attitude of boundless tolerance.' It is, indeed, a form of meditation on truth. These are some of the ways of maturing the practice of inner communion with reality.

M.A.

*Down in the villages
Flutes and drums are sounding,
Here in the mountain
Pines' solitary murmuring*

Monk Ryokan

Dr A. M. Halliday — An Appreciation



‘THE SOCIETY of the good is full of influences.’ So said the Sufi saint, Nizamuddin Auliya, and the statement is profoundly true in the case of Dr A M (Martin) Halliday, who passed away on March 18th 2008.

Dr Halliday held the exacting post of Warden of Shanti Sadan from 1963 until his retirement in 2006. Readers of *Self-Knowledge* may recognize his articles by their signature, S.D.S. These writings cover a vast cultural range, and quarry gemstones of spiritual wisdom from such diverse fields as science, literature, western philosophy and psychology, history and art, as well as from the great classics of the Vedanta. Dr Halliday showed an unflagging ability to say something new and different, and went on doing so until a few days before his decease. The two Shanti Sadan publications, *Freedom through Self-Realisation* and *Yoga for the Modern World*, give an idea of his range

of interests, and a third book, based on his more recent series of articles, *The Spiritual Awakening of Science*, will shortly be published.

The scientific field was one which engaged Dr Halliday’s attention from an early age, and his first article in *Self-Knowledge*, or rather its precursor, *Shanti Sevak*, was entitled ‘Yoga and Science’, written in 1942. His ensuing worldly career was in the field of medical science, where he became an outstanding neuro-physiologist, and, through his painstaking researches and inventiveness, added greatly to the store of human knowledge, discovering new ways of computing and analysing brain activity, and thus deepening medical understanding of a range of diseases and conditions that afflict the human body.¹ Yet Dr Halliday spoke little about his professional life to those whose main concern was the spiritual Yoga, holding that such aspirants had more than enough to do, and to think about, in pursuing their yogic ‘careers’, for only such a spiritual course will lead to the supreme Knowledge. As he wrote in that first article: ‘With [this knowledge] all ignorance of any kind vanishes and man at last sees the real purpose in life. Henceforth he realizes everlasting joy, far greater than any which can be experienced by the senses.’

In his indefatigable work of furthering the cause of spiritual enlightenment, Dr Halliday’s acquaintances found in him a firm friend and a wise guide. Once the hand of his benevolent friendship had been extended, it was never withdrawn. He was indeed the ‘thousandth man’ referred to in the poem by Kipling, which he loved:

One man in a thousand, Solomon says,
Will stick more close than a brother,
And it’s worth while seeking him half your days
If you find him before the other.
Nine hundred and ninety-nine depend
On what the world sees in you,
But the Thousandth Man will stand your friend
With the whole round world agin you.

¹ A short account of Dr Halliday’s services to medical science is included in an obituary published in *The Times* on April 10th 2008.

His guidance extended to all phases of life. Through his wide and enlightened understanding of human affairs, Dr Halliday could not only make wise and practical suggestions about career and livelihood, but also offer shrewd, and fundamentally spiritual, insights, about how best one might deal with difficult situations at work or in the home. This counsel was never forced; hints and suggestions only became definite advice if this was consciously sought, and, even so, the decision to act remained the free choice of the individual. In this way, many found their lives, and not least, their inner state, were improved by taking to heart his comments.

As a person of genuine and permanent spiritual insight, he had a precise knowledge of human nature and its capacity for expansion and illumination, and also a sympathetic understanding of man's frailties and self-deceptions. Through his writings, as well as his personal interchanges, it gradually dawned that his way of speaking about the mind differed slightly but significantly from normal usage: here was someone who viewed the mind, his own as well as others', objectively, and not as one enclosed within its borders and enslaved by its workings. If his words are pondered carefully, they will infuse a refreshing sense of disidentification from one's mental world, at least partially, and open the way to deeper insights.

As was the case with his spiritual Teacher, Hari Prasad Shastri, the spiritual life, as lived and taught by Dr Halliday, was far from being a drab and humourless mode of existence. He always encouraged an interest in art, music and culture generally, as a means of enriching the mental life and liberating it from vulgarity and petty preoccupations with profit and loss. His cultural standards were high, and they well fulfilled Dr Shastri's dictum that the value of a work of art (or literature) lies in the associations it arouses in the mind; if these conduced to a life of peace, human-heartedness and wisdom, then the experience was worth the time and attention given to it. As for humour, Dr Halliday delighted in word play, and also in reflecting on the irrationalities of human nature. Once he was discussing the rebuilding, originally planned by the Communists, of Dresden Cathedral, which was destroyed during the War. The building, he said, was a wonderful, baroque, light building, the epitome of éliteness, a case of aristocratic

expenditure for the sake of beauty. And the anti-élitist Communists rebuilt it! He reflected: 'One of the saving graces of the human mind is its inconsistency!'

His own nature was very far from being inconsistent, for his wisdom was an enduring touchstone by which one could measure what was worth while and sift illusion from reality.

Last Christmas, Dr Halliday was read a short poem by Tennyson, and he suggested that it might be included in an issue of *Self-Knowledge*. It is called 'The Making of Man' and runs:

Where is one that, born of woman, altogether can escape
From the lower world within him, moods of tiger, or of ape?
Man as yet is being made, and ere the crowning Age of ages,
Shall not æon after æon pass and touch him into shape?
All about him shadow still, but, while the races flower and fade,
Prophet-eyes may catch a glory slowly gaining on the shade,
Till the peoples all are one, and all their voices blend in choric:
'Hallelujah to the Maker. It is finish'd. Man is made.'

The poem depicts man as an unfinished sculpture, being 'touched into shape' by experience. But, instead of enduring the passage of long tracts of time before this process is complete, man can even now accelerate and finalize this process of spiritual evolution, and awaken to his true spiritual stature. This was the process of growth, or rather, uncovering, that Dr Halliday was adept at assisting. As he wrote in *Freedom through Self-Realisation*:

Man physically may be only an insignificant speck of matter originating at a particular point-instant in time and space, but as a spiritual being his mind is able to reach out, defying the limitations of time and space, and through his aspirations for a better world, and a better life, can set its sights on a centre somewhere on the way to infinity. And the further he gets in that process, the higher his aim, the more spiritual he becomes, and the wider the expansion of consciousness which he enjoys.

The ‘Space-Simile’ of Vedanta

by A. M. Halliday

Part One

OFTEN IN WORKS expounding the philosophical notions of the Vedantic philosophy, we find the ideas expressed in the form of a simile. A number of these occur frequently — the snake in the rope, the various objects made of gold, etc. A particularly interesting and comprehensive simile is expounded in the sixth chapter of Vidyanaraya Swami’s *Panchadashi*. Like all similes it is intended to serve as a pictorial guide to a difficult conception, and should not be pressed too far. For want of a better name, we may call it the ‘Space-simile’. It must be a standard Vedantic illustration, for Shri Shankaracharya refers to it, though only briefly, in his commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*.

First of all, let us follow Vidyanaraya’s exposition. The Supreme Spirit, *Brahman*, who may be said to be *Chit*, or Consciousness Absolute, is the substratum of the whole universe, which is produced by the power of *Maya*, just as different objects may be painted on a canvas. (*Panchadashi*: Chapter VI, verses 5-7.)

This *Chit*, or Consciousness, may be said to be of four kinds, viz. *Atman*, *Brahman*, *Jiva* and *Ishwara*. This does not mean to say that it has four parts, or varieties, for the Shruti definitely lays down that it has neither parts nor qualities. What is meant is that the one identical *Chit* receives four distinct denominations when associated with the limiting *upadhis* (vehicles) set up by *avidya* (nescience). These different denominations are, from the absolute standpoint, imaginary, (see Shankara’s commentary, *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter XV, verse 7), but relatively they may be compared with the different names which can be given to the *akasha*, or space (literally æther), which, though uniform and all-pervading, is occupied by the various objects which exist in it. (*Panchadashi*: Chapter VI, verse 18.)

Mahakasha, the great space which extends throughout the whole universe, is called *ghatakasha* when circumscribed (and hence limited locally) by the jar (*ghat*). That is to say, the space in a jar is called *ghatakasha*, though continuous with the outer all-pervading space,

called *mahakasha*. In precisely the same way, *Brahman* is called *Atman* when in relation with the subtle (*sukshma*) and material (*sthula*) bodies. But it must nevertheless be realized that, just as *mahakasha* includes the space in the jar, so there is no real distinction between *Brahman* and *Atman*.

Now, if we partly fill the *ghatakasha* (the space in the jar) with water (*jala*), there will be a reflection in it of the *mahakasha* above, formed by the surface of the water, like the reflection of the sky in a pond. This reflection is called *jalakasha* in the simile. In the same way, the undifferentiated consciousness, *Chit*, reflected in the intellect, *buddhi*, appears as *jiva*, the individual soul which experiences the succession of lives, etc. All this information may be tabulated thus:-

The all-pervading CHIT (Consciousness), one and the same everywhere, receives the names:-	...in just the same way as the all-pervading AKASHA (Space) is termed:-	
ATMAN	GHATAKASHA	- the space in the jar
BRAHMAN	MAHAKASHA	- the immense, unlimited, all-inclusive space.
JIVA	JALAKASHA	- the reflection of space in the water partly filling Ghatakasha.

The water in the jar corresponds to BUDDHI (the intellect).

Now let us examine the points to be illustrated by the simile. Firstly, the *ghatakasha* (the space in the jar) is real space while

jalakasha is not real. The latter is only an appearance, actually a reflection of *mahakasha* (the outer space) in the water of the jar. It is therefore mistakenly, and as a result of ignorance of the facts, that *jalakasha* is regarded as real. In *Viveka-Chudamani*, Shri Shankaracharya, using a slightly, but not intrinsically, different metaphor, explains this:

The fool, having seen the image of the sun in the water of the jar, thinks it is the sun. So an ignorant man, seeing the reflection of Brahman in any of the *upadhis* (vehicles), takes it to be the real Self. (Verse 220.)

Whereas,

As the wise man looks at the sun itself and not at the jar, the water or the reflection; so also the wise man looks towards the self-illuminated *Atman* [identical with *Brahman*] through which the three *upadhis* are manifested. (Verse 221.)

This brings up another point. *Jalakasha* appears to be behind the surface of the water. When a man looks at his own reflection in a mirror or a pool, he sees what is apparently himself, underneath and behind the surface of the mirror or the water. So, the reflection of *mahakasha* in the water of the jar appears as *jalakasha* beneath the surface of the water, where, in reality, is the *ghatakasha* — the original space in the jar. In other words, the ‘reflection’, *jiva*, is superimposed on the reality, *Atman*, and is thus mistaken for it. Moreover, because of this dazzling reflection, *Atman* is not seen, just as the reflection, *jalakasha*, obscures the *ghatakasha* beneath. The unreality of the *jiva* must be known before *Atman* can be discovered. Shri Shankara says:

Thus it is that the individual, abandoning the body, the intellect and the reflection of consciousness, becomes sinless, passionless and deathless by knowing the self-illuminated *Atman* which is the seer, which is itself the eternal knowledge, different from reality as well as unreality, eternal, all-pervading, supremely subtle, devoid of ‘within’ and ‘without’, the only one, in the centre of wisdom. (Verses 222-223.)

Let us go a step further in the simile. What is it that causes this

reflection? How is this apparent unreal *jiva* produced, so that it obscures the nature of *Atman*?

It is by the *upadhis* (the ‘vehicles’ or limiting media), as Shankara says, that the ‘reflection’ is formed, but these themselves are the outcome of *maya*, or *avidya*, these being but two names for a single power (see *Panchadashi*: Chapter I, verse 16). In the simile, it is the water which forms the reflection of the changeless *akasha*. Moreover it is by movements in this water — ripples and swirls on its surface — that the reflection is distorted, and appears to undergo modification. The water is in the jar, and is occupying the space in the jar, *ghatakasha*. In the same way, the intellect (*buddhi*), which the water represents, rests on the substratum of *Atman*, and is the real seat of all the changes experienced by the *jiva*. In the *Vedanta* of Shri Shankara it is held that nothing exists save *Brahman*. To what then does this water correspond?

This question may be answered in two ways. Firstly in this philosophy, the negation of plurality is made in the sense that all else exists in the Supreme Spirit, i.e. the existence of everything is dependent on It as the universal substratum; then *buddhi* may also be said to be in *Atman*, just as, in the simile, the water exists in the space within the jar. Secondly, it is also a fundamental conception of Shri Shankara’s philosophy that there is an inexplicable potentiality, which is of the very nature of the Lord, and that by the manifestation of this potentiality, the power called *maya*, the Lord conditions a part of Himself, which then seems to undergo change and modification. In this way, the ‘water’ representing *buddhi* is produced, so to speak, from the already existing space in the jar by the action of this power (*shakti*). By it *Brahman* (as *Atman*) evolves *buddhi*, the intellect, out of Himself, by producing, in Himself, the illusion of movement — an illusion because the nature of *Atman* is never altered in any way by this process. This primary moving principle is called *buddhi*, and, in more general terms, *antahkarana*, the ‘experiencing organ’.

Considered collectively, the ‘moving principle’ is the *prakriti* from which the whole Universe is evolved and is, strictly speaking, neither real nor unreal. It must exist in a sense, because the ‘delusion’ of duality is experienced. And yet it does not exist in that high state of consciousness where only the non-dual Supreme Spirit remains.

We have spoken of two of the three so-called *upadhis*; of the *buddhi*

and the *jiva* (the water and the reflection). It may be asked to what the jar corresponds. The reply is that the jar is only used by way of illustration. It is the Supreme Spirit 'limited by the *upadhis* set up by avidya; it is a portion as it were, an imaginary portion'. (Shankara's *Commentary on the Gita*, Chapter XV, verse 7). But the 'portion' is a limitation existing in *prakriti* and not in *Brahman*. The distinction between *Atman* and *Brahman* is one of name only. In the simile one cannot really distinguish *ghatakasha* from *mahakasha*, for the walls of the jar themselves occupy space.

There are only two things which need be considered: the conscious principle, *Chit*, appearing as *Brahman* and *Atman*; and *prakriti* which, itself insentient, provides the basis for experience. These two are the *kshetra* and the *kshetrajna*, the Field of Matter and the knower of the Field. (see *Gita*, Chapter XIII.)

Being the One without any differentiation whatsoever, the universal Soul is present in all beings. Though One, It is seen as many, like the moon in the water in different water-vessels. (*Amritabindu Upanishad*, verse 12.)

Let us recapitulate for a minute. The existence which really belongs to *ghatakasha* is identified wrongly with *jalakasha*, although, without *ghatakasha* (the space which contains the water, which in turn produces the reflection) *jalakasha* could not exist. *Ghatakasha*, on the other hand, can and does exist independently of *jalakasha*, because it is seen before the water is put into the jar, and when it is removed. However, while the water is in the jar, by erroneous identification (*vikshepa*), the changes exhibited by *jalakasha* are attributed to *ghatakasha*. In the same way the existence which really belongs to *Atman* is identified wrongly with *jiva*, although without *Atman* (which is the substratum of the *buddhi* or *antahkarana*, and hence of all the experience of the *jiva*) *jiva* could not exist. *Atman*, on the other hand, can and does exist independently of *jiva*. It is eternal and immutable, while *jiva* is temporary and finite. However while *avidya* is at work and the intellect persists, the changes experienced by the *jiva* are mistakenly assumed to be experiences of Reality. Instead of the *jiva* realising its identity with *Atman*, it is settled in the conviction of 'I am the ego, the mind and the body'. This state is naturally enough called ignorance, or nescience.

When the knowledge of *Atman*, of stainless radiance, is concealed, the man, deluded, imagines this body, which is not the Self, as 'I'. Then the far reaching power of *rajas*, called *vikshepa*, gives great pain, binding him with the cords of lust, anger and so on. (*Viveka-Chudamani*: verse 142.)

Liberation implies discrimination between the real and the unreal, between *Atman* and *Jiva*.

By realising 'I am not *jiva* but *Parabrahman* (the supreme Reality)' remove the erroneous conception that non-Spirit is Spirit, which is produced by the force of desire. Having merged the *Atman* in *Paramatman* even as the space occupied in the water jar is merged in free space, remain for ever silent in that state. Having attained that primeval consciousness, absolute bliss, of which the nature is truth, which is without form and action, abandon this illusive body that has been assumed by the *Atman*, just as an actor abandons the dress put on. (*Viveka-Chudamani*: verses 281, 289 and 293)

The first step is to purify the mind. This is accomplished in the same way as the water in the jar has to be becalmed, so that its unruffled surface can present a clear and undistorted reflection of the *mahakasha*, which is pure Consciousness. The discipline of Yoga uses all possible means to purify and harmonize the mind, by avoiding disturbing influences, by eliminating the agitating desires, and by courting tranquillity in meditation and concentration. In this way, the reflection of *Chit* in it becomes clearer and clearer, till eventually it is becalmed and the pure light of Consciousness is seen undistorted in it.

This, however, is not the final state. It is the highest mental conception possible, which is the consciousness of the Self as *Ishwara*, the Lord of the Universe and the Master of *Maya*. This is the state of the liberated one. But beyond this is the ultimate experience of Absolute Non-duality. Before this can be attained, the water must be completely evaporated and the jar destroyed. Then, only the limitless *mahakasha* remains.

Part Two

Those who have followed our consideration of the simile which Vidyaranya Swami expounds in his *Panchadashi*, may have noticed that,

while four denominations of *Chit* (Consciousness) were originally mentioned, only three of these were dealt with in Part One. The illustration of '*Ishwara*' has been avoided so far as it is not so easily understood as the rest. However, it is described at length in the sixth chapter of the classic and deserves consideration.

As well as being reflected, as *jalakasha*, in the water of the jars (representing the multitudinous *jivas*) the great space, *mahakasha*, is also reflected in the clouds. This reflection, however, cannot be seen; we must arrive at its existence by inference. The clouds being made up of droplets of water, there must be a reflection in these droplets. This is called *meghakasha* (*megha* = cloud). It is to *meghakasha* that *Ishwara* (the Lord) corresponds.

This emphasizes a number of points. For instance, *Ishwara* is unlimited as compared with the *jiva*; the cloud is unlimited as compared with the water confined in the jar. It is not individualized or localized like the latter by a particular *upadhi* (vehicle). In fact the whole of *sansara* (the realm of *maya*) may be regarded as the *upadhi* of *Ishwara*. Nevertheless, *Ishwara* does partake of the nature of *maya*. He is not like *Brahman* and *Atman* but exists in the realm of duality. As both *meghakasha* and *ghatakasha* are reflections of space, so both *Ishwara* and *jiva* are 'reflections' of Consciousness (*Chidabhasa*) and they are therefore unreal. They are only appearances depending for their existence on the 'water' of the jar or the clouds which represents *prakriti* manifested as *buddhi* and *Mahat* (cosmic intellect) respectively. (*Panchadashi*: Chapter VI, verse 225.)

One might say that the relationship between *Ishwara* and *Brahman* corresponds to that between *jiva* and *Atman*, and this is more or less true provided that one very important difference is appreciated. *Prakriti* — the substance from which the universe is fashioned — is the product, or manifestation, of the creative Power (*shakti*) of the Lord. It is composed of three primary qualities (*gunas*) called *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. A fuller explanation of these will be found in the fourteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, but, briefly, they are the principles of purity or harmony, activity or passion, and darkness or inertia. Now the power receives the name of *Maya-shakti* when the principle of *sattva* predominates, but when the other two predominate, it is called *avidya*. When *sattva* predominates, by its revealing properties the 'reflection' of the supreme Spirit in *prakriti* as *Maya* is not overcome by the illusion. This is *Ishwara*, Who is aware of His real nature, but, reflected in *prakriti* as *avidya*, it forms the *jivas* who are overcome by the illusion and whose

knowledge is veiled. (*Panchadashi*: Chapter VI, verse 190, Chapter I, verses 15-16.)

The manifestation of *Maya-shakti* as *prakriti* then is *Mahat*, the cosmic intellect, in which on the whole *sattva-guna* predominates. This is the state of consciousness called *Hiranyagarbha*, the first product of *Ishwara* manifesting His power, the 'Mundane Egg' of the Upanishads. It is important to realize that this consciousness includes the experience of all the *jivas* as well. As it has been explained by an Acharya:

Hiranyagarbha is the state in which the totality of cosmic subtle bodies is realized. It is also called *Sutra-Atman*, that aspect of Consciousness which realizes and experiences the totality of all the subtle bodies (senses, *ahankara*, mind).

This is so because it is within the Cosmic Intellect (*Mahat*) that the multitudinous *jivas* are afterwards differentiated. The simile is not perfect and fails to illustrate this point. In these *jivas*, *avidya*, manifesting as *prakriti* with a predominance of *rajas* and *tamas*, forms *buddhi*, from which *manas* (the lower mind) and the senses (*indriyas*), which make up the rest of the *antahkarana* and its instruments, are evolved. (*Panchadashi*: Chapter I, verse 16.)

To return to the simile, the droplets of water forming the cloud (which represents *Mahat*) themselves represent the *vasanas* (latent impressions) of the whole universe. It is not easy to supply a short explanation of these *vasanas*, but they are essentially the records left from the past which initiate and determine the activities taking place in the present and future. In the individual they represent the *sanskaras* (of *karma*) left by actions in the past which gradually fructify as the experience of the *jiva*. On the universal scale they represent the same forces applied to the world as a whole. All experience of change (i.e. *sansara*) is the outcome of *vasanas*.

In the simile then, the droplets of water represent those *vasanas* of the whole universe. Hence *Ishwara*, represented by the reflection in them, is that aspect of Consciousness which, as the Lord of *Maya*, rules the entire Cosmic Intellect (*Mahat*). Microcosmically, as *Vidyaranya* points out, this is represented by the innermost sheath, or *anandamaya-kosha*, in each *jiva*. This is the organ in which all the *vasanas* rest until they fructify, and consequently, it is from here that all experience of both the dreaming and waking states of consciousness, arises. All intellectual operations originate from this sheath (though they do not take place in

it) for in it are all the *vasanas* on which those operations rest. (*Panchadashi*: Chapter VI, verses 158-161.)

Vidyaranya speaks of *Ishwara* as being like the threads in a cloth. The cloth is His manifestation, or *upadhi*, made up of multitudinous individual threads, the *vasanas*. Just as the shape of the whole cloth alters when changes occur in the threads, when they shrink or lengthen, so the whole creation exhibits changes according to the *vasanas* which activate Him. (*Panchadashi*: Chapter VI, verses 168-170, Cf. *Gita*: Chapter XVIII, verse 61.)

Ishwara Himself is all-pervading and omniscient, and is not bound by His *Maya*. All objects rest on Him as the Lord of the Universe. He is thus the consciousness pervading all the inanimate creation. Here again we return to the original simile. Animate (*chetana*) objects differ from inanimate (*achetana*) ones in their ability to present a clear 'reflection' of *Chit* (Consciousness). The mind of man is quite evidently possessed of consciousness, but the consciousness in a rock is hidden. As science is showing, the actual difference is one of degree and not a clear-cut division into two groups. Nevertheless, the difference between the living organism and so-called inert matter is striking. In the same way, the reflection in the water of the jar is clear, while that in the droplets of the clouds is not visible but has to be inferred, as we have already explained. The distinction rests in the fact that man possesses an *antahkarana* (corresponding to the jar) which presents a clear 'reflection' of the Consciousness really possessed by the Supreme Spirit. *Ishwara* is nevertheless (as the simile does not show) the material cause of both animate and inanimate creation. (*Panchadashi*: Chapter VI, verses 153-157.)

The *Shakti*, variously called *maya* and *avidya*, creates both *Ishwara* and *jiva* by means of such 'reflections' (*chidabhasa*). *Ishwara*, though consciously the Lord of *Maya*, still experiences it in the realm of duality. He coexists with it eternally. Being in the region of time and space, *Ishwara* undergoes change and is not 'real' in the Vedantic sense of that word. He is sometimes explained as *Brahman* seen through the thinnest veil of *maya*.

Maya itself, in the Advaita, is regarded as neither real nor unreal, it is *mithya* — 'unaccountable' (see Part One — *Panchadashi*, Chapter VI, verses 129-130.). It is the alogical proposition on which the rest of the philosophy stands; its nature is a mystery which can only be unravelled by the direct experience of the Yogi.

The Ethics of Shri Shankara

A FEW YEARS ago I was in the audience at a meeting which was being addressed by that scholarly old lady, Dr Rhys Davids. She was speaking on some aspects of the Upanishadic metaphysics, and in the course of her lecture she pronounced the Upanishads to be without ethical teachings. At the conclusion of her speech I rose and quoted text after text from the Upanishads in support of the ethical value of the classics:

Speak the truth; follow righteousness...Let thy parents be God to thee. Let thy teacher be a God to thee. Let thy uninvited guest be a God to thee. (*Taittiriya Upanishad*, I.xi.1-2)

Truth alone prevails ultimately, not falsehood. (*Mundaka Up.* III.i.6)

Do not covet the wealth of others. (*Isha Upanishad*, 1)

Shri Shankara has clearly shown (in his commentary on *Vedanta Sutra* II.3.38) that a moral purpose is subserved in creation. The world of finite individuals or 'jivas' is a fact; it is a 'vale of soul-making'. The life of every individual is one of ethical aspiration and endeavour. It is by perpetual self-transcendence that the Self actualizes its infinite potentiality and reality. The Self-hood is an ethical or dynamic category. The divine in the human has ethics (dharma) as its basis. It is strange that Advaita scholars of such eminence as Deussen have fallen into the error of referring to Vedanta as unethical. The oneness of Self (Atman) is to be achieved and enjoyed by a strict discipline, which is mainly ethical. Man is a spiritual being, finite-infinite, far removed from the developed brutes.

Institutional Christianity sponsors the basic dualism that separates the world of created things and beings from the Creator and necessitates divine mediatorship and vicarious redemption by such a mediator. This view is uncritically accepted. The doctrine of Shri Shankara is an uncompromising monism, not, as is alleged, a negation of all morality.

It is true that an ethical life is not held as the goal of life, but it is essential for the realization of the goal; and on the attainment of the supreme end of life, the sage still continues to be one 'who is all the time engaged in the good of all'. (*Bhagavad Gita* V.25)

Not *doing* but *being* is the ideal of ethical culture. To bring about

holiness is the final aim of the perfectionist ethics of Shankara's Yoga. The philosopher breaks away from a life of unreflecting acquiescence in the satisfaction of animal wants which exhibits itself in brutes. Man looks before and after, and devotes himself to the attainment of life eternal in and through a moral life of the highest order. To Shri Shankara the whole world is worthy of love and worship. The highest good is 'beyond action, a stage of supreme illumination in which there is neither day nor night, neither reality nor unreality, but the good alone.' (*Shvetashvatara Upanishad* IV.18)

In his *Mysticism and Logic*, Bertrand Russell recommends elimination of ethics from philosophy, whereas Shri Shankara sees an ethical end in a supra-moral state of existence in which there is no possibility of evil conduct. Both the active and the contemplative life contribute to the supreme illumination, *moksha* or liberation.

In the *Katha Upanishad* (I.ii.1-4) it is made abundantly clear that what is pleasant is not necessarily good; that is, it does not lead to the supreme good. Is not ethical conduct a negation of the narrow personal pleasure which binds the soul to the earth? Shri Shankara is an anti-pragmatic philosopher who places the highest good in the realm of knowledge of truth. His ethics is perfectionism.

Shri Shankara opens his ethical enquiry with a rigid antithesis between the heteronomy of nature and the autonomy of spirit, and holds it as an essential prerequisite of morals. He calls nature-necessity, as the realm of ignorance (*avidya*), a prolific source of evil. Not coercion but right education is the instrument of moral causation. Man as a moral being must be recognized as the possessor of a free will.

The basic presupposition of the moral life is the elimination of non-moral instinctive preferences and aversions (*raga* and *dvesha*). This is the 'original sin'. In animal life it is a necessity; in man it is to be moralized. The *Katha Upanishad* (II.i.1) says that man, by nature, looks outward, but the wise look within because they hanker after eternal life, a vision of the Self. To be ruled by empirical ends is to be in bondage, to be led away from the path of rectitude. Shri Shankara, commenting on *Vedanta Sutra* I.i.4, says: 'A man, acting on external things and making the attainment of his own good or happiness and the repulsion of that which threatens the opposite (evil or unhappiness) the end, does not realize the *summum bonum*, in spite of his hankering after it.' Both Shri

Shankara and Kant call the heteronomy of nature — the determination of man's activity by the consideration of personal happiness or unhappiness, by the pathological motives — the very negation of freedom, a perpetual bondage. It may seem that moral culture argues a forcible wrenching of the mind and sensory apparatus from the natural outgoing flow, a restraining of the impulses of the senses and a directing of these impulses towards the Self. This is the path of self-discipline, by which man can hope to regain his Self, his essential nature.

Every man brings with him from his previous existence a stock of innate cravings and capacities, and they constitute his psychical make-up. *Prakriti*, or Nature, the instinctive basis of this psychic continuum, expresses itself in peculiar cravings. This is not the insidious and dangerous doctrine of naturalism. Shri Shankara, with unerring psychological insight, accepts this psychical fact and makes it a sub-structure for his idealistic or rationalistic theory to stand on. 'Every man according to his light' is the motto. Let us understand another word used by Shri Shankara. It is '*svabhava*' (one's own nature) and it is *not* a synonym for *Prakriti* (Nature). 'The intrinsic nature of the Supreme *Brahman* is the inner Self in every organism, and by "one's own nature" (*svabhava*) is meant the intrinsic spiritual nature of man, which, transcending the body and soul, terminates, by way of the inner Self of all selves, in the Supreme Brahman'. (Commentary on *Bhagavad Gita* VIII.3)

To recapitulate: the word '*Prakriti*' means the instinctive, non-moral, animal spontaneity, whereas '*svabhava*' is reserved for the higher spontaneity of realized moral perfection. Shri Shankara is unambiguously clear in his doctrine that the power of self-determination or autonomy is given unreservedly to man as a spiritual being (*homo noumenon*).

In his discussion of the question of free-will, which most Western philosophers hopelessly deny, Shri Shankara shows his marked superiority over them. In his commentary on the first verse of the *Kena Upanishad*, he considers the question raised in this verse: 'Willed by whom does the directed mind go towards its object?' He observes that the mind itself is not a totally independent, self-determining free agency. This is because it often finds itself driven into an evil course of action, even though it is aware of the painful outcome. 'The mind, though

conscious of the consequences, wills evil; and, though dissuaded, it does engage in deeds of intensely sorrowful result.’

The evidence of the play of free causality is in the spiritual and not merely the mind-endowed being. Here is the final verdict of Shri Shankara on the point:

...Hence this is said to be the object of human free will; the original unregenerate nature of man, which is conditioned by attachment and aversion (*raga* and *dvesha*), impels a man to pursue a particular line of conduct ... while a man who resolutely sets his face against *raga* and *dvesha*, becomes endowed with a spiritual vision, is no longer subject to nature-necessity, and is therefore free.

(Commentary on *Bhagavad Gita* III.34).

Inner and outer control (*shama* and *dama*), without the cultivation of which in daily, nay hourly, life, the attainment of God-vision is impossible, means the pressing of all the outgoing tendencies and impulses into the service of the moral life. This Shri Shankara calls duty. Spiritual culture must precede spiritual realization.

Let us not be disturbed by the accusation of Professor Keith that there is not the faintest glimmering of ethics in the Upanishads. The same can be said of any system of absolute idealism in the East or West. Keith stretches the logic to breaking point and ignores the higher ethics of a Paramahansa who lives for the enlightenment of others. Metaphysics is not ethics but a continuation of ethics on a higher plane.

It is the poverty of the metaphysical sense which leads some narrow thinkers of the Christian church to consider ethics to be the goal rather than the means to liberation or beatitude. This ethically-inspired personalism is branded by Russell as ‘bad metaphysics’. The claims of logic are absolute and paramount, and personalism is only a half-way house to idealism.

Any careful student of Buddhism knows that the ethics and renunciation attributed to the Holy Tathagata (the Buddha) are based on the Upanishads from which the Lord of Enlightenment drew his inspiration and which are the foundations of the philosophy of Shri Shankara. The *Bhagavad Gita* is the spirit of the Upanishads and its lofty ethics are of the very highest type. Shri Shankara bases his whole philosophy on the *Gita*.

Hari Prasad Shastri

Spiritual Growth

The real destiny of man is to unfold to a limitless measure his spiritual consciousness....This is the ultimate way of life: to come in contact with the indwelling reality called God; to feel consciously immortal, consciously omniscient and that every living being is a manifestation of the same divine being who manifests Himself in us. This is what is meant by the unfoldment of spiritual consciousness.

Hari Prasad Shastri

THE PURPOSE of the Yoga of Self-knowledge is to accelerate man’s fulfilment of his higher destiny and to realize the immortality and freedom of the essential reality of his being, his true Self. All human beings are destined to evolve spiritually as we learn our lessons from experience and adjust our lives accordingly. But the turning point comes when this spiritual evolution becomes a conscious process. This can only come about when we understand and embrace the high goal revealed by the knowers of Truth. That goal is nothing less than conscious immortality. It is the realization that one’s own innermost consciousness is not individual but universal, and that one’s Self is the Self of all. This knowledge dissolves at a single stroke all uncertainty, all puzzlement about the ultimate meaning of life and all spiritual doubts about the essential identity of the innermost Self of man with God. The Truth of this identity manifests as clearly as the sun in a cloudless sky.

Our lack of direct knowledge of this identity is the ultimate cause of our restlessness and lies behind our feelings of unfulfilment and frustration. These can only be permanently cured by spiritual means. Expressed positively, there is a principle within us that must grow and expand if we are to be at peace with ourselves.

When a child is growing, his clothes need constant replacement as they become too tight for his expanding body. When a man starts to grow spiritually, he becomes aware of a sense of inward limitation and stagnation. Many of the ideas, assumptions and opinions he has harboured so far, now seem to offer no real lead in life, and yet he feels intuitively that there is something more to be discovered about life and its meaning. This state of mind is a spiritual opportunity, a chance to

open ourselves to new influences that will promote the true progress and expansion of the soul.

At such crossroads in our inner life, the turning we take won't necessarily be a spiritual one. If we still imagine that the lasting solution to our problems will be achieved through some outer change, we shall continue to wrestle with circumstances and perhaps win a better situation. But sooner or later our new responsibilities will make their own demands and revive the old feeling of restriction. Even if we had the means and opportunity to arrange for ourselves a continuous stream of novel and stimulating experiences, rather like being a permanent tourist, we shall eventually be forced back into a humdrum lifestyle, confronted by the less glamorous path of duty and the need to deal with unforeseen problems.

A good man used to pray persistently to be allowed to visit Paradise — just a quick visit to see what it was like. Eventually his prayer was granted. He was taken to the heavenly realm and there he found himself surrounded by gentle delights of all kinds, graceful people enjoying an atmosphere of the utmost tranquillity and contentment. Years later, when he died, he went to heaven. But this time he was immediately given some overalls to wear and also some gardening tools. He said, somewhat surprised: 'When I last came there was nothing to do. I simply enjoyed myself.' The answer came: 'Then you came as a tourist. Now you are a resident.'

One moral of this story is that to transcend our sense of limitation is not a matter of securing an easy ride in the outer life. Any pleasing situation can only be sustained by a certain amount of dedicated work. Therefore, for our spiritual growth and the transcendence of our feeling of restriction, there has to be a way forward which does not deny or evade the normal demands of our earthly life, but must somehow be integrated with that life. The real solution is not a change of outer circumstances, but to work on the inner plane and to cultivate a spiritual frame of mind.

The first real stage of spiritual growth is the realization of our need for a better inner state. This is a major awakening in our life. It is not necessarily an insight that is entertained by the majority of men. For this discontent that we feel, assumes that the expanding principle within us has begun to pressurize our consciousness to such a degree that it cannot

be ignored. When this happens a man becomes more intensely aware of his inner life. This awareness often brings with it a feeling of disharmony and unfulfilment, as if something vital within our own nature is as yet unexpressed or unrealized.

This state of restlessness can be compared to the state of a fully grown chick that is still contained within the egg but is ready to break out and to experience a wider life beyond the restrictions of the shell. So too man is destined to go beyond his present apparently restricted mentality and enter a life of spiritual expansion leading to fulfilment. When a person reaches this point of dissatisfaction with his present experience, he begins to look around for some source that mirrors, or is in sympathy with, his own inner state. What he really needs at this stage is a clear understanding of what is happening to him, the reassurance that all is well, and that this restlessness is essential to his spiritual evolution. It is a divine discontent, for his own nature is fundamentally divine.

Who will he turn to? There are countless seeming remedies on offer. And he will no doubt sample several before he finds one which earns his deeper consideration. But if he wants true freedom, he will need to be told in no uncertain terms about the spiritual path and its goal, illumination, and what he has to do in order to progress steadily to that end. It is only from the genuine spiritual teachings based on the insights of those who have realized the goal, that he will gain the light he needs.

The next definite sign in his spiritual awakening is the eagerness which drives him to listen to spiritual teachings. It may well be that Shakespeare's schoolboy, with shining morning face, 'goes unwillingly to school'. But our attitude to hearing the divine Truth about our true nature and its higher potentialities must be more of a thirst — a need — than a duty. This inner thirst is an essential ingredient of the dynamic spiritual life and without it no progress is possible.

This hunger of the soul is one of the main themes of that great spiritual classic, the *Masnavi* of Jalaluddin Rumi. In one story a man is seen rushing to the mosque in order to join in the service and receive the Prophet's blessing. But when he sees that the people are leaving the mosque, he lets out a sigh of anguish and disappointment. Hearing this sigh, the people ask what is wrong. He replies: 'Alas I have missed the service and the blessing.' Deeply impressed by his earnestness, an onlooker says: 'Please confer on me that sigh — that longing. It is worth

far more than all the prayers of the congregation put together.’

Why are the spiritual teachings good to hear? They are not simply informative. They have an awakening power. If heard in the right way, they kindle the flame of recognition of our true identity and impart the means whereby we may adjust our inner life so that it may reflect more and more of the light of the Spirit. They tell us the source of our feeling of restlessness and search. That source is our unrealized higher and spiritual Self.

Listening seems to be an easy thing, but in fact it is a high art and requires conscious cultivation. This need for effective listening is signified by the expression used by Jesus: ‘He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.’ One might argue that the vast majority of people have ears to hear, unless they are physically deaf. It is true that our eardrums are sensitive to soundwaves, and so we hear. But listening is a different matter.

In Shakespeare’s play, *Henry IV Part II*, the chief justice tries his best to question Sir John Falstaff about his doings. But each time Falstaff shields himself by changing the subject. In the end, the chief justice, in exasperation, tells Falstaff that he must be suffering from a disease, because, ‘You hear not what I say to you.’ Then Falstaff at last comes to the point, showing that it is not his hearing that is at fault, but his listening. He says: ‘It is the disease of not listening, the malady of not marking, that I am troubled with.’

The same difficulties, often working unconsciously within us, can hinder our reception of the spiritual Truth. One reason for this shielding ourselves is that the mind is generally in a state of high security, keen to avoid interference from new and challenging ideas. It prefers to remain in a state of continuous surface activity rather than to explore its own quieter depths. If it listens at all to spiritual teachings, it is likely to retreat sideways by instantly comparing what it hears with other ideas that seem similar, thus diluting and adulterating the input by this very process of intellectual comparison. But this subtle evasion of the true impact of the words of Truth has to be outgrown. On the path of wisdom, it is depth of mind that really matters, not breadth of information. The treasury of Truth lies buried in the depth of our being. To unveil our real nature requires inner stillness, either the stillness of meditation or the stillness of perfect receptivity, resisting the tendency to lose ourselves in

seemingly spiritual fancies, or indulge in the habit of cross-referencing what we hear with other ideas lodged in our memory.

What is real listening? Rumi gives us a hint when he tells how the followers of Mohammed listened to him whenever he gave them a recitation from the Quran.

At the moment of munificence, that chosen messenger would demand of us attentiveness and a hundred reverences.

’Tis as when a bird is perched on your head, and your soul trembles for fear of its flitting,

So you dare not stir from your place, lest your beautiful bird should take to the air:

You dare not breathe, you suppress a cough lest that exquisite bird should fly away.

This is highly focused listening, intensely conscious, where the listeners do not want to miss a single word. There is also a sense that this is an opportunity for deeper understanding. Why? Because any genuine spiritual teachings, when they are concerned with throwing light on the nature of the soul, of God, of the supreme Reality, transmit through the words something that is deeper than the words and bears the radiance of the experience that inspires the words.

What has been said seems reasonable enough to those who are already committed to a spiritual way of life. But man has an active and critical mind, and is not inclined to take things on faith and trust only. If we are not certain of the reasons why we should adopt a particular school of thought or way of practice, it will not retain our allegiance for long. We must be intellectually convinced of its validity and not just emotionally impressed by its presentation.

In order to optimize our receptivity and our capacity to receive the benefits of spiritual teachings, and yet also to give full scope to the mind’s critical faculty, the knowers of Truth recommend that we train ourselves to apply the following simple sequence, which may be expressed in the formula: ‘First the listening, then the analysis.’ If, while listening, our mind starts to challenge, analyze and compare, then while this intense inner activity is happening, we may lose the thread of what is being said, gathering a few vague impressions overshadowed by a pile

of prejudices and preconceived ideas. A better situation is the reverse of this: to forget our biases completely and allow our mind to receive as much as possible of the information that is being conveyed. Afterwards, we are encouraged to reflect on the teachings, preferably in solitude, rather than in discussion. Then we should allow the objections, if any, and the questions, to be formulated by our intellect with its critical faculty. If doubts persist, we have the option of returning to the source of our information and of raising our questions with someone who has deeper and wider experience in this field. If there are no such questions or objections, and we feel that we have been, to some extent, spiritually nourished, it is reasonable to deepen our interest through further contact with the teachings.

Is listening to the teachings enough to awaken us to a direct and permanent realization of the Truth? For example, if we are told the Self of man is in essence identical with God, and we remember it, does this constitute realization or spiritual illumination? The ultimate purpose of the teaching of non-duality is to revive our realization that the Self is never really under a veil and is the only fundamental Reality, self-effulgent and self-evident. But our practical experience suggests that most people can only assimilate this radical doctrine indirectly to begin with, as a new idea in the mind, and not as a direct experience of reality that transcends the mind. In order to convert our familiarity with the non-dual principle into the living flame of Truth, and to be liberated, something more is needed. This is spiritual practice.

Spiritual practice in Adhyatma Yoga has wide implications and penetrates the whole of our life. It includes practices aimed at the control and mastery of our inner life, and also the adoption of spiritual values generally, such as patience, tranquillity, harmlessness, and honesty instead of flattery. During our active life and our interface with other people, there are countless opportunities to evoke these spiritual values and put them into practice. This is the way our inner faculty of spiritual wisdom will expand and grow, and lead us further along the path to enlightenment.

Not least, our practice should include the habit of reflecting consciously on the spiritual teachings we have heard with a view to extracting their inner meaning. Such pondering may be compared to sucking a sweet where the most intense and delightful flavour is

encapsulated at the very centre of the sweet, and will only burst upon our tongue after we have dissolved the surrounding layers. In the same way, spiritual doctrines, like the intrinsic divinity of man, or the changeless consciousness that is aware of our thoughts from within, or that the spiritual light is reflected in a still mind — all these doctrines are very profound and meaningful, and will only reveal their richness if we give them careful and sensitive consideration.

We should approach the practices of whatever kind with genuine longing and thirst for purity and freedom. This can be stimulated if we keep ourselves aware of the great goal towards which we are travelling. In our daily life, to recall some spiritual thought, some high verse from a spiritual classic, or to consult a pocket notebook that records sayings that inspire us, will make all the difference to our ability to cope with the day and remain spiritually centred. Such recollection will also serve as an antidote to the stings of life.

A holy man once witnessed a fight between a snake and a mongoose. Each time the mongoose was struck by the snake, it retreated to a particular bush, lingered a moment or two, and then returned to the fray. It was discovered that the bush was a herb that proved to be an antidote to the snake's venom. In the same way, to revive the thought of our meditation text, to call on Truth or God, to repeat a holy name such as Jesus or OM, will bring light into the mind and effectively counter the adverse influence of circumstances or our own negative thoughts.

What is the purpose of all the spiritual practices which we undertake in this Yoga? It is to calm and tranquillize the restless activity of the mind and create an inner atmosphere of peace, harmony and clarity. This in turn is a means to the deeper development in which the light and bliss of our spiritual nature, which is ever radiating from the core of our being, may impress our mind from within and enlighten it.

When the lower activities of the mind, those concerned with worldly acquisitions, anxieties, personal ambitions and resentments, have been controlled and brought to a stillness, a higher part of the mind becomes operative. This part of our mind, called the buddhi, has direct access to the source of wisdom, if, as a channel, it is kept pure and clear. The true growth of the soul is the increasing degree of peace, purity and clarity that we bring about by our own spiritual efforts, in this higher part of our mind.

One could compare the process of training the mind to Jesus's calming of the waters. In the Bible we read how Jesus and his disciples were caught in a storm at sea. The disciples roused Jesus, who was asleep: 'And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.' In this illustration the water may be taken as a symbol of our ever restless mind and Jesus as a symbol of the great and divine potentiality within us to direct and calm the mental activities. One secret of Yoga is that this divine principle of authority is present in every man.

When we attempt to perform spiritual practices with a view to uniting ourselves with our innermost divine centre, we automatically draw on the power that has its source in that centre. We shall find that it is possible to command our mind to be still. If we persevere, the mind will respond as a servant to a master on whom it depends. In the following meditation text, our potential mastery over our own mental life, and the source of this mastery, is presented very clearly.

OM. I AM YOUR MASTER, O MY MIND. IT IS IMPERATIVE
THAT YOU SHOULD OBEY ME. BE STILL. YOUR REAL HOME
AND SUPPORT IS GOD WITHIN ME. OM

The Bible also relates the episode when Christ is said to have walked on the water. This may be taken as symbolizing that same ability to rise above the restlessness of the mind, and keep the higher part of our mind dry, so to say, in spite of the disturbances in the environments inner and outer. To extend the metaphor, we keep the higher part of our mind dry by exposing it to the interior Sun of the true Self, through remembering our essentially divine nature as often as we can.

Why do we need to be spiritually focused in this way? Because this is the way we reunite our limited being with the inner region of transcendence that is our true nature. This higher part of the mind has been called the point of contact. We can develop it through attention, or lose it, as it were, by neglect.

We ourselves have the faculty to choose whether to promote or disregard our spiritual progress. Choice is at the heart of all spiritual endeavour. For spirituality implies having the conviction that the progress of our soul to enlightenment is the most important thing in life. We may have other interests, some voluntary, some unavoidable, due to

our work or situation. But let us engage in these interests consciously and with a clear purpose. Let us now and then pause during the day and ask ourselves: 'Why am I doing this? How much of my time is it claiming? Am I doing this purposefully and creatively, with a definite end in view, or have I become distracted?' In Yoga, this alertness or self-awareness is called conscious living or goal-directed living.

What really shifts the barrier to our spiritual growth is when we make the supreme goal of God-realization our own personal goal. This indeed is the goal that is promulgated by Christ, Krishna and Buddha in their different ways, and it is meant to be our goal, my goal. When we accept this fact, it is called 'framing one's purpose'. This decision to live purposefully is itself a kind of affirmation that springs from the higher part of our mind, our buddhi. Once this purpose has been adopted, the whole of our life can be organized on spiritual lines. The *Chandogya Upanishad* declares that our purpose will determine our path and destiny. In spiritual matters we are in a position to choose the highest purpose. Therefore, says the sage, 'Let a man frame his purpose.'

Such a purpose may thus be framed as follows: 'The supreme goal in life — spiritual illumination — is my own personal goal and I am going to work for it.' This is the conviction that will advance our spiritual growth. Once this conviction has been formulated within us, it serves as a touchstone or standard against which the value of all other undertakings is measured. With regard to any involvement, we have the power to stand back and assert: 'OM. I am the director of my own mind. If I judge that this interest will not hinder my spiritual growth, I shall pursue it. But if I find that I have misjudged the situation, I shall instantly change track, without remorse or repentance, but with determination to complete my spiritual unfoldment with urgency and priority.' For who knows how much time will remain at our disposal?

An elderly woman came to a holy man and said: 'I have lived a life of selfishness, and now I wish to learn the way to holiness. Teach me, and accept my body, mind and wealth.' The sage remained quiet, so the woman asked: 'Have I come too late?' 'No', he replied. 'You have come in time. Whoever comes to God before he dies has come in time, though he may have been a long time in coming.'

In seeking to realize the true nature of the Self — God within — are we doing something which is abnormal or unnatural? Will such a course result in a manufactured state of consciousness that will dissipate as soon

as life confronts us with a real challenge?

It was said earlier that our true home and support is God within, the spiritual realm which is the very ground of our being. What is unnatural is to continue living our lives disconnected from our own spiritual source and unable to benefit from the peace, power, light and bliss that are implicit in our own deeper nature. Thus alienated from our source, we conceive desire after desire, and none of these desires has so far led us to a state of permanent contentment. The life that is driven by uncontrolled desires and passions is the truly abnormal life, and the mind that is uncontrollable is the truly abnormal mind.

There is a Chinese saying: 'The mad mind never stops; if it did, it would become enlightened.' This saying gives us a hint of the barrier created by the restless mind, and the dissolving of that barrier once the mind becomes peaceful and still.

So on one level it is a far more advanced manifestation of nature when a man recovers the rulership of his own inner world through training his mind, so that he can choose what to think about whenever he wishes to do so, and for as long as he likes, and, if he so chooses, to make the mind void of all thoughts and rest his consciousness in his real home and support, the spiritual Self which is his innermost awareness and the substratum of his being.

Self-realization is the ultimate revelation of our nature, in the light of which all else is seen as an illusion that has never tainted or limited the true Self. In the words of Shri Shankara:

This being the Self of all is the true state of the consciousness of Atman, his supreme natural state. But when he feels himself to be other than the Self of all, even by the tip of a hair, that is nescience.

So in seeking to realize that one's own Self is the Self of all, and the sole reality of the universe, one is being true to oneself in the very highest sense. To follow this path is true faith, enlightened faith, leading to direct experience of the supreme Truth. From this standpoint, the apparent multiplicity of selves that we find in the universe, and the universe itself, are realized to be none other than one's own Self. This Reality is the unity within and behind all the seeming multiplicity. The knower of Truth has the certainty that there is but one Reality and I am verily That.

B.D.

INTRODUCTION TO MEDITATION

IN HIS WONDERFULLY helpful book *Meditation: Its Theory and Practice*, our founder, Dr Shastri, advised: '...one must cultivate a love for difficult things'. 'Meditation is a technique for purifying the psycho-logical instruments of knowledge, and for awakening their faculty of spiritual intuition.' Now how is this to be achieved? Dr Shastri tells us a story drawn from the Zen tradition:

There was in Japan a Zen monk who was an adept in meditation. Among the men from all walks of life who were attracted by his reputation as a teacher, was a well-known Professor of the Imperial University of Tokyo. The Professor went to see the monk, who offered him the customary green tea. Placing a cup before the distinguished visitor, he poured tea into it until it became full. He continued to pour, and the cup overflowed. Seeing the tea spilling over the table and on to the floor-mats, the startled Professor asked for an explanation. The Zen monk said: 'I can fill what is empty, but not that which is already full. You have come to me with your mind full of ideas of *meum* and *tuum*, ambitions and desires. If you seek my instruction, empty your mind, forget all you have learnt, and rid yourself of all harmful and useless matter; then return and I will teach you.' (*Meditation: Its Theory and Practice*: pp.23-4)

To focus the mind is essential to meditation, but it is a preliminary. The real aim is to withdraw attention and concern both from the external world with its alluring objects and also from the inner world with its stream of associative ideas and emotional reactions to them, and then re-focus on one chosen point. As Dr Shastri puts it: 'The practice has a double purpose: to create a vacuum in the mind, and to fill that vacuum with what is desirable.'

'That is more easily said than done,' you may say. 'My mind will be sure to interfere with this — to bring up pictures and ideas unbidden.' Dr Shastri replies: '...But the will is stronger than either thought or mind, and can banish these pictures. Fill the mind so completely with the idea of the meditation, that no room is left in it for anything else. Continue negating the distractions and gently lead the mind back to the

meditation.’

Make a start by assuming the right posture for meditation: ‘Sit still, with the back, head and neck in a straight line...To sit in this posture, in relaxation, tranquillizes the mind.’ And now seek the right frame of mind for the meditation practice: Approach the meditation with reverence and calmness. Feel that you are in the presence of the divine, within and without you. Mentally bow to that invisible power. Ask yourself what you hold sacred and bow to what you hold sacred, calmly, humbly, in reverence.

Breathing practice

The first practice is a breathing practice, breathing deeply and slowly: 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. Dr Shastri explained: ‘By relaxation, steadiness of posture is achieved.’

If you decide to make a serious trial of meditation, then make a firm decision to do it each day for forty days. Choose a specific time, preferably early in the morning. Sit in the same quiet place, where you will be undisturbed. Sit on a cushion on the floor or on a firm chair, with the back straight, relaxed but alert.

Visualisation practice

Now go on to practise a visualization: Visualize any sunrise you may have seen. Imagine the sun is rising higher and higher over the mountains, over the trees, over the plains. Concentrate on this picture for at least 5 minutes. You may find that a picture of a sunrise will help your concentration or you may prefer to close your eyes.

It is important to carry on in the spirit of the meditation. Dr Shastri advised: ‘Make it a point to be calm throughout the day. Whatever happens, treat everyone with sympathy and kindness, and be assured that there are no enemies in the world, unless they are self-created; there are no strangers either.’ And again: ‘Avoid all hurry and needless anxiety during the day, and remain in a peaceful state of mind. Think of

strength and feel that you are becoming stronger and stronger. Be kind and considerate to all, but do not preach.’

Meditation on a text

The last practice is meditation on a text with our minds ready to receive its thought-content. ‘The mind is then comparable to a stage from which all the actors have made their exit. The actors are not there, the producer and promoter of the play are not there, the musicians of the orchestra are not there. Only the light shines, illuminating the empty stage.’ Take one portion at a time and let the mind rest in it. The meditation should be felt.

OM
I EXIST FOREVER IN THE DIVINE SUN, THE SELF. MY
MIND REFLECTS ITS PEACE, LIGHT AND TRANQUILLITY.
OM

Just to remind you of Dr Shastri’s advice: ‘The best times for meditation are the early morning and before retiring at night, but whatever hour and place is decided upon should be maintained if humanly possible, because a rhythm is thus established and a spiritual habit formed which increases the power and effectiveness of the meditation.’

Offering thoughts of goodwill

Traditionally each meditation session finishes by forgiving anyone against whom you may have a grievance. Sit in peace, offering thoughts of goodwill to the whole world.

J.R.

Cross the Ocean of Suffering

WHAT IS THIS OCEAN of suffering? Adhyatma Yoga gives a very clear definition. It is the experience of the being who believes himself to be something that he is not, namely the mind and the body.

Do we doubt that the world is an ocean of suffering? If we are quite content with our existence, then there seems little reason to escape from it, to cross over it. Now clearly there is suffering in the world, the daily news is filled with it — illness, bereavement and hardship. To one in such a state there would be little need to convince them and indeed they would no doubt be very keen to try any means, religious or otherwise, of escape. In the *Bhagavad Gita* the Lord says:

Four kinds of virtuous men worship Me, O Arjuna — the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of wealth, the wise man and the distressed.

Indeed one of the merits of suffering is that it often prompts one to question the status quo; to start to look for something deeper. However, such a motivation often evaporates when the suffering ceases.

Now apart from the very obvious kind of suffering mentioned previously, there is a more subtle and far more pervasive state of suffering to which all beings are subject, and this is desire. A brief analysis of a typical day will show that many of our thoughts and actions are driven by desire — from what we would like for breakfast, to planning a holiday, through to finding a life partner. But the state of desire is not happiness; it is dissatisfaction mixed with an *imagined* pleasure on the fulfilment of the desire. And it is this *imagined* pleasure that is so troublesome because it allows the faculty of denial to operate.

Human beings are given a huge capacity for denial — the thought of the smoker, for example, that cancer really is not such a big risk. This denial no doubt conferred a certain survival benefit on our predecessors; certainly they had many things to be anxious about that we have now largely eliminated. When concerned with desire, this faculty of denial leads to the thought that: ‘Well, I accept that at the moment I am not happy but this will all change when I have such and such.’ And thus we end up living in an imagined future which, of course, may or may not

happen and this stops us from dealing with the present, from asking the question: ‘Why am I not happy right now?’

And what about the proportion of time spent desiring, compared to the time spent actually enjoying? A recollection of the last time you really enjoyed something will probably reveal that the amount of time thinking about it, planning and working for it was vastly greater than the transient happiness that it produced.

What is desire? There is good evidence that it is just various circuits of the brain going about their business. Take hunger for example. There are sensory areas in the brain which react to the balance of glucose and fat stored in our bodies and stimulate our appetite accordingly, and we suddenly feel, ‘Oh, I’d really like a bar of chocolate.’ Now this is a very trivial example but in fact many of our desires have this sort of basis. Are we just going to let our lives be run by the functioning of various neural circuits? No. And Yoga teaches that we do not have to.

To stay with this concept of neural functioning for the moment. Let us consider an extreme example of desire — alcoholism. This is a classical addictive behaviour. Alcohol is known to stimulate serotonin receptors in the brain. It is thought that these receptors are involved in the pleasure that may be produced by an activity and that they become self-reinforcing, so that each repetition of an action creates a stronger and stronger desire to repeat that act. The alcoholic will very often lose their partner, perhaps their home and seriously damage their health — yet they just keep on drinking. The neural circuits are out of control and it demonstrates the terrible state that the mind can develop if it is left uncontrolled. In this scenario, rational thought, that tells them that if they really wanted to be as happy as possible they would give up drinking, is completely overwhelmed by desire.

So how do we deal with the mind in Yoga? Firstly we objectify it. What do we mean by this? It means to take the mind, not as who we really are, but instead as something which we have a very close connection to but are really different from and hence we can observe it and study it. By thinking of the brain as a collection of neurons, which in many types of behaviour have been genetically pre-programmed, we have already achieved this to some degree.

We can also objectify the mind by considering the question, ‘Is this desire part of me or something other than me?’ In the case of being hungry it is fairly easy to accept that it is not an absolute part of yourself

but rather the body. And this is reinforced by the fact that eating something rapidly removes the desire.

What about the desire to be successful, ambition if you like. Here someone is far more likely to consider this to be a quality of their real self. Why? Because it is so much more persistent than hunger — the longer a quality is with ourselves the more likely we are to consider it our real self. However, one could imagine that an ambitious person having achieved what he set out to do, and perhaps being disappointed that it wasn't what he expected in the end, lost his ambition. At that point he couldn't say that ambition was an absolute quality of himself since it had departed at some point.

It is very useful to think about what qualities are definitely ours, and when you try to pin it down, the vast majority very clearly cannot be part of our absolute self. Adhyatma Yoga tells us that our real nature is *satchit-ananda*, existence, consciousness and bliss. What we think we are, the mind and body, is in fact a form of illusion. By distancing ourselves from the mind and body, we allow the possibility of this real nature to filter through.

So where does rational thought fit into this? Surely man is a rational being. Modern psychology would to a very large extent refute this. Although we could certainly tell someone why we did such and such with perfectly reasoned arguments, it would probably be to a large degree 'post hoc rationalisation'. We are largely driven by emotion and desire which do not operate rationally, but in seeing our actions we create an appropriate rational set of reasons to fit in with them. But this is not the end for rational thought, because Yoga teaches that very importantly it *can* be used to direct the desires of the mind and can, with practice, control the mind to an extraordinary degree, and this is the next key step.

So how do we bring true rational thought into play? We need to live consciously. This means thinking about what we are doing at any particular time and noting what is driving us. Is it emotions — has someone just annoyed us and left the mind running over the incident again and again without any conclusion? Are we being driven by desire? And if so what is going to be the result on fulfilling it — transient pleasure or something more worthwhile? This simple observation of what the mind is doing and its purpose will quickly give a degree of control, as the mind becomes objectified and we are, so to say, looking

in on its actions.

This process of observing the activity of the mind may be taken a step further so that at the end of the day you review your thoughts and actions. Some you will be pleased with and some you will not be. With those that you are not, do not berate yourself, but just for a few minutes concentrate on the opposite quality, and, if you like, ask for help from one of the divine incarnations, Christ or Buddha for example. Remember that in offering a prayer, although you appear to be summoning an external principle, you are really contacting the Divine within your own nature. This simple practice, if undertaken earnestly, will yield very real results.

Let us now consider the image that is created by the title of this article, 'Cross the ocean of suffering'. The ocean is the world. As we look out across the ocean, it is vast, we cannot see its limits. Can we even be sure that there is anything to cross over to? The waves moving on the surface of the ocean are the different objects in the world. They are virtually infinite in number, we will never know even a tiny fraction of them. Such is the world, infinitely varied, there will always be something new to try, always something else to divert us from following a spiritual path.

The ocean is also a good analogy for the world because it is always changing, nothing is fixed. If we try to make our abode in the world, then we are guaranteeing a dissolution and loss at some future point. Jung, in his analysis of symbols, concluded that water is a symbol for the sub-conscious, and this is relevant because it is not only the outer world which is infinite and ever changing but also the inner world, the world of the mind. Although the mind is in some respects the instrument to be used for our journey, it is also that which is to be transcended.

How are we going to cross this ocean? We cannot go unaided. If we do, we will make very slow progress, being swept by currents hither and thither. No, we must use the boat of Yoga. What kind of a boat is it? Is it a great liner that we lie back on and sail through the oceans, oblivious to what they are doing? No, it is a tiny boat, at risk of being dashed should the seas turn stormy. We have to cling to it with faith and, following the instructions we have been given, guide it as straight as possible across the ocean.

Note how a boat floats across the sea. It is not completely independent of the water nor is it submerged in it. Such is one on a yogic

path. While in the world acting with a job and family, they are also in some way untouched by it, knowing that it is merely a part of transitory existence.

Finally, we need to know all about the boat. We have to become adepts in its use. How do we go about this? Primarily we need what is called in Sanskrit, *vichara*, enquiry. We need to question and to learn. Certainly we may get a great deal of preliminary knowledge from books, but what has been gained from books has to be practised, and practised not for our own aggrandisement and self-satisfaction but from a deep belief that this is one of the few really worthwhile activities to undertake.

At the beginning of this article, it was asserted that the nature of the world was essentially suffering driven by desire which can never be truly fulfilled. *Vichara* means not just accepting this teaching on blind faith but to really think about it — to try and find fault or flaw in the argument. As long as this is done with the aim of arriving at truth, this is to be encouraged. Those of an intellectual persuasion may be tempted to think and think about these problems, to read some more and think some more, but there will come a time when a conviction is reached such that we must act according to our beliefs. We must test out ideas. If we are convinced that uncontrolled desire causes suffering, then we must experiment and say ‘I am going to try and restrain the mind and see what happens,’ and you can be assured that while some things may be expected, some results will be entirely novel and in this way progress is made.

Dr Shastri was always against what he called ‘rigid thinking’. What he means is the state of thinking that we know something with certainty. The problem with this is that the spiritual truth which we aim for is something far greater than anything we can possibly imagine. Even as we approach it, it expands before our eyes to become more and more subtle and all-encompassing. If we insist on holding on to any particular idea, it will eventually become an impediment to our future progress. Take the idea of desire. One may be inclined to conclude that desire must be eliminated. For a time the pursuit of this may well be beneficial, but this conclusion ignores the fact that desires can be spiritualized or given up as a sacrifice. If one just stuck to the stubborn conclusion the desire must be eliminated, progress would grind to a halt. Therefore this Yoga teaches that all concepts must be eventually given up. In the *Kena Upanishad* it says:

He knows Brahman to whom Brahman is unknown; he knows it not who thinks that it is known. It is unknown to those who know, and known to those who do not know. II.3

Much of this article has been concerned with identifying what we are not, what might be called a negative approach. However Adhyatma Yoga has a positive aspect as well, in fact it often comes as a surprise at how forcefully this is expressed even in the very early stages of this Yoga. There are many texts available which demonstrate this. For example in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* we find:

I am the spirit which moves the tree. My fame rises high as a mountain peak. I am pure in my root. I am immortal and resplendent. I am the bright wealth. I am skilful and wise. I do not know death or decay.

What is the basis for making a statement such as this verse? It is an expression of the Divinity that lies within each one of us, and here it is bursting forth. To those brought up in the tradition of the Christian Church, this type of affirmation may border on the blasphemous and the idea of concentrating on it may seem to risk opening the floodgates of rampant egoism. However the effect in practice is quite the opposite.

Man innately has a sense of his own inner divine nature and the misery of life is caused by his misdirected efforts at expressing it. Why does man want to learn? Because his real nature is omniscient. Why does man seek pleasure? Because this is a tiny reflection of the bliss which he really is. Why does the mind resist control? Because its real nature is absolute freedom. If we try to really assert these truths, then we find that in fact the mind becomes tranquillized and controllable. Essentially it becomes harmonized so that, for example, we seek satisfaction not in the outer world, where it only appears as an illusion, but in the inner world where it is really to be found.

How do we soak the mind in the great truths such as that expressed in the verse mentioned? It is with meditation. Meditation is one of the key practices of this Yoga and it is the method whereby the higher faculty of intuition comes into play. Marjorie Waterhouse, a former Warden of Shanti Sadan, says of this faculty:

Whereas it is common knowledge today that below the conscious mind there lies a subconscious region, the repository of latent desires and emotions, a snake-pit of suppressed activity, it is not so well known, nor is it believed by all in the West, that there is a supra-conscious region also. Here is located (if one can use such a term) a high intuitive faculty. It lies behind and above the conscious mind of every individual, but it only becomes operative when the mind has been mastered and quietened by the practice of meditation. This power is the power of direct perception and spiritual intuition; through it, knowledge comes instantaneously and not through a conscious process. It forms the medium through which God or Truth touches and transforms the being of man, as one sees Him doing in the great fresco of Michelangelo.

Dr Shastri made the point that meditation is a spiritual act and its goal is spiritual. Certainly it produces a tranquil mind and a refined sense of bliss, but this is not its true purpose.

Meditation needs dedication, and one will find that it has a bearing on all one's activities. One notable effect is that the events of daily life will be noticed much more prominently during the time of meditation. For example, if we have allowed our mind to become absorbed in some future activity which we are going to enjoy, then you can be sure that at the time of meditation the mind will try to return to this subject. Likewise, if we have soaked it in agitating imagery, television and film being the prime suspects here, meditation will be disturbed, and these effects can be quite long lasting. Alcohol is also highly destructive. With this in mind, the desire to ensure that the time devoted to meditation is not wasted, makes us think much more carefully about how we spend our time the rest of the day.

The conscious part of our mind is only a tiny fraction of the mind. The sub-conscious is a much greater part. This sub-conscious part can continue to focus on an idea of meditation even though we ourselves may not be aware of it. This is fostered by really believing in the truth of a meditation text. If a meditation is approached in the spirit of 'Let me try meditating on this and see what happens,' the results will not be absent but they will be limited. Marjorie Waterhouse advised taking the text as an absolute statement of truth which is addressed to you personally. If the meditation is taken in this way, then it will be retained

in the sub-conscious and continue to function there, altering our outlook in a most beneficial way.

So to recap the themes of this article. The nature of the world is suffering. Buddha taught this, and once one starts to really think about the nature of life and experience, it is quite verifiable by yourself. The root cause of this suffering is desire and desire is perpetuated by our false identification with the mind and body, thinking we are something which we are not.

To overcome this false identification we can first start to distance ourselves from them. We considered that part of the activity of the mind is just certain neural circuits firing, some of them acting on basic instincts which may be quite unhelpful for life as a human being in society, let alone one on a spiritual path. Another method is to think about the transience of our desires and our character as a whole. When really analysed, it becomes very hard to say that any desire or quality is really part of ourselves. And this is an example of how, by rational thought, we can transcend ourselves.

This use of rational thought is called *vichara* (enquiry) but it has to be coupled with practical steps and must be accompanied by an ever present willingness to give up previous ideas and conceptions as we make our way across the ocean.

Finally we considered meditation, which most often has a positive aspect, confirming what we are. It is to be undertaken with solely spiritual aims and as something which permeates all of our life.

May you all swiftly cross this ocean of suffering to the further shore of light.

P.R.

BREAK DOWN THE THOU

by Swami Rama Tirtha - translated by A.J. Alston

Break down the Thou
Till nothing of it remains
Nor any whiff of duality whatever.
Enquiry itself is a subtle veil,
Enquiry exists that enquiry may cease.
Prayer, also, is a veil obstructing union.
Prayer exists that prayer may cease.

Existence is Consciousness

‘WE MEDITATE on Him, from Whom the world proceeds, in Whom it exists and in Whom the withdrawal takes place at the time of dissolution, Who is established by proofs, positive and negative, Who is the self-effulgent Lord of all, Who gives the scriptures in which the understanding of the mind of man is bewildered, in Whom the regions above, below and in the middle exist as a ring, a watch, a bracelet exist in gold, Who by his indefinable power lifts up the soul of man as an act of His mercy, He Who is Truth, Who transcends all, on Him we meditate.’

The purpose of the human mind is, in its lower sense, for the preservation of the species and in its higher sense that it may know Truth and be freed.

Souls not yet developed devote their mental faculties to their individual and selfish ends, that is, for the sustenance and preservation of the biological and physical existence, unconsciously perhaps for the preservation of the species. But the developed minds devote themselves to the discovery of the spiritual Truth. This is a question needing careful study and some profound thinking. The *prima facie* view is: I live and what contributes to my well-being is good for me. This idea includes the development of nationalism. During the last hundred years no mental ideal has brought so much misery to man as this exaggerated sense of individualism and nationalism.

Thinkers from the time of Hegel have held that the purpose of the individual is to contribute to the good of society and no more. This is a mischievous way of thinking. Matured souls have no such feelings. To them, first, every being is one with them and, second, they devote their mental energy to the discovery of the spiritual Truth. Man exists not only to eat and build houses — so do foxes. What need was there to produce a biped and give it such a brain as man has, unless he discovers what the Greeks called the eternal verities of life and in the spiritual philosophy, the nature of Existence. Without this man’s life is wasted and he will have to come again and again until he has graduated in the University of Sansara and has come to know the identity of himself with the cosmic Existence.

The study of Truth demands a disciplined mind and love of Truth. Just as every investigator before commencing the pursuit of his investigation assures himself that all the instruments are in perfect order, so a man wanting to investigate the spiritual Truth must live a life of discipline, otherwise his efforts will remain fruitless. A life of self-control, concentration, continence and benevolence, devoted to the good of others, a life of prayer and devotion, are a few of the items and properties the soul has to acquire before it is fit to enquire into the nature of existence and acquire eternal freedom.

But men begin the study of metaphysics without these disciplines and so it is that their brains become well filled even as an encyclopaedia, able to confound their fellows in argument, but their life is in variance to what is taught; it is vain. There is a Persian saying that an ounce of practice is worth a pound of theory. Without *yama* and *niyama* (self-discipline and inner self-control) all is naught and vain.

There are two processes of the mind which are essential to cultivate before beginning the study of the spiritual Truth and in order to be able to feel the benefit of it. These are the processes of *withdrawal* and *concentration*.

That man is fit to be a student, who can withdraw his mind from any object in a moment and can concentrate on Truth as long as he requires. Not that the object should bind him. The student has his mind free and can devote as much time as is necessary and then can withdraw at once. This qualification is the prerequisite in the spiritual realm, and even for worldly success it is essential. The mind cannot accomplish anything if it is caught in the snare of appearances like a fly in honey. We should be able to use the mind as a painter uses his brush on the canvas or as a musician uses his instrument. Even in everyday life work should be undertaken in this spirit.

In John Morley’s *Life of Gladstone*, it is said that one evening they returned from parliament together to play a game of chess. They prepared the board, then Morley looked into Mr Gladstone’s eyes and said: ‘May I tell Mrs Gladstone?’ He had that evening resigned his premiership, a great event indeed, and yet he was unconcerned and self-possessed, unaffected in his life. It is also said of him that when he took off his hat, he used to say ‘there goes my premiership’ and he laid down the subject of parliamentary affairs.

The knowers of God must cultivate this habit every day, and the time

will come when the grace of God will dawn on them, and they will know the Truth. Truth is immutable, eternal, without a second and all-pervasive. If these conditions are not fulfilled, it is not Truth.

Truth is free from contradictions and higher than them. It is free from the three classes of differences:

1. Internal differences, e.g. between the branch and leaves of the same tree;
2. Differences between species, e.g. between one tree and another;
3. Differences of genus, e.g. between a tree and a rock.

These are the three differences and Truth is free from them all.

We identify Truth with Existence — a conception far in advance of the Socratic and other schools of Greece. They did not soar much higher than cognition, etc. Truth must be one; it cannot be three or four.

If there are two truths one will contradict the other. It must be free from differences. Truth must be absolute. Brahman is translated by the Germans as the Absolute. It is Existence, one's own Self — Being, free from becoming. The idea that Truth has emanations, attributed to the thrice-blessed Hermes, brought the theory that God emanates higher and lower angels and archangels and so forth. It does not stand the test of logic. If you accept it, you reduce the Absolute to the relative, subject to the realm of cause and effect, and it is robbed of immutability and immortality. Being and becoming are two contradictory concepts.

Sat Chit Matram (literally, 'Existence-Consciousness only') is entirely absolute and nothing more. Tat Twam Asi — That Thou Art. You who are saying; 'Where is it?'; you, the enquirer, the enquiring ego — you, in your intrinsic nature, are immortal, one without a second. To understand this point is to understand a great part of the Upanishads on which this discourse is based.

Let us determine the nature of Existence, Truth or Self. In order to determine it, you cannot use your eyes or hands. Suppose we want to know this brass — we find that it is round, smooth, hard, etc. All this is objective. But Truth is not objective and therefore all objective attempts will fail. The Upanishads teach that this Atman is not to be known by hearing or thinking; it is beyond the reach of the mind and imagination, and is not obtained by these. How can my finite fingers grasp the infinite atmosphere? How can this finite mind with range so limited, grasp the infinite? Mind is mortal, mind is material and not spirit, hence it cannot

grasp immortality. The spiritual Truth is not obtained by efforts but by silence. Emerson says: 'Truth hides in transparency'.

How then shall we determine the nature of Existence? Let us enter our innermost nature and find out by our own experience. Reason alone fails to establish Truth. The existence of a thing in itself cannot be grasped by reason. Therefore away with arguments and go into silence. Lift up the veil in your existence, in deep contemplative silence, and then, if God comes to thee, my friend, thou shalt truly know that 'I am Bliss'. There is no other way whatever.

Bertrand Russell observes that 'of all instruments of precision the mind is the most unreliable'. If unreliable to Russell, who is a materialist, how much more must it be so for a student of the divine metaphysics? Plato in his *Republic* says that by force of contemplation, the sage will understand the importance of justice, not by dialectics. In contemplation, man begins his real spiritual life; when his mind is purged of all fleshly desires, he can go into contemplation. Is it erroneous to say that contemplation is the highest joy in life? The only real joy is contemplation.

The *Bhagavad Gita* says: 'Contemplate'. 'O Arjuna, My devotees contemplate Me in highest feelings of joy.' It is in this realm that true peace is found. All have to come to this life where peace is found. That poetry has yet to be written, that music to be developed, that art to be executed as the result of inspiration acquired by bringing the mortal ego in contact with the Absolute, Brahman, Self. The art of Titian, the philosophy of Hegel, etc., will appear like child's play, miserably incomplete when the work of the real artist is born, the divine artist — the art created by those who contemplate the nature of Existence.

Not by argument, but by evaporating our minds under the fire of contemplation, by discipline, by self-control and so forth, the Truth is known. The external universe is not known to us directly; its picture is produced on the retina of the eye, upside down, conveyed to the brain and thence to the mind. This philosophy is based on the experience obtained in silence.

If this universe is known at all, it is known as modes or states of consciousness. We are intimately acquainted with our being, but what are we directly conscious of? I AM — this is the immediate experience and in this I AM there is another I AM. Until you come to the 'I', 'AM' is a mode of consciousness which does not really exist. Then what do we

know? I AM SAT — Existence or Truth. Can anyone say: 'I am not'. We are conscious of 'I AM' without any possibility of doubt. A step further is: Existence is Consciousness.

Existence is synonymous with consciousness. I am consciousness: this experience requires no proof. Consciousness is Being or Existence imperishable. Being is identical with Consciousness because you cannot think of the one without the other; you cannot think of a rose without thinking also of its petals. The Truth absolute, imperishable is Existence and Consciousness.

Sat is Chit, Existence is Consciousness: this is what Kant meant by the thing-in-itself. Things are not what they seem in appearance. We see the phenomena but not the noumenon of them. Is it conscious or unconscious Existence? If it is unconscious how would you know it? The unconscious needs a subject if you think of it as an object. The Absolute is Consciousness, Existence Absolute. There is no duality.

To sum up: Man is here to know Truth, which will give him everlasting joy. Mind and physical body are mere adjuncts to it. When the mind is purified and disciplined, it can realize Existence immutable and unalterable. It can realize its identity with the Absolute and also with the whole universe. This comes to be known 'by knowing Whom, nothing else remains to be known'. There is no suffering, no power that can then shake the devotee. This is called the Kingdom of Heaven. Those who dedicate themselves to this quest become beings of light for ever.

H.P.S.

O SAQI!

by Swami Rama Tirtha - translated by A.J. Alston

O Saqi! Pour me such a potion in a single cup
 That I may forget this world and the next,
 And drown myself in Thy adoration.
 The pupil of the eye cannot come empty-handed
 To seek the vision of the Beloved.
 On the salver of the eye-lashes
 It must offer its necklace of pearls.
 The Lord will come with His own finger-nail
 To untie the knot of Thy delusions,
 But first a blister must appear
 On the foot-sole of thy spiritual enquiry.

The Wednesday evening talks at Shanti Sadan during the Summer term were a special series on meditation, following on from the appreciation of the Spring series on that subject. The talks covered the essentials of preparing for meditation and establishing regularity in the practice, as well as the psychological and spiritual principles on which it is based. Then there were practical directions, with breathing exercises, visualizations, and meditations on traditional texts expressing the true nature of the Self. Written notes were provided to assist with establishing regular practice at home. Once again the presentations were very attentively received. The series began with a talk called *The Value of Meditation* and the themes in subsequent weeks included *Meditation - the Key to Conscious Living*, *Entering the Inner Temple*, and *Returning to One's Source*. The final talk of the series was on *Meditation and Self-Realization*.

On Friday evenings there were talks on a wide range of topics related to the Yoga teachings. A talk on *Symbols as Aids on the Path* looked at art and symbols as spiritual teaching tools; *Freedom and Fearlessness* considered the roots of anxiety and the yogic prescription for its resolution, and there were talks on *The Crest Jewel of Wisdom*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the writings of Arthur Schopenhauer who was the first major Western philosopher to embrace the Upanishads, and another talk looked at the yogic, non-dualistic, understanding of the teachings of Christ.

The Summer one-day course was held on a Saturday, 7 June, with the overall title *The Yoga of Self-Knowledge: A Way to Perfect Fulfilment*. The day began with a presentation on *The Purpose of Life*, explaining the essential need for *dharma* as the basis of successful living and spiritual enquiry. That was followed by the first meditation session of the day. The second talk of the morning was on *Taking Positive Steps*. After lunch the afternoon began with a talk on *Seeking Truth - Finding Peace*, clearly giving the traditional teaching on the identity of the true Self and the Absolute. The day closed with a further session of traditional practices of the kind that have been used by sincere enquirers for millennia to prepare the mind and to meditate on Truth.