

**SELF-KNOWLEDGE** is the official publication 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 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 centre is at Shanti Sadan, 29 Chepstow Villas, London W11 3DR, where the teachings are given in the traditional way.

## SELF-KNOWLEDGE

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### MATERIAL WELL-BEING AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

THERE ARE people who believe that an entry into the spiritual way of living — that is a conscious, deliberate life of discipline, devotion, study and contemplation — means an introduction into the realm of plenitude, freedom from illness and achievement of worldly success. There are references in the scriptures to the fact that the Lord looks after the mundane interests of His devotees. I, too, subscribe to this view up to a point. But let us consider it critically.

The realm where spiritual peace and satisfaction alone are found is radically different from the realm of matter and of cravings seeking to realize themselves in sensual and mental pleasures. Attainment of the spiritual realm means perfection and a sharing of the infinite, divine life. This realm demands certain conditions, chief among which are indifference to the pairs of opposites, an attitude of equanimity towards the occurrences and events of the world, and devotion of the entire mental and psychical energy to the good of others. There are many authentic stories of devotees of the Lord who have been materially

helped by Him, but the highest spiritual attainment, even if reached at the cost of all physical pleasure and satisfaction, is worthwhile.

It is open to question whether those devotees who have prayed for worldly prosperity and success are favourites of the Lord to the extent of sharing His life of infinite sovereignty.

Another point to be considered is that it is our karma which conditions our joys, sorrow and worldly success. The Lord can cancel adverse karma of His devotees or, instead, He can bless them with perpetual devotion to Him. A man cannot have both.

It is observed that many of the saints have been subject to physical limitations, but neither illness, poverty nor any bereavement have cooled their ardour or made them forget the normal state of their soul, devotion and contemplation of reality. Augustine, the august Bishop of Hippo, during the last years of his life, was visited by appalling gastric troubles. The blessed saint of Assisi lost his eyesight and the use of his legs before he was forty, yet he had himself driven in a handcart every afternoon to give blessings to the people. Our modern saints, Shri Dada and Rama Tirtha, were visited by physical ailments.

Those who pray for an escape from physical conditions do not know the etiquette of spiritual love. It is not the time-spatial conditions which determine the state of our soul. It is the attitude we adopt towards them which is the decisive factor.

In a Japanese drama, as in King Lear, a young daughter is maltreated by her demented father. Still her love is not affected. Such is the attitude of the true lover. Let the devotee worship Hari (the Lord) in pleasure and pain, in sickness or health, because the sweetness of devotion far surpasses physical worries and pain. A soldier risks his life in battle. The forty-nine Ronins of Japan suffered for many years to uphold the ideal of loyalty to their master. So does the devotee.

My friends, let us be steady in our devotion. Let our faith in and love for Guru and God mount daily like the rising sun. Let our practice of virtue be unconditional. If the bubble knew that it reflected the starry heaven in its bosom, would it be afraid to lose itself in water? The strength of a man's character is determined by the intensity of his perseverance for his ideals.

**Hari Prasad Shastri**

## True Christianity and Yoga

*The Pearl of Great Price*

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THERE IS basic oneness of the teachings of Christ with those of Adhyatma Yoga. Consider the opening words of the Gospel of St John:

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

These verses indicate that the whole cosmos is divine in origin, and that divinity is the source of light and life. The same message is found in the Upanishads. There, the great reality is called Brahman, meaning the Absolute or the supreme Spirit.

All this is Brahman. This universe is born from, dissolves in and exists in That. Therefore, one should meditate by becoming calm.

*Chandogya Upanishad*, III.14.1

This Truth underlies our experience in the universe. It transcends the mind, but there is a spiritual faculty in man, a latent power hidden within the mind, which, when awakened, will enable him to realize ultimate Truth directly and be free forever.

Words are formulated in the mind. Both the mind and its store of words belong to the transient universe. The scriptures point to the immutable spiritual principle underlying the realm of change. This is the transcendent Absolute, and it is the whole. It is the real being of man. The way to its realization is through deepening self-knowledge.

The infinite and transcendent nature of this ultimate light of spiritual reality is indicated in this verse from the *Mundaka Upanishad* (II.ii.10):

There the sun does not shine, nor the moon nor the stars, nor do these flashes of lightning, what to speak of fire. Through His shining, everything else shines. By His light everything is lit.

In the Upanishads, words are used to lift our minds to a realm that is beyond words. In the Christian tradition, great art also attempts to raise man's mind to a realm that is beyond form. Consider the nativity painting by Geertgen tot Sint Jans. There are the forms, yet there is a mysterious light that transcends the forms, including the self-luminous form of the child Christ. Is not the artist attempting to indicate the supreme source of light through which all else is lit?



Geertgen Tot Sint Jans *Nativity* © National Gallery, London

In the *First Epistle of John* (1:5), this light is declared to be the very nature of God: 'God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.' This light is man's origin and true nature. In the *Gospel of Thomas* (50), Jesus says:

If they say to you: 'From where have you originated?', say to them: 'We have come from the Light, where the Light has originated through itself.'

Man's light and God's light are the same when rightly understood. Of this supreme light, it is said in the *Chandogya Upanishad* (III.13.7)

Now, that light which shines beyond this heaven, beyond the whole creation, beyond everything in the highest worlds which are unsurpassingly good, it is certainly this which is the light within a person.

Man can realize this light because, in the words of John, it is 'the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world'. (1: 9) The nature of this realization is signified by Jesus, when, as recorded by Thomas (24), he says:

Within a man of light there is light and he lights the whole world.  
When he does not shine, there is darkness.

There is a supreme spiritual knowledge, an awakened and illumined understanding, which is not different from this ultimate light. Though transcendent, this light is intimately present in all our experiences. All our mental conceptions and perceptions, our thoughts and feelings, are revealed by that ultimate light. If that light were absent, there would be no experience. But that light is never absent and there is nothing outside it to be absent from.

Our life experience appears to contradict this vision of Truth, and this is why the holy scriptures are necessary: they throw light on the spiritual reality. Our only source of information about this light transcendent is from the God-realized sages whose insights have been recorded in the revealed scriptures. This divine knowledge does not reveal itself in us while our mind remains intensely active and consumed in the outer affairs. Hence the *Chandogya Upanishad* advises us: 'Therefore, one should meditate by becoming calm.'

To become calm, the mind needs to enter the inner silence with a sense that it is entering the divine presence — the source of all peace and tranquillity.

The supreme Truth is to be discovered as the essence of our own being. It is approached through the contemplation of some image or

symbol that indicates, in a finite and imaginable form, the infinite spiritual reality that lies within and beyond the symbol. Our focus may be in the form of a sentence or word, a sacred picture or a holy name. All such inner focusing has the aim of awakening our faculty of spiritual intuition. This is the spirit of the *Bhagavad Gita* verse, where the Lord, in the form of Shri Krishna, gives us, in words, a symbolic indicator of His nature and, by implication, our own true nature, as the source of all:

I am the source of all. From Me everything evolves. Thus thinking the wise worship Me, endowed with contemplation. (10:8)

When Jesus declared: ‘The kingdom of heaven is within you’, he is, as it were, prescribing a symbolic meditation designed to turn our gaze from the outer and engage us on the inner quest for self-realization.

If we want self-realization, this inner quest should be the main intention of our life. For if we seek it above everything else, we shall find fulfilment. ‘But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.’ (*Matthew*, 6:33)

The *Chandogya Upanishad* compares this spiritual realm within us to a golden treasure buried in the ground, which we may walk over again and again without realizing its nearness and availability. In the Gospels, the kingdom of heaven is also compared to a treasure that is buried in a field. The seeker is like a man who has realized that this is the place where the treasure is to be sought and found. He sells everything he has and buys the whole field.

One can interpret the whole field as the mind, in which is hidden the treasure of the supreme Truth as its very source. ‘Buying the field’ and making sacrifices to do so, signifies our determination to cultivate our mind, through tranquillity, purity and charging it with thoughts that point to our divinity. Thus the mind will become a clear channel through which our divine nature will manifest. This process is brought about by such practices as meditation, worship, service and philosophical reflection on the spiritual truth.

What is the result of this seeking? Concerning this, Jesus says:

Let him who seeks, not cease from seeking until he finds, and when he finds, he will be troubled, and when he has been troubled, he will marvel, and he will reign over the All. (*Gospel of Thomas*, 2)

Once a man has been told that the Lord is his true Self and is to be sought within his own heart, and accepts it, once he finds, so to say, that this is where Truth has to be realized, he will be troubled, because he will be faced with an inner challenge which he cannot evade. He may postpone the quest or delay it, but it will always haunt his conscience. For he can no longer claim to be ignorant of the path he has to follow. There are no longer any excuses to hold him back, or, if he has been deflected from the path, to stop him from making a new beginning. Sooner or later he will have to face his inner state and take responsibility to remove the rust from the mirror of his heart and clear his vision of egoism and self-deception.

But once his vision is cleared, even partially, he will marvel at the inner revelation. He will realize that the source of happiness and divinity is his own essential being. Finally, he will know that there is no divinity other than his true Self, his Atman, the pearl of great price. And he will recognize himself as ever free, fearless and fulfilled. Sings the sage in the *Avadhut Gita*:

That God, Atman, by whose power the whole universe is born, in which it abides and to which it finally returns like bubbles and waves in the sea, is realized by the wise.

Such verses remind us of the overall purpose of both Christianity and the spiritual Yoga. It is to awaken to direct experience of reality, whether we call it ‘the realization of the kingdom of heaven within’, or we refer to it as Brahavidya — the knowledge of Brahman, or Self-realization.

Religions are means to an end that ultimately transcends religion. They provide the dynamic and progressive steps to Self-realization. As Jesus says: ‘If you bring forth that within yourselves, that which you have will save you.’ (*Thomas*, 70). To bring forth what is within ourselves is to discover that our deeper Self is the source of joy. When

we finally understand that we are not going to find lasting happiness in the outer world, one option still remains. And that undertaking is grounded on Truth, not illusion. It is to seek the treasure within oneself, to dig in our own field. At last our joy will be full, independent, pure and peaceful. This natural Self-joy is also the promise of Yoga:

With the Self unattached to external contacts, he finds the joy which is in the Self. With the Self engaged in the contemplation of Brahman, he attains the endless joy. (*Bhagavad Gita*, 5:21)

People sometimes say that they belong to a religion. This idea of belonging should not blind us to the fact that the goal of religion is transcendence and universality — freedom from all limitations. This is implicit in Jesus's teaching that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Religion, if rightly practised, purifies the mind. In that inner purity, the higher insight or wisdom arises, and that wisdom is its own authority.

In the Indian tradition all scriptural texts, including the Vedas, are acknowledged to be means to an end that transcends words, scriptures and spiritual symbols. When the Truth is realized, the scriptures have served their purpose. In the words of Krishna:

An enlightened knower of Truth does not need the Vedas. In the midst of an all-encompassing flood of water, one does not need a reservoir. (*Bhagavad Gita*, 2:46)

We also need to recognize that in the spiritual life there is the state of preparation and the state of achievement. During our period of preparation, we draw the greatest comfort and aid from following what is laid down in the holy scriptures. If we want to grow spiritually, there is guidance in the scriptures and from those with spiritual light, in how to live and how to worship, how to give and how to pray and meditate, and, not least, how to overcome egoism and pretence, and how to avoid error.

In the Gospels and in the *Gita*, it is the inner spirit of sincerity that

is to be cultivated and will truly help us on the path. Jesus's advice to help us to outwit the limited ego is to do our spiritual practices, not for reputation or the admiration of others, but to effect a deeper communion with the indwelling Lord. (*Matthew*, 6:1-18)

When you do some act of charity do not announce it with a flourish of trumpets, as the hypocrites do.

Instead, 'Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.' In other words, do it without fuss and forget it.

So too when you fast, do not look gloomy. Instead, anoint your head and wash your face, so that men may not see that you are fasting, but only your Father who is in the secret place.

The same spirit of sincere striving for God or Truth pervades the *Bhagavad Gita* (9:26-28):

When one offers to Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, water — that I eat, offered with devotion by the pure-minded.

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you sacrifice, whatever you give, in whatever austerity you engage, do it as an offering to Me.

Thus you will be liberated from the bonds of action which are productive of good and evil results. Equipped in mind with the yoga of renunciation and liberated, you will come to me.

This reality of God or the true Self seems to be unknown, but it is not so. St Paul told the men of Athens who had set up an altar to the unknown God, that this apparent unknownness is a delusion, for 'in Him we live, move and have our being', and that the Godhead is close at hand. (*Acts*, 17:22-29) In the *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus is asked by his disciples: 'When will the new world come?' He replies: 'What you expect has come, but you know it not.' (51). And again, 'The Kingdom of the Father is spread upon the earth and men do not see it.' (113) When Jesus says in the same Gospel, 'I will give you what eye has not seen and what ear has not heard,' (17) his words echo those of the

*Chandogya Upanishad*, where the sage speaks of his instruction as shedding light on ‘That through which the unheard becomes heard, the unthought becomes thought, the unknown becomes known.’

If the spiritual Truth is our origin and true nature, and we live, move and have our being in this infinite ocean of light, why does this supreme Truth escape our understanding, so that as regards its glory and immediacy, we have eyes, yet do not see? One explanation is that this innate wisdom of the spirit concealed in our heart is hidden by our desires for other things.

As fire is surrounded by smoke, as a mirror by rust, as the foetus is enclosed in the womb, so is spiritual wisdom covered by desire.

(*Bhagavad Gita*, 3:38)

But this inner blindness may be cured if we develop the master desire for spiritual liberation. When the desire for liberation is dominant and we nourish it, we will gain shrewd insight into the limitations that are innate in other pursuits. As we become wise about the range and limits of what we can expect from the world — as we see through the glamour and the false promises — the old desires will lose their compelling power over us. The same teaching is indicated by Jesus when he says:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (*Matthew*, 6:19-21)

We need to collect the treasures of the spiritual life, that is, to cherish the sayings of the wise and to follow those practices that make our inner being peaceful and harmonious. Then, like a flame, the energy of our desires will become unified, focused and full of light.

There is another explanation as to why this supreme spiritual reality appears to be unknown to us. In the *Gita*, Shri Krishna reveals that human nature is subject to a kind of illusion called *maya* or *yoga maya*. It is this cosmic illusion, which has its source in the individual human mind, that veils from us the knowledge of ultimate Truth. Krishna says:

I am not manifest to all, veiled (as I am) by *Yoga Maya*. This deluded world knows not Me, unborn and imperishable....All beings are subject to illusion at birth. (*Bhagavad Gita*, 7:25 and 27)

The effect of this *maya* or illusion is that we become hypnotized by the magic show of life and have no care to look deeper than the surface or to thirst for any deeper Truth.

In the *Gospel of Thomas* (28), Jesus speaks of this blindness of heart as a kind of drunkenness, which impels us to cling to worldly things as if they are the only reality, even though our stay in this world is short and uncertain, and nothing material can be taken with us when we depart from it. To know ourselves truly is to be free from illusion, and to live in everlasting freedom, absolute security and fearlessness. ‘Whoever knows the all, but fails to know himself, lacks everything.’ (67) Where is the divinity in man? It is his Self. This is the liberating insight revealed to us by the knowers of Truth. To know oneself in spirit and in Truth is to know that the principle which is indicated by the personal pronoun ‘I’ is the transcendental Self, one without a second and only one.

Jesus’s own use of the word ‘I’ points to a selfhood that transcends the physical body and also the entire material realm that functions through time, space and causation. ‘Before Abraham was, I am.’ (*John*, 8:58) And in the *Gospel of Thomas* (77), we read: “I am the Light that is above them all, I am the All, the All came forth from Me and the All attained to Me. Cleave a (piece of) wood, I am there; lift up a stone and you will find Me there.”

Our innermost Self transcends all change. Being pure spirit, it is enclosed by nothing. This is the Self to be enquired into for the purpose of realization, the pearl of great price, the treasure concealed in the field of the mind. When Jesus speaks in the *Gospel of St John* (chapter 17) of his own Self abiding within his disciples, and the Self of his disciples being one with his own Self, it is the same limitless selfhood that is taught by Krishna, and which applies to all beings without exception.

The Self abiding in all beings, and all beings abiding in the Self, sees he whose Self has been made steadfast by Yoga, who everywhere sees the same. He who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, to him I vanish not, nor to Me does he vanish. (*Gita*, 6:29-30)

The purpose of Yoga is to help us to withdraw our attention from the transient contents that appear in our own consciousness, and to focus our mind on that spiritual element which is the source of our being. This apparent narrowing of our focused attention on, so to say, a single point within us, leads to an expansion of consciousness beyond all imagination. As we go deeper within, we become increasingly aware of that centre of original being and radiant power. Jesus speaks of this single-minded concentration on the spiritual element within us, when he says: 'If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light'. (*Matthew*, 6:22) The meaning is, when our mind is freed from the multiplicity of worldly thoughts, our inner being will be flooded with the light that emanates from our true Self.

Another Christian painting which suggests this illumined inwardness of consciousness is Pieter Brueghel's *Death of the Virgin*.



*Death of the Virgin (detail)* c.1564, Pieter Brueghel the Elder, Upton House © NTPL

This painting shows the moment when Mary, the mother of Christ, leaves her worldly life. One of the disciples holds a candle. But the physical light of this candle is drowned in the spiritual radiance that emanates from Mary. Illumined by the light within her, this image is not one of sorrow and loss, but depicts one who has discovered the utmost joy and freedom. The ordinariness and intimacy of the environment remind us that this light is available to all, and can be awakened through turning our attention within in one-pointed absorption in our spiritual source. This turning within for peace and light is the essence of Yoga. In the words of Krishna:

When the well-restrained thought is established in the Self only, without longing for any of the objects of desire, then he is said to be *yukta* (truly focused). (*Bhagavad Gita*, 6:18)

What do our efforts lead to? The time comes when the Self reveals itself as a centre of attraction, so to say. Its influence becomes perceptible to a higher part of our mind. When this happens, a man naturally desires to turn within for bliss, peace and light. The attempts to focus the mind on that which is spiritual within our own being, bring about the true conversion.

The real meaning of the word 'conversion' is a change of heart, a new and developing spiritual understanding, and not a change from one religion to another. This process is ongoing until final illumination. Real conversion always centres on man's inner life. It involves what he is willing to do and what he actually does in order to adjust the expression of his thoughts and feelings, so that they let in more and more light from his spiritual centre, his deeper Self.

This process is in our own hands and the responsibility is on our own shoulders. We can make spiritual progress through right thought at any given moment. The abundance of spare moments that arise during every normal day is, for the yogi, the gift of God — openings when the mind can be fed with, and reminded of, spiritual thoughts and sayings, and not lost in daydreams or distractions. This is St Paul's meaning when he advised: 'And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind'. (*Romans*, 12:2) In the words of Shri Dada,

such a course will convert the precious material of life — our thoughts and feelings — into inner illumination.

Many animals spend most of their waking hours feeding and digesting. So, too, man spends his mental life feeding on and digesting the food of experience. The spiritual teachings are called the food of the spirit. They provide a nourishment that gives delight, causes no harm, purifies and opens the inner eye of wisdom. Jesus calls this the bread of life. We who are acquainted with this spiritual culture carry this bread with us all the time. We have only to remember to draw on this food at every opportunity, and to throw off the sleep of forgetfulness. In the words of the sage Vasishtha:

Apply your mind to Brahman, which is beyond your comprehension, to the holy light, the beginning and source of all, in which abides all good fortune and the ambrosial food of our souls. There is nothing so lovely and enduring in the regions which surround us as the lasting peace of a mind centred in God.

Jesus refers to himself (in *John*, chapter 10) as the good shepherd. Every man has to become a good shepherd, not as a leader of other people, but as a good shepherd tending the flock of his own thoughts. He has to make sure his mental herd grazes in the best pastures, and to rescue and draw back any sheep-thoughts that leave the safe and nourishing field. The Lord within is the ultimate ruler of the personality. He is the shepherd of the mind flock. And the intellect is like a trained sheepdog that skilfully rounds up the sheep. The grazing process that leads us to the highest illumination is described by the Lord in the *Bhagavad Gita*. (10:9-11):

With their thought on Me, with their life absorbed in Me, instructing each other and ever speaking of Me, they are content and delighted.

To these ever devout, worshipping Me with love, I give that devotion of knowledge by which they come to Me.

Out of mere compassion for them, I, abiding in their Self, destroy the darkness born of ignorance by the luminous lamp of wisdom.

It was said earlier that religions are a means to an end that transcends religion. They are aids to inner illumination. When illumination dawns, man realizes that his true nature ever was, is and shall be universal, independent and free: the All. The purpose of religion is to remove the covering from our eyes so that we may see directly and experience for ourselves the spiritual Truth that is the source of all religion. ‘Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.’ (*Matthew*, 5:8)

To take an image from the Gospels, the spiritual teachings are like the curative paste that Jesus prepared and applied to the eyes of the blind beggar. Once the man’s sight was restored, the paste had served its purpose. In Yoga, too, the teacher is compared to someone who similarly treats defective eyes in order to restore a person to normal sight. The Guru is revered as one, who, with the collyrium stick of knowledge of Truth, removes, as it were, the eye disease of those blinded by spiritual ignorance.

In both Christianity and Yoga this awakening concerns what we think ourselves to be. If we learn to think of ourselves as Atman, not the body, not the mind, it is more than an intellectual idea. For this idea is a bridge to our reality and cuts through illusion. The great idea, expressed as ‘in truth, I am Atman, here and now, I am Atman’, adjusts our experience to our underlying reality and makes realization possible. When this luminous lamp of wisdom has dispelled all darkness, the realization is: ‘I am ever liberated.’ In the words of Shri Shankara, from his *Thousand Teachings* (Chapter 10):

I am without a second, unborn, deathless, not subject to old age, immortal, self-luminous, omnipresent, not a cause, not an effect, completely without taint, ever one and perfectly satisfied and so liberated.

That one without a second, consciousness in its true nature, space-like, transcendent, ever-shining, unborn, indestructible, taintless, omnipresent: That, verily, am I, ever liberated.

## MEDITATION

TO SEE THE world as it is, you have to see not only what is extended in time and space, but the world as it really is. Yoga means seeing and apprehending the world as it is; not the moon through the naked eye, but the moon as revealed by the telescope.

The state of spiritual enlightenment is seen through the telescope of will-less contemplation. As long as your will is functioning, you are not meditating but imagining. Meditation means submergence of the will in the contents of the text of meditation. This state is called in Sanskrit 'Prasad'.

O Arjuna, in this state of Prasad complete termination of all woes and sufferings takes place. (*Bhagavad Gita* II.64).

This state is possible through our exertion and exertion only. You will have to work for it. Anything in life which is obtained without hard work has very little value. In our philosophy of aesthetics we want to create music and enjoy it, write poetry and enjoy. Not only go and listen to the music and come back and say it was very beautiful; this is a parasitic tendency. Each and everyone cannot become a Rubinstein in playing the piano, but you can have reasonable proficiency and it will give you help in appreciating music.

The first steps in mental training to obtain mastery over external things are:

1. Shut up all your senses. Fix in your house a little place for your meditation. A corner of the sitting room, or if you can, set aside a tiny room in which you do nothing else but study, meditation and devotion. Yoga will be fulfilled much quicker if this can be provided. The yogic standard of life is to add peace, sympathy, knowledge of the truth in art, literature and music. Let us awaken in us God who is asleep. Go into that chamber and will that now you are going to be in the presence of all beauty, all truth, all goodness, all knowledge and all peace. In one word, God.

Be in His presence. Sit down calmly. Take twenty-one deep breaths calmly, saying a word of God: Jesus, Buddha, OM, it does not matter

which. Shut up all the senses and turn the current of your thought inwards. It goes out by the senses. Make every effort to shut them out. River water turns back when it meets the tide. Turn the mind inward, see yourself to be the centre of the world. In this state think of your Self. How shall you think of your Self? It is easy. Say 'I', 'I', 'I'. Not the body, no. The body is not 'I'. The body changes every moment. The mind ceases to exist in a swoon or in sleep, it is not the 'I'. 'I', 'I', 'I'. then 'I am the centre of the world'. Imagine: 'The solar systems, the nebulae and the universes are revolving round my real "I", my Self, infinite, all peace.'

Try to meditate. For a few days you may get nothing out of it. But go on trying. Meditate: 'I am the being of perfect bliss, light and intelligence. I am the law giver of nature. I am the centre of will and I am the centre of all bodies.' First realize the separation of your spirit from your own body, then extend the spirit all over the universe, and then see the world existing in your 'I'. If your mind thinks of the moon or of an eclipse — 'It is in me, it is in me.'

If you want to go deeper into this practice, study the poetry of Swami Rama Tirtha, in translation. Study it; it is all on the same line. Then, I assure you, study the Fourth Gospel. This is the highest way of prayer. All other kind of prayer is preparatory. Spend an hour in this way. You say 'I have no time'. But you have time to have pneumonia and stay in bed. You have time for neurosis. Why not have time for this? We waste a good deal of our time in futility and in worry.

2. Practise in daily life by patient endurance of the pairs of opposites: success and failure; meeting and parting; health and illness. Not to be disturbed by them. It is called 'Titiksha'. Say: 'I can and will end the conflict between the spirit and my local self.' Defy pleasure desires and power desires. 'I shall not yield to the pleasure desire.' There is only one power in the world, and that is to rule others, not by guns or false propaganda but by love alone. If I cannot keep my friends with me by force of my love to them, I shall be a hundred times greater a scoundrel than any if I adopt any subterfuge to tie them to me. Love and truth are the only forces by means of which you can conquer others, and more than conquer them. If you fail in your love, ask yourself: 'Have I loved rightly and fully?' The fault is not in them but in you.

Master nature, first inner and then outer nature. The mastery of nature by science leads to no good unless the inner mastery is proportionate to the outer. Mastery of inner nature is the key to the mastery of outer nature.

Every now and then, at an appointed time, learn to sleep on the floor. Set aside a time now and then to keep complete silence, half an hour or an hour. Do not always be fond of sleeping on cushions but sometimes on the naked floor, with a view to obtain mastery over your mind. It is no use defying the Government, but defy the lower government of your mind of passions.

Master the pairs of opposites and then learn how to give in charity. Not to write a cheque for the Institute of the Blind — a good part of the charity we must do by our hands. Meditate on these thoughts and you can find great meaning in them.

Then set apart a day in every fortnight to fast. So many diseases you will avoid. Tranquillity of the mind you will have. On the day of the fast do not fast only from food but from malice, from nonsense-talk.

Sit in a quiet place and meditate on 'My body is my servant'. For noble living, it is my servant. My body will obey me so that I may see God within me, which is the only end. Imagine the body is your instrument. My mind also is my instrument. I will tune the organ of my mind and play hymns of adoration of the Lord. 'Thou art the fire that consumes the darkness of ignorance; incline my heart to Thy contemplation, for ever'. When the body cries under pain, or the mind under restraint, treat it as a wise mother treats a child. The body and mind are not your enemies. Correct by discipline, as a master his pupil. Finally meditate 'My Self is ever safe. Water cannot drown it, nor fire burn it, nor death claim it'. I am telling you that it is the way to obtain mastery.

**Hari Prasad Shastri**

## POEM BY SWAMI RAMA TIRTHA

He who abandons his worldly home  
Finds his true home.  
He who retains the home of his own ego  
Feels miserable in any home.  
If one gives up wealth,  
One lives in riches.  
If one gives up pleasure,  
One comes to relieve the pain of others.  
He who gives up his life, never dies.  
He who abandons a soft bed  
Sleeps on a litter of flowers.  
He who abandons thoughts of others' women  
Obtains access to a queen.  
He who abandons deceit and lies  
Acquires the gift of prophecy.  
He who abandons all evil thoughts  
Is already a *gyani* [enlightened].  
He who abandons slavery to the mind  
Finds all his whims realized.  
He who gives up everything  
Acquires everything.  
He who has no desires  
Finds his deepest desire realized.  
He who abandons taste  
Tastes the nectar of immortality.  
If one asks for nothing  
One finds what pleases the heart.  
Renunciation gives you the three worlds,  
This the Veda proclaims.  
He who remains unkempt  
Washes off all impurity.  
He who retains the home of his own ego  
Feels miserable in any home.

*Translated by A. J. Alston*

# The Yoga of Patanjali

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*An article prepared from notes for a talk by Dr A M Halliday in 1956.*

WE ARE ALL in a sense bound — in bondage to the mind. When politically free, economically free, free in the practice of art and religion, man still lives under the worst tyranny of all: that of his own lower nature. Hamlet realized this when he said: ‘I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.’

We are all troubled by ‘bad dreams’ — dreams like the dreams of the lotus eaters (in Tennyson’s poem) for ease and comfort, of Hitler and Stalin and Alexander for boundless power and domination, of prejudices, inordinate desires and ambitions, hatred and infatuation, fears, worries and anxieties.

Unlike Hamlet, we fondly imagine that outer circumstances bind us. We see the world and its outer conditions as a nutshell which confines us, and put down all our ills, all our sense of frustration and crampedness, to its lack of space, and not to our bad dreams.

But it is not outer objects but our own ideas about them which bind us: our likes and dislikes, prejudices, fears and anxieties. The spiritual teaching of the yogis is that we must be able to live independently of these circumstances, unruffled by disasters and calamities, not depending on any person or thing for our contentment and peace of mind. We must live, they say, like a lotus on the pond, its petals untouched by the water, or like a bird sitting on a branch. The bird supports itself on the branch, but only temporarily. It is not dependent on it. It knows that it has wings and can fly.

If we expect the outward millennium of peace on earth as the solution to all problems, we are putting the cart before the horse. Spiritual illumination is primarily an inner discovery and not to be made in the external realm. To widen the power of the church to include all mankind or to convert every man to be followers of one religious teacher (be he Billy Graham or Mary Baker Eddy or whoever else) is a hopeless undertaking, but even if it were possible, it would have little or nothing

to do with real spirituality, because it is an extension to the field of religion of the fallacy of regarding the outer circumstances as the really important thing.

‘And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the Kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! Or lo, there! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.’ (Luke 17. 20-21)

And this is the second reason why Yoga is preoccupied with the problem of the control of the mind. For the mind is not merely an obstruction, it is not only the cause of bondage when unpurified, it is also the laboratory in which we have to carry out the spiritual experiments which lead to the discovery of freedom and truth. It is a place of hidden treasure. ‘The kingdom of God is within you.’ And it is not by moving mountains but by knowledge that it comes.

‘Know ye the truth and the truth shall make you free.’ When Jesus said this, you remember, the people didn’t understand him. They said (John 8.33) ‘We are Abraham’s descendants and were never in bondage to anybody. How can you say “You will be made free”?’

And Jesus replied: ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you. Whosoever committeth sin is a bondsman to sin.’

In the yogic terminology sin is spiritual blindness and ignorance of the spiritual truth. It is the result of the unpurified mind. In *Panchadashi* (Chapter IV), Swami Vidyaranya shows us that the bondage of attachment, of seeking joy and avoiding sorrow from particular outer objects, springs not from the nature of those objects themselves, but from our mental pictures of them — our mental pictures tinged with strong personal feelings, conceived through the opaque and distorting glasses of our own selfish viewpoint and of our prejudices and presuppositions.

For instance, a man’s son goes abroad. He dies there. But the event itself is nothing to the man unless he hears of it. He neither grieves nor is cast down because his son has died if he hasn’t heard of it. It is an obvious and yet deeply significant fact. More significant still, he may be told the boy has died by someone who wishes to inflict mental anguish on him when in fact no such thing has happened, and in such a case, if he believes

what he is told, he goes through all the shock and horror of the experience just as much as if it had really happened. So our minds can be deluded by appearances, by false suggestions and ideas, and, false as they are, those ideas may cause just as much misery and suffering as real disasters.

We must conclude that our minds are not perhaps so unworthy of attention after all. For it is the mental pictures, the ideas and beliefs, false or true, with which we have stocked them, that cause us pleasure and pain and not the outer objects and experiences themselves.

One can almost hear the inquirer saying at this point in the exposition: 'All right. I agree that your thesis sounds reasonable, and being a very reasonable man — exceptionally so, I may say — I am willing to put it to the practical test. I will meet you more than halfway. I am actually willing to spend a little time and effort to find out about this. As I understand it, you say that the impure mind binds us by its wrong ideas, deeply ingrained, and that these are impediments to our understanding of truth. Very well. I will just go off and take the trouble to remove these impediments and then I shall come straight back and tell you whether what you say is valid.'

It was to a new student of Yoga who must have taken up very much this point that an old Master gave the following reply. 'All right,' he said, 'the whole thing is possible with one single practice, and that, one of the simplest. Simply sit and let your mind have free rein and watch its antics. You can let it do exactly what it likes. There is, in fact, only one thing you must achieve. There is a single restriction. You mustn't on any account think of monkeys — that's the one thing. It is most important. If you do, the whole practice will be null and void.'

The student, who had never given monkeys more than a passing thought anyway, thought it sounded too simple for words. He went off and settled down to watching his mind. But imagine his disgust and disappointment when he found that, try as he would, he could not think of anything else! Continually he found his mind dodging round his guard and getting back. He would find himself thinking 'It's a curious thing not to have to think of. I wonder why it is monkeys in particular.' And soon his mind would be concentrated in one-pointed abandon on the qualities of different monkeys and their yogic significance.

It was the first lesson of the Master to his would-be pupil on the

nature of the mind and why the practice of Yoga is necessary. It was to teach the pupil to begin with that the mind is not under his control, that even in the simplest things, the mere fact that he wants his mind not to do something, makes it do just that very thing. It resists his will with all its innate perversity. The raw mind is naturally perverse and opposes any attempt to control it. It loves ease and comfort and self-indulgence but doesn't willingly submit to discipline. So the mind does need the restraint which is Yoga. This is what the old teachers meant when they said 'He who has no understanding, whose mind is always unrestrained, his senses are out of control, like the wild and unbroken horses of a bad charioteer. But he who has understanding, whose mind is always restrained, his senses are under control, as good horses are.' (*Katha Upanishad* I.3.5-6)

The uncontrolled one, of impure mind, does not reach the spiritual goal, says the text, but the pure one does. So, for Yoga to be practised at all, the mind has to be purified and controlled. And it resists.

The mind will not fit into our plans without discipline, and as a means to the practice of Yoga a discipline is essential. The sage Patanjali in his classic on Yoga divided yogis into three classes and the third of these are the *yogārudhas*, those who have really attained to the object of Yoga; but he points out that this is only possible for those who have already in the past carried out the necessary preparatory discipline.

The spiritual truth will not be gained without effort; it is not a ripe fruit which will fall into the palm of a sleeping man. The mind has to be taken in hand, controlled and prepared. Indeed Swami Mangalnathji says that the process demands a hero — a hero of the spiritual field — if the ultimate victory is to be won. But all achievement in the world needs striving.

Hence the first class of yogis are the *arurukshus* 'those aspiring to practice Yoga' (literally 'aspiring to climb') and for them a detailed preparation is given, which we shall go into in due course. Between them and the *yogārudhas* comes the second class of yogis, called *yunjanas*, those actually engaged in the practice.

The Yoga then does not promise us any easy path to success. But, on the contrary, it assures us that no effort made to control and purify the mind is ever wasted and that nothing but good will come of it. It is the

heedless disregard of the mind and its wilful and undisciplined nature which we are warned against.

There is a Chinese verse 'Alas! It is the flower within man's heart which fades without giving any sign of its fading.' And the fact is that we cannot afford to neglect the mind any more than we can afford to ignore the wild and untamed forces of wind or tide. Nature gives us only two alternatives to choose. Either we must transform the mind into a friend and a great benefactor or it will degenerate and destroy both itself and us.

Is this an exaggeration? How else can we regard the mass insanity of Nazism and the Third Reich which, founded on hate and evil, engulfed nations and plunged the whole of Europe into a cataclysm? It was the sick mind of Europe which led to it. Let a man subdue his own mind, says the *Bhagavad Gita*, for he alone is the friend of himself when he does so, and if not, he is his own worst enemy.

The mind is not a trustworthy ally in its present raw state, and the means whereby it can be converted into a friend and servant and a source of great light and upliftment in the moral, artistic and spiritual realms are not applied without effort. It is not as easy as eating an ice cream or going to the pictures or quarrelling with one's neighbours. The *Bhagavad Gita* makes this clear.

'This yoga which you speak of as being of the nature of equi-mindedness [undisturbability of the mind], O Krishna, I don't see any stable foundation for it, because of the restlessness of the mind.'

'For the mind is verily treacherous and fickle, O Krishna, it is impetuous, strong and obstinate. I think that it must be as difficult to control it as it is to control the wind.' (VI.33-4)

This expression, from the pupil Arjuna, is a polite way of saying that he doesn't think it can be done! But the teacher Shri Krishna replies:

'Without doubt, the mind is difficult to curb and restless, but it can be controlled, O Arjuna, by constant practice and non-attachment.'

'Yoga is hard to attain, I agree, by one who is not self-controlled; but by the self-controlled it is attainable by striving through the proper means.' (VI. 35-6)

Then, how to deal with the mind? Don't worry about monkeys. If they come let them come! Mind is like a child. It wants to be interested and amused. It likes sweet things. It is no use bullying it or trying to tyrannise over it. You must use persuasion and gently but firmly direct it on the right lines. If you see an unwise parent who tells you that their child is very naughty, troublesome and difficult, ten to one they are at fault themselves. In *The Heart of the Eastern Mystical Teaching*, we read the following account:

It was perhaps in the year 1895 that, to an informal Sat Sang held at the temple of Shiva at Ghatia, a beautiful garden about a mile from Chandausi, an aged widow came, broken in health and in very reduced circumstances, attended by a boy of about ten. The mother was not more than forty-five, but she looked sixty-five. She approached the Saint and offered him two sweet melons. With his permission, she stated her problem:

I do not know what to do with this boy. I am ill and suffering from insomnia; he has quarrelled with his Guru and plays with undesirable children. He abuses me and tries to beat me. You are a holy man; please tell me what to do with him.'

Shri Dada affectionately holding the boy's hand in his own, looked at him with compassion and said: 'I am sure you are a very good boy. What is your name, my son, and what games do you like to play?' The boy, who had never perhaps received such pure affection in his life before came closer and answered: 'Holy father, my name is Teerath, and my favourite sport is tip-cat.' Shri Dada gave him one of the melons and said: 'My son, I love you. Play your game, but also learn to read and write. Do not forget, darling, that you are a Brahmin boy.'

Then the holy man addressed his mother thus: 'Mother, please do not be hard on this good boy; he is hungry for affection and you treat him with indifference. His soul resents your treatment. Have you means to educate him, mother?' She replied: 'I live by helping in the neighbouring merchant families. I do not earn more than two rupees a month.' Shri Dada looked at Brindavan who was in attendance and who had a druggist's shop and said: 'My son, can you lend me two rupees now?' Brindavan placed three and a half rupees and small change at the feet of his Guru, all that he had. Turning to the aged widow, Shri Dada said: -

‘Take this little sum, dear lady; buy a new shirt and a pair of shoes for this boy; take him to the school of Pundit Liladhara and ask him, in my name, to admit him as one of his pupils.’ Then he said to the boy: ‘Teerath Mal, my good boy, come to me after a month with your books and tell me what you have learned. Pundit Liladhara is a very kind man and my old friend. Here are two annas for you; buy a new outfit of tip-cat. In the meantime, come any evening and have prasada with me.

Teerath Mal went away a changed and happy boy.

Always to be issuing vetoes is no good. Some parents you hear shouting: ‘What are you doing Johnny? Well, whatever it is, stop it! Will you be quiet and sit down here.’ But the wise parent uses persuasion. He or she tries to capture the interest and enthusiasm of the child in something constructive, useful and elevating. The child has boundless energy which cannot be simply thwarted; it must be directed, then it becomes creative. It is the great secret of education.

Once the child himself begins to enjoy it, half the battle is won. How much of our present troubles — the hooliganism, thuggery and gang warfare among the youths of today — wouldn’t have happened if only this simple principle had been put into practice.

Similarly, our mind is our child. If we learn how to interest it in something higher — spiritual — we have learned something of inestimable value. It is no good bullying the mind. It must be treated with gentle persuasion. It likes sweet things — that is why the saints and yogis have clothed the truth in the attractive form of stories or epics like the *Ramayana*, or *Yoga Vasishtha*, or the story of Shri Krishna on the battlefield.

When this secret is known then the control of the mind becomes relatively easy. It is done through the help and instruction of a qualified teacher of Yoga or a messenger appointed by him.

‘That knowledge is not to be obtained by reasoning, but when it is taught by another who has himself realized the Truth, O dearest, it is easy to understand.’ (*Katha Upanishad*)

**S.D.S.**

## Nicholas Malebranche

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THERE IS a tradition in Advaita Vedanta — the non-dual philosophy that is the basis of Adhyatma Yoga — of justifying a work by stating at the outset its intention, its value and its relevance. Honouring this ideal, we might ask: Why speak on this lesser light, Nicholas Malebranche? Why dig for truth in Western philosophy and its literature, when its direct and full expression is to be found in the spiritual literature of the Eastern traditions?

A couple of reasons: if, as we believe, the ultimate reality pervades the inner and outer worlds, then to divine precious truths in science, literature, art and even secular philosophy, ratifies this conviction and demonstrates the universal, non-sectarian character of our tradition. To a devotee, it might also speak of a compassionate Lord who seeks to touch the hearts and minds of all men and women, those of any spiritual tradition or of no spiritual tradition.

Interesting, too, that, in a paper dated 1947, our teacher, Hari Prasad Shastri, listed a number of Western philosophers, the study of whose thought he regarded as worthwhile. No surprise to find Kant and Hegel in his list. But some might be surprised that his very short list also included Malebranche.

We now turn to Malebranche and his writings. We note his dates and the dates of other philosophers very relevant to his writings.

<i>Descartes</i>	1596 - 1650
<i>Geulincx</i>	1625 - 1669
<i>Locke</i>	1632 - 1704
<i>Malebranche</i>	1638 - 1715
<i>Berkeley</i>	1685 - 1753

The dates of birth are in chronological order and happily that order is retained in the dates of their demise. We say ‘happily’ since, in principle, any one thinker, at the end of his life, could have had a complete overview of the contributions of his predecessors. Locke was a close contemporary of Malebranche, but they were both largely sandwiched in time between Descartes and Berkeley. And we do find that, in many respects, the philosophy of Malebranche is a bridge between the thoughts

of Descartes and Bishop Berkeley.

Descartes is best remembered by that phrase '*cogito ergo sum*', 'I think, therefore I am' and Berkeley by his dictum '*esse est percipi*', 'To exist is to be perceived'. A careless reading of Descartes would have him mean that thinking is exclusively a condition of being, and a superficial reading of Berkeley's dictum would have *him* deny any reality other than the objective realm. Both are gross, but not uncommon, distortions of their philosophies. As to Malebranche, the phrase 'Seeing all things in God' might qualify as his great utterance. It does capture the essence of his philosophy. Both Berkeley and Malebranche were pleased that this aspect of their thought echoed the words of St Paul: '*He in Whom we live and move and have our being*'.

We now look at the life and work of Malebranche, ever with an eye to looking at his ideas from the perspective of Advaita.

Malebranche was born in Paris. He studied philosophy at the college of La Marche and later theology at the Sorbonne. In 1660 he joined the Oratorians and was ordained a priest in that order in 1664. His allegiance as a philosopher was to the tradition that could be traced back to Plato, through Augustine, and up to his beloved Descartes. The main influence in philosophy in the Catholic Church was, and still is, the tradition based on Aristotle, Aquinas and other Scholastics, but Malebranche was very scathing of this Scholastic tradition, as was Descartes, his great hero. Though he did take issue with Descartes on a number of points.

The three main works by Malebranche are *The Search after Truth (De la recherche de la Vérité)*, 1675; *Elucidations of the Search after Truth (Éclaircissements sur la recherche de la Vérité)*, 1680; and his *Dialogues on Metaphysics (Entretiens sur la métaphysique)*, 1688.

*The Search after Truth* was his main work and seems to have been a great influence on Berkeley, though the *Dialogues* present essentially the same material in a much more attractive and engaging form. More than coincidence, perhaps, that Berkeley, too, took this approach, first presenting his full-blown philosophy in *The Principles of Human Knowledge* and later in charming dialogue form as *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*.

Let us look at two main aspects of the philosophy of Malebranche: first his view on the reality of the external world or, put more simply, the

meaning he attached to the term 'matter'; and, secondly, his view on causation: his 'Occasionalism'. His view on matter anticipates the essence of Berkeley's philosophy and his Occasionalism looks back to the so-called mind/body problem as first addressed by Descartes. Though we discuss them in this order, we shall see that these two aspects of his philosophy cannot really be separated out.

Now, commonsense tells us that there is an external world. To question its existence seems absurd, but here we do well to recall a phrase in Bertrand Russell's *The Problems of Philosophy* when he wrote: 'whoever wishes to become a philosopher must learn not to be frightened by absurdities'. For many this debate of philosophers is seen as no longer relevant. They would say that physics now tells us what matter is. But the truth is that whether our model for physical reality is the atoms of Democritus, the three gunas of the Sāṅkhyas, or the subatomic particles and electromagnetic field of modern physics, the *concept* of matter is as much a conundrum now as ever it was.

As to absurdities, neither Berkeley's denial of matter nor Gaudapada's denial of the objective world, when properly understood, are in any way absurd. Quite the opposite, as we shall explain later.

There is a verse in the *Bhagavad Gita* on the practice of Yoga, on the trouble of restraining the senses, as being like poison in the beginning but sweet as nectar in the end, and this has a parallel in our study of the philosophy, in which the intellect — if we are honest with ourselves — can see non-duality as initially a nonsense but eventually, on deeper enquiry, as a precious and liberating truth.

On the existence of external objects, I now quote a few passages from Malebranche's *Elucidations of the Search after Truth*.

I say that it is more difficult than one would have thought to prove definitely that there are objects, even though our senses might assure us of it, because reason does not so readily assure us as we might think, and because reason must be consulted very attentively if we are to be enlightened. But since men listen more readily to the testimony of their senses than to that of inner truth, they have always relied on their eyes to assure themselves of the existence of matter without bothering to consult their reason. This is why they are surprised when they are told that it is difficult to prove the existence of matter. They think that they have but

to open their eyes in order to assure themselves that there are bodies, and if there is some reason to suspect an illusion, they think that it suffices to approach the bodies and touch them – after which they then have difficulty conceiving that one might still have reasons for doubting their existence.

But our eyes represent colours to us on the surface of bodies; our ears make us hear sounds as if spread out through the air and in the resounding bodies; and if we believe what the other senses report, heat will be in fire, sweetness will be in sugar, musk will have an odour, and all the qualities that can be sensed will be in the bodies that seem to exude or diffuse them. Yet it is certain that all these qualities do not exist outside the soul that perceives them. Why should we conclude then, merely on the testimony of the senses that deceive us on all sides, that there really are external bodies?

At the beginning of this passage, Malebranche states that it is *difficult* to prove the existence of objects. In his later work, the *Dialogues on Metaphysics*, he is to say that it is *impossible*. The conversation is between Theodore (representing Malebranche) and Aristes (his pupil). Aristes speaks:

It seems to me that prudence dictates that I suspend judgement with regard to the existence of bodies – of external objects. Please give me an exact demonstration of their existence.

Theodore replies:

An exact demonstration! That's a bit much, Aristes. I admit I do not have one. On the contrary, it seems to me that I do have an 'exact demonstration' of the impossibility of such a demonstration.

Ultimately, for Malebranche, it is a matter of belief; for him belief in the scriptures that teach a real creation. That the secondary qualities, as he has listed them, depend on a conscious being who experiences them would be agreed to by Locke and Berkeley, but Berkeley was to go further and deny that any of the attributes of so-called 'matter' were independent of a conscious being. For Berkeley matter conceived of as 'an unknown and unknowable somewhat' was a self-contradictory notion; not really a concept at all, but a misconception. An empty,

meaningless phrase.

Why did Malebranche never manage to take that last step and deny 'material substance' in the way that Berkeley was later to do? One suggestion is that, as a Catholic priest, he did not wish to upset the ecclesiastical authorities. For the doctrine of transubstantiation seems to depend on the notion of material substance. There is, in the Russian Orthodox Church, the alternative doctrine of Consubstantiation, a reading of the meaning and symbolism of the Eucharist that is perfectly compatible with both a denial of matter and a reverence for the Sacrament. But this interpretation is not likely to have been known to Malebranche.

To throw light on how the concept of 'matter' interfaces with the notion of transubstantiation, we have to jump forward about two hundred years to a wonderful passage in William James' *Pragmatism*. This may seem a bizarre topic to address so it is important to emphasize in advance that neither William James nor the writer are making a case either for or against the Sacrament of the Eucharist, much less ridiculing it. The writer's purpose is to tease out what the beliefs of Malebranche the theologian might have implied for the thinking of Malebranche the philosopher. William James wrote:

Scholasticism has taken the notion of substance from common sense and made it very technical and articulate. Few things would seem to have fewer pragmatic consequences for us than substances, cut off as we are from every contact with them. Yet in one case Scholasticism has proved the importance of the substance-idea by treating it pragmatically. I refer to certain disputes about the mystery of the Eucharist. Substance here would appear to have momentous pragmatic value. Since the accidents (the attributes) of the wafer don't change in the Lord's supper, and yet it has become the very body of Christ, it must be that the change is in the substance solely. The bread-substance must have been withdrawn, and the divine substance substituted miraculously without altering the immediate sensible properties. But tho' these do not alter, a tremendous difference has been made, no less a one than this, that we who take the sacrament now feed on the very substance of divinity.

A couple of paragraphs later, James has a passage on Berkeley's view

of 'material substance'. It is worth quoting as it reflects a clear understanding of Berkeley that very few philosophers ever achieved.

Material substance was criticized by Berkeley with such telling effect that his name has reverberated through all subsequent philosophy. Berkeley's treatment of the notion of matter is so well known as to need hardly more than a mention. Far from denying the external world which we know, Berkeley corroborated it. It was the scholastic notion of a material substance unapproachable by us, behind the external world, deeper and more real than it, and needed to support it, which Berkeley maintained to be the most effective of all reducers of the external world to unreality. Abolish that substance, he said, believe that God, whom you can understand and approach, sends you the sensible world directly, and you confirm the latter and back it up by divine authority. Berkeley's criticism of 'matter' was consequently absolutely pragmatic. Matter is known as our sensations of colour, figure, hardness and the like. They are the cash value of the term. The difference matter makes to us by truly being is that we then get such sensations; by not being, is that we lack them. These sensations then are its sole meaning. Berkeley doesn't deny matter, then; he simply tells us what it consists of. It is a true name for just so much in the way of sensations.

In a work of that title, A.A. Luce characterised the essence of Berkeley's philosophy as 'Immaterialism', not as 'subjective idealism'. This passage from James concurs. Now the whole purpose of Berkeley's denying 'matter' was to affirm a world of experience which depended entirely for its being on God. Use the term Brahman or Cosmic Consciousness if you prefer. It is the 'He Who Is' of Exodus, since nothing else has an existence of its own. Meister Eckhart, too, wrote: 'Creatures in themselves are mere nothings.'

Malebranche did not arrive at this denial of matter, but the overall significance of his philosophy converges on the same insight, namely that all phenomena have their being in the being of 'He Who Is'. For all is sustained by Him at every instant. Berkeley and Malebranche are really in agreement; they simply arrived at that agreement by different routes.

On this topic of the status of the external world, it is now time to look at some verses from *Triumph of a Hero* by Swami Mangalathji

(published by Shanti Sadan). Much of philosophy, especially recent Western philosophy, concentrates on the analysis of language. A great deal is sterile and boring. We can get lost in a sea of words and their definitions and end up with all the confusion of the Tower of Babel.

In the ancient Eastern traditions we can have the equally frustrating situation of curt, cryptic aphorisms. We want to know what they mean and very often the commentators do little more than reproduce the style of the original. Or our enquiry is fruitlessly stonewalled with 'he means what he says'. This is why *Triumph of a Hero*, as Verse 203 expresses it, 'though small in size, is great in content'. Compared with many works of philosophy and spirituality, it is as the sun to a penny candle.

The Swami speaks from what is highest in him to what is highest in us. He has a great reverence for the human intellect and its possibilities. Above all, with great care, he both says what he says and says it so clearly that he is at one and the same time saying what it means. There are 205 verses in this work, with about ten of them really central to the themes we have thus far discussed. Here are five of those verses (or parts thereof).

He is the existence of all existent objects and the knowability of all objects that can be known by conception or perception. [22]

As an earthen pot is assuredly nothing but earth, so is the body, in fact, pure Consciousness Itself. [168]

Silence is best, but if you have to say something of it then speak carefully and reasonably: otherwise people will not respect a thesis unwarranted by reason. [188]

All is real as Brahman, and as different from Brahman is unreal. Thus alone can the holy Truth be described and not otherwise. [190]

That which is superimposed derives its existence from the substratum. It is non-existent if considered apart from the substratum. [194]

We now move on to that for which Malebranche is best remembered: his Occasionalism. As mentioned earlier, this aspect of his philosophy bears on the so-called mind/body problem. We also mentioned that the two aspects of his philosophy are inextricably linked. The reality of mind and body, and matter in general, have been called into question and that

question has been fully and unequivocally answered by Swami Mangalnathji.

Now this mind/body problem, a problem for philosophy, for psychology and for neurophysiology, can be expressed in the question: How can a thought, which is non-material in nature, act on or effect changes in matter? How can the will to lift my arm cause the raising of my arm? Mind and matter are different in kind, so how can there be a causal link? Or rather, since we know this happens, how are we to explain what seems to be a causal link?

Descartes did not present a solution to this problem, only a view on the interaction. We see in our time that the brain is indeed implicated, and regions of the brain can be mapped to visual, aural and, most relevant for the mind/body problem, motor function. It was a reasonable stab at the truth, then, for Descartes to identify the pineal gland, deep in the brain, as the gateway from the mental to the physical

Occasionalism starts from the position that, in fact, no body/mind interaction really takes place at all. Before Malebranche, Louis de la Forge and Geulincx took this position. I quote from Copleston's *History of Philosophy*, as it expresses, so clearly, what 'occasionalism' means. Of special interest is that much of what Copleston wrote in this passage echoes the advaitin's view of agency as being an illusion:

According to Geulincx it is an evident principle that in all true activity the agent must know that he acts and how he acts. From this it clearly follows that a material thing cannot be a true causal agent producing effects either in another material thing or in a spiritual substance. For since a material thing lacks consciousness it cannot know that it acts and how it acts. It also follows that I, as a spiritual ego, do not really produce either in my own body or in other bodies those effects which my natural way of thinking, accepted by Aristotle as a criterion, leads me to suppose I do produce. For I do not know how these effects are produced. I am a spectator of the production of changes and movements in my body, but I am not the actor, the real causal agent, in spite of my interior acts of will.

This last sentence on being the witness not the agent or, more accurately, being the witness of both the *illusory* activity and the *illusory* sense of

agency, is pure *Bhagavad Gita* teaching.

In the paragraph that follows the above, Copleston explains the use of and justification for that strange label, 'occasionalism'.

If interaction is denied, how are we going to explain the fact that volitions are followed by movements in the body and that changes in the body are followed by sensations and perceptions in consciousness? The explanation is that my act of will is an occasional cause; that is, an occasion on which God produces a change or movement in the body. Similarly, a physical event in my body is an occasion on which God produces a psychical event in my consciousness. Body and soul are like two clocks, neither of which acts on the other but which keep perfect time because God constantly synchronizes their movements. At least this is the analogy to which Geulincx seems to incline.

Now to move on to Malebranche's view of this topic. We saw that De la Forge and Geulincx got there first, so why is occasionalism most closely associated with Malebranche? We commonly think of occasionalism as an answer to the mind/body problem. But Malebranche's answer to the mind/body problem falls out very naturally from his view that divine intelligence is the *immediate and ever present cause* of all – *and* in *all* its details. So much so that he makes no distinction between creating and sustaining. This whole world appearance, for him, is actively sustained not passively sustained. So, on his view, it would be just as accurate to say that it is *being created anew* at every instant as to say that it is being *sustained*. To quote him on this point: 'On the part of God, the conservation of creatures is simply their continued creation.' (spoken by Theodore)

Through Swami Mangalnathji's wonderful verses, we have already established that the world appearance has its being in the being of Brahman or God. It has no independent being. So we can speak loosely and allow Malebranche to do likewise as long we keep this key fact in mind. Malebranche continues, through the lips of Theodore:

In the eyes of men, there appears to be a difference [between creating and sustaining] since in creation they pass from nothing to being whereas, in conservation they continue to be. But, in reality, creation does not pass away because, in God, conservation and creation are one and the same.

Aristes demurs:

I understand your reasons, Theodore, but I am not convinced by them. It seems to me not to be sufficient for the annihilation of the world that God no longer will that it exist, He would have to will positively that it no longer exist. There is no necessity of a volition when nothing is to be done. Thus, now that the world is made, let God leave it so and it will always be.

Theodore comes back at him and does not mince his words:

You are not thinking, Aristes. You are making creatures independent. You judge God and His works by the works of men. Your house subsists although your architect is dead. This is because its foundations are solid and it has no connection with the life of the person who built it. It depends on him in no way. But the ground of our being depends essentially on the Creator.

A little later on we have a partial assent from Aristes;

I admit that, between creatures and the Creator, there is a relation, a connection, an essential dependence, Theodore. But could we not say that, to maintain the dependence of created beings, it is sufficient that God can annihilate them whenever He please?

Theodore replies:

Certainly not, my dear Aristes. What greater mark of independence than to subsist by itself and without support? Strictly speaking, your house does not depend on you. Why is that? Because it subsists without you. Yes, you can set fire to it whenever you wish, but you do not sustain it. That is why, between you and it, there is no essential dependence. Thus, even if God is able to destroy creatures whenever He pleases, still, if they are able to subsist without the continuous influence of the Creator, they are not essentially dependent on Him.

So we see that his occasionalism is a consequence of his overall view of causation. Not a patch sewn on, *ad hoc*, but an essential feature of the seamless garment of his thought. We can also see why he had no need to deny 'matter' in the way that Berkeley had done. Berkeley denied an independent 'material substance'. In the heel of the hunt, Malebranche arrives at the same point of view. Nothing is independent of the divine

ground of being — we do not need to analyse our use of the phrase 'material substance'.

In a way, the label 'occasionalism' is not needed. Another word redundant in his system is 'miracle'. We think of a miracle as the divine will intervening in natural law. But when, on his view, the cosmic intelligence, the divine will, or whatever phrase you might like to use, is active at all times and in all places, then the notion of intervention does not apply. Everything is a miracle.

In *The Heart of the Eastern Mystical Teaching*, Shri Dada says: 'The laws of nature are His fixed decrees.' Natural law *is* divine law.

In a modern work, *The Self and its Brain*, subtitled 'An argument for Interactionism', Karl Popper, speaking on Malebranche, acknowledges that in his system the word 'miracle' is really redundant. As one might expect, Popper's conclusion is that occasionalism implies that nothing is a miracle, and he sees this as an unfavourable consequence for Malebranche the theologian. But, quite the opposite, the philosophy of Malebranche implies that everything is a miracle.

Now, to say a little on what the style and content of his writings reveal about the character and personality of Malebranche and his outlook on enquiry.

At the very outset in the *Dialogues*, Malebranche corrects Aristes on his misconception that this Search for Truth is an expedition to a foreign land. Aristes says:

Take me away to that happy, enchanted Region. Let us go. I am ready to follow you into that land which you believe is inaccessible to those who listen only to their senses.

Theodore puts him right straight away:

Indeed, I shall not take you into a strange land, but perhaps I shall teach you that you are, in fact, a stranger in your own country. I shall teach you that the world you live in is not such as you believe it to be. You will see this, Aristes, without going outside yourself, without my 'taking you away to that enchanted Region'.

These *Dialogues* make a lively and colourful read and it is easy to believe that they record genuine conversations between Malebranche and

a friend, as represented by Theodore and Aristes, respectively. There's friendly banter and ribbing, and at times even mild sarcasm. We see Aristes all bouncy and enthusiastic when he believes he understands a difficult point Theodore is making, but very soon we again see him confused and crestfallen when his commonsense but erroneous ways of thinking seep back through the holes in his understanding.

Theodore's aim is to help Aristes to see certain truths in and for himself, as though Theodore had never existed and he continually warns him against too ready an acceptance out of friendship. In a long passage of admiration for Theodore, Aristes ends: 'Please continue. I shall try to follow you anywhere you lead me.' And Theodore replies with a warning:

Ah, my dear Aristes, once again watch out that I do not go astray. I am apprehensive that you may be too easy-minded and your approbation induce negligence in me and make me fall into error. Fear for me, and do not believe everything that a man who is subject to illusion may tell you. Also, you will learn nothing if it is not your own reflections which put you in possession of the truths I shall attempt to demonstrate.

This shows real humility. He is saying; 'I am not infallible; do not learn from me but from your own inner reflections, from the light of divine Reason. Agreeing with the truth is what matters. Agreeing with me, with Theodore, matters not at all.'

The dialogue form is a clever teaching device. It enables Malebranche to speak to us indirectly what he could not so easily say to us directly or rather what our egos might not so readily accept.

One important feature of the philosophy of Malebranche, of which the yogic tradition would heartily approve, is that he sees enquiry as only bearing fruit if carried out in the context of a life of discipline and meditation. Modern western philosophers seem not to have noticed this.

We know that Descartes spoke of meditation. His *Meditations* is his most famous work and he spent long hours in silent contemplation. The activity of philosophizing, for Malebranche too, is much more than reasoning and logic-chopping. He emphasises over and over again the need to withdraw from the world of sense and sensuality, to abstract oneself from the body and mind and to some extent from society.

The following exchange between Theodore and Aristes even alludes to an inner circle of seekers after truth, called the Meditators, to which Aristes was eager to gain access. Speaking of the leader of this group, Aristes says:

I wish to have him for a friend. I want to merit his good graces; and if I cannot succeed in that, I want him to know at any rate that I am no longer what I was.

And Theodore reassures him:

Well then, Aristes, he will know this. And if you wish to be among the number of the Meditators, I promise you he will in turn be among the number of your good friends. Meditate and all will be well. You will soon win him over when he sees you with a deep longing for truth, and a respect for our common Master.

This paper has dealt a lot with words and concepts and with understanding in a new way, seeing by a new light. This might lead us to suspect that the realization to which we aspire amounts to no more than changing our language habits, no more than writing up a new dictionary, a new lexicon, perhaps like reconfiguring our computer memory. But this knowledge, we are assured, is more than mere words; it is utterly transforming. Out of otherness comes fear, as the Upanishad says. If this sense of otherness can be obliterated, then our lives can manifest perfect tranquillity and fearlessness.

Finally, when studying Malebranche, or any other philosopher for that matter, we should ideally try to enter into the meaning and intention of what he says. It is not difficult to find imprecision in any writer if we have the ill-will to do so, by concentrating more on the words he writes than on the meaning he intends. His writing is clearly the fruit of much reflection and meditation. It *is* very abstract, yet astonishingly consistent in spite of his continually transcending commonsense ways of thinking, experiencing and speaking. If we can respond to his evident sincerity with the generosity of spirit his writings deserve, we can hope to be rewarded with glorious insights that mirror many aspects of the Advaita tradition.

**B.O'D.**

## I LOVE THEE

Why do I love thee? I love thee because thine eyes are dim, thy hair grey, thy forehead wrinkled like a furrowed field; because thy hands are full of swollen veins, thy feet infirm and thy tongue wagging like a dog's tail.

I love thee because thou art as yet an innocent infant; thy vocabulary is quite large but not so thy ability to frame coherent sentences. Thy tiny feet, thy tiny hands, thy curly hair, thy smooth face, thy babbling, attract my heart. Thou art a sweet blossom in the garden of Rama. Thy chubby arms when thrown around my neck, thy pouting lips and shining eyes make me happier than the great ones of this earth.

I love thee for thy figure, for thy moonlight complexion, for the urges of love rising like the waves of the sea in thy heart, for thy lies, coquetry and blandishments, for thy sympathy, for thy loving care — O youthful beauty.

I love thee for the order and harmony which thou hast breathed into the fragments of matter, for the atoms and electrons into which thou hast split the gaseous nebulae, for the storms, the hurricanes, the billows that strike the rocks and recede like playful children. I love thee for the changing sky, for the colours of dawn and dusk, for the arching rainbow, for the green grass, for the waving azaleas.

I love thee for earthquakes, war, pestilence, for plagues and massacres, for widespread penury, for the pedantic learned, for the flatulent philosophers, for a Ghenghiz Khan, for a Nadir, for a Nero.

I love thee for the peace that knows no diminishing, for the bliss which is integral, for the mystery of "I AM", for the projection of the countless self-sacrificing Augustines, Nichirens and Dadas.

I love thee for thy compassionate nature, for thy ready forgiveness, for thy loving habits, for thy *Gita*, for thy friendship as revealed to Arjuna and Sudama, for thy Rama Tirtha, for thy friendliness to the friendless — I love thee, O Sat-Chit-Ananda, [Being, Consciousness and Bliss Absolute] I love thee.

Thou hast created my soul, not to be wasted in the pursuit of illusory objects like wealth, fame and the passing shadows of the clouds of

youthful women. How can I help loving and adoring thee! Thy beauty, thy intelligence, thy self-negation invites my heart to adore thee, to adore thee, to adore thee — O Sat-Chit-Ananda.

Am I true to myself if I cease to adore Thee? Is my personality of any use unless solely devoted to thee and thy manifestation in nature, art, poverty and purity? I am worse than a worm that grovels in the mud, unconscious of the beauty of the rolling heavens and smiling springs, if I cease to belong to thee and to adore thee.

Kill me outright in a flash of thy lightning! Throw me into the foaming sea and be devoured by the fishes! Let my body be cut into pieces and thrown to the kites and vultures, but do not withdraw from my heart the capacity to adore thee, to live and die for thee.

**Hari Prasad Shastri**

## FULL OF HOPE I CAME

Full of hope, I came to the garden of the world  
to pluck the roses of delight.

But I found there needle-like thorns and I leave it  
in deep disappointment.

It is neither a place of joy, dance and music,  
nor a chamber with soft beds for sweet sleep.

It is a school in which to learn  
the lessons of patience and tranquillity.

In this garden I made friends with the bees and butterflies,  
the robin and the grasshopper.

**H.P.S.**

## Shri Shankara's Doctrine in Outline

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THE SOUNDEST guide to the meaning of the Upanishads and *Bhagavad Gita* is the body of commentaries of Shri Shankaracharya, who lived about 700 AD, and this article is devoted to a general account of his teaching.

Let us raise six questions and give short answers to them. One: Did Shankara have any one special and distinctive doctrine? Two, three and four: What were his answers to the three main problems of philosophy: God, the soul and the world? Five: Did he defend this doctrine? Six: What practical teachings did he offer? This is an enormous field to cover, and Voltaire has said that the secret of being a bore is to tell everything! Accordingly, in this short article, we shall only attempt short studies of these great subjects.

First, did Shankara have a distinctive and special doctrine? The answer is 'Yes', and it is concentrated with marvellous compactness and brevity into the seven pages of introduction to his *Brahma Sutra* Commentary. The essence of the doctrine is that if we reflect on the implications of our ordinary everyday experience, we will see that a contradiction lies at the heart of them. As individual beings who perceive and think and know and act in the world, we are contradictions.

Let us reflect a moment on the constituent factors implicit in our nature as knowing, acting individuals. On the one hand, there is an element of unchanging consciousness and self-hood. We recognize ourselves as conscious beings, persisting as identical. On the other hand, to be either active or conscious of anything we have to identify ourselves with a mind-body complex. We recognize ourselves as ever identical. Yet the body and the mind are always changing. The changeless element and the changing element must be different. Yet we cannot help identifying the two. The 'I' that in youth felt 'I am young' recognizes itself to be the same 'I' that in old age feels 'I am old'. Shankara argued that this identification of the changeless with the changing cannot be true. Yet all worldly experience depends on it. So, worldly experience must be based on error or ignorance, technically known in the system as nescience.

Shankara analyzed all error into two factors. First, there is a failure to

apprehend the truth, which he characterized essentially as not being awake. Secondly, once the truth is not known, the way is clear for positive error. When the rope lying on the ground is properly perceived and recognized as such, there is no room for erroneous fancy. But when it is only half-perceived in the twilight and is not recognized as a rope, it appears in other delusive forms, such as a snake or a stick or a cleft in the ground.

This feature of ordinary misperception explains how the great metaphysical statements of the Upanishads can be true and yet we can remain unaware of their truth. When we reflect rationally on the data of our experience as individuals, we find that the very state of being an experiencing individual implies an error, an identification of the changeless with the changing, of a changeless element of consciousness with a mind-body complex that is changing and is by nature, unconscious. The mind-body complex is by nature unconscious because it is known. We are aware of it as an object, so it cannot be conscious by nature. If it appears to be conscious, if the limbs appear to undergo pain, if the mind and ego seem to have a conscious life of their own, this is because we erroneously attribute to them, or superimpose on them, the consciousness that belongs properly to the eternal unchanging element in us, technically called either the Witness, Sakshi, or the Self, Atman. And we superimpose on to the eternal, unchanging, unlimited consciousness of the Self, the limitation, change and pain that belong properly to the individual mind-body complex.

The object of the Upanishadic and *Gita* teaching is to awaken us from this error, to deliver us from error, limitation and pain, by awakening us to the true nature of our own Self as infinite consciousness. But this knowledge does not usually arise from a mere hearing of the texts. There has to be mental purification and discipline before the truth can be apprehended, as the error of regarding ourselves as individuals is deeply engrained and reinforced by habit. The discipline is not for the sake of acquiring new knowledge, but for rising above the suggestions of limitation generated by long-entrenched habit. The chief means to counteract these suggestions is to dwell on the truth as revealed in the texts of the Upanishads and *Gita* in meditation and spiritual affirmation. But our power to do this effectively is diminished by doubt arising from

the wrong suggestions of individuality and limitation arising from our everyday life.

The purpose of philosophy and theoretical doctrine in Shankara's writings is to minimise these doubts by demonstrating rationally that the doctrine expressed in the profoundest texts of the Upanishads must be true, and the suggestions of everyday experience false.

What did Shankara say about God, the soul and the world? Let us start with God. Is the world and our experience self-explanatory, or do we have to presume the existence of some transcendent principle to account for it? If we do have to assume a transcendent principle, what, if anything, can be said about it?

Shankara did think that we have to postulate a transcendent principle to account for the world. It is true that we cannot perceive God through our sense organs. But that does not mean He does not exist. For Shankara, not only all the individual objects of the world, but the world itself as a whole, was manifestly an effect. And an effect cannot come from nothing. Even the Christian doctrine of creation from nothing presupposes God as Creator. But has it not been suggested that the world will ultimately prove to have been an illusion? Even an illusion, replies Shankara, implies a real substratum as its support. There cannot be a mirage in the desert without the sunshine and haze on which it is based. There cannot be an appearance, even a false appearance, without something that appears. Even if the world is in the end a mere illusory display, there cannot be an illusory display without a conscious being to bring it about.

Shankara appeals to the example of the mass-hypnotist who performs the rope-trick. The illusory visions conjured forth have no reality. Yet the spectators know that they could not even appear without the hidden magician producing them, who will no doubt impress his reality on them afterwards by going round with the collecting-box. The performer of the rope-trick, conceived as a mass-hypnotist, is no more than an imperfect analogy illustrating the rise of the world-appearance. But it illustrates certain features of the Upanishadic conception of God as well. God is identified with the supreme Spirit, infinite consciousness present in ourselves but hidden in His true form. The limitations of the world-appearance do not affect or contaminate pure consciousness in any

way. And this is illustrated by the case of the mass-hypnotist, who is no way affected by the sanguinary drama in which he appears to participate.

In the trick, as described by modern observers, which is clearly the same in all essentials as that to which Shankara refers, a rope appears to ascend vertically into the sky, a small boy climbs up it and disappears, and the magician follows him, hands free but clasping a great sabre between his teeth, until he also disappears. A cacophonous noise ensues and the blood and limbs of the boy are then seen falling to the ground, after which the magician descends the rope, sword adrip with blood, goes over to a sack and reveals the boy, hearty and whole.

The point for Shankara is that the magician has actually committed no murder, has done nothing, knows that nothing has been done, is untouched by the whole display. And yet, in order for the visions to occur the magician himself must exist as a conscious being in order to bring it about. Similarly, even if the world has to be dismissed as an illusion in the end, it implies a conscious being behind it. And Shankara points out that the wise enquirer devotes more time and energy to enquiring into the nature of the inner being behind the illusion than he does to the illusion itself.

Of course, scientific enquiry into the nature of the world has its importance, and not merely for utilitarian reasons. But Shankara distinguished between enquiry for utilitarian ends and enquiry for metaphysical ends. When we enquire into the nature of the world for metaphysical ends, we do so for the sake of the light such enquiries may throw on the reality that lies beyond the world, not for the sake of knowledge of the mechanism of the world as an end in itself. We enquire into the nature of the unreal, not for the sake of knowledge of the unreal but for the sake of knowledge of the real.

Shankara gives many reasons why the objective realm is not self-sufficient and implies both the existence of a transcendent ground and an omnipotent and omniscient controller. Suffice it to point out one interesting variation on the teleological argument here. Everything in the objective world, including the minds and bodies of living beings, is composite. But whatever is composite has been put together deliberately and exists for the sake of another. God, he says, is that conscious element in the individual personality which perceives the activities of the organs

of the mind-body complex and for whose sake they exist. That being itself must be non-composite. For whatever is composite is transient. It is brought together at a point in time and will dissolve and break up at a point in time. But the series of transient entities must end somewhere. There is a simple homogeneous entity, called 'pure' in the sense of partless, homogeneous, who witnesses all the play of all the minds, sense-organs and bodies of the universe and for whose sake they exist. Not that He needs them to express His fullness. It is rather that, given the appearance of a world of plurality characterized by a high degree of order and harmony and witnessed by a conscious principle, we cannot but assume that principle to be simple and eternal and to be that for the sake of which the world of composite bodies exists. But this whole notion of a world of plurality is due to be corrected when the Self taught in the Upanishads is directly known.

What can we say of the transcendent principle whose existence is implied by the knowable world of objects? Shankara values anthropomorphic conceptions of God as a means to withdraw excessive interest from the transient objects of the world and fix it on some concrete representation of its divine source. He favours visits to the temple to worship the Lord in concrete form as an idol or image. But this is all at the stage of mental purification. It is not his final word about God. When we worship God in any concrete imaginable form, we are worshipping the limitless, formless Absolute, conceived under forms which we ourselves supply and which we can understand. The truth about the Absolute is that, being infinite, it transcends mental conception. As the Upanishad says, it is that from which words turn back, together with the mind.

The Absolute is not, in its true nature, immediately accessible to the natural faculties and can only be known through Upanishadic revelation, while Upanishadic revelation, when properly interpreted, is found to be negative in character. We come to the Upanishads and expect them to convey knowledge of the Absolute through the medium of words. It is as if we were to ask, 'Who is Mr Devadatta?' and were to receive the answer, 'The man with the spotted cows.' Such an answer would have a negative function. It would keep our mind away from all but Mr Devadatta's immediate possessions. But, ultimately we could not know

Mr Devadatta himself until our attention had been withdrawn even from his cows. As Devadatta can only be known shorn of his cows, so the Absolute can only be known shorn of all knowable characteristics communicable through words, though such characteristics can be used, as was the case with Devadatta's cows, as a means to focus attention on the object of enquiry. And since the Absolute is for Shankara nothing other than the pure form of the consciousness that is present in our minds illumining them with its light, one is able to say: 'When all the external characters have been eliminated, then one becomes aware of the true Self as the knower, as in the case of the man with the spotted cows.'

This brings us to Shankara's conception of the soul. The soul is the one immutable infinite Consciousness, apparently individualized by being viewed in association with what is called, in the jargon of the system, illusory limiting adjuncts or upadhis. The upadhi or illusory limiting adjunct is variously defined. According to one definition, it is that which, standing near something else, defines it without entering into its nature. According to another definition it is that which, if standing near something, falsely introduces the appearance of its form into that thing.

The second and narrower definition probably comes closer to Shankara's use. Take the familiar example of space and pots. If you have a large pot and a small pot and you swap round their position, you have moved two definite, different portions of air and made them change their positions in space. But you have not effected any movement or change in space.

Whereas a definite portion of air is enclosed in each pot, no space is enclosed in either pot. The pots simply move about in space. And yet there is a meaningful sense in which we can speak of volumes of space enclosed by the two pots, a relatively large volume and a relatively small volume, respectively. No space is actually enclosed in either of the pots, and yet to all intents and purposes, it seems as if it were. The pots are upadhis, apparently enclosing parcels of space. Shankara regarded the individual soul as the universal consciousness enclosed within the upadhi of an individual organism. There are no real delimitations or boundaries in the universal consciousness, yet as long as we are in the grip of nescience, it seems as if there were.

While this is a useful analogy for conceiving the relation of the individual consciousness to the universal consciousness, it is not a sufficient one. Shankara regarded, in addition, what we might call the reflection analogy as indispensable for explaining the facts of experience. When Shankara drew his line of demarcation between subject and object, it was not between mind and matter, but between the Self, as pure consciousness, and the not-self. Mind, for him, fell wholly on the side of the object, and was in fact matter in a subtle form. Because of its comparative subtlety, mind was able to catch a reflection of the light of pure consciousness and this reflected light is the experience of the individual soul or jiva. When a luminous body, say the moon at night, is reflected in the water lying in a row of water-pots, the moon is unaffected by the condition of the various reflections. One pot may be wobbling a bit, so that the image of the moon it contains flickers with the ripples of the water. Another may contain dirty water which gives a weaker reflection, and so on. But all these variations in the reflected images of the pots leave the moon itself unaffected.

In the same way, the pure light of the universal consciousness, present everywhere, is unaffected by the state and condition of its various reflections in the minds of living beings. It is the same one light of pure Consciousness illumining the mind of Jones, who is generous and kind, and the mind of Robinson, who is cruel and crafty. And that light itself is neither generous, nor kind, nor cruel, nor crafty. It is like the footlights, in the light of which the whole play goes forward. The reflection-analogy has the incidental advantage of suggesting to the beginner on the practical path that, even if he cannot attain the Absolute in a single leap, he can acquire an increasing degree of awareness of the presence of the Absolute in the course of daily life through purification of the mind, the medium in which its light is reflected, gaining, as it were, an ever clearer and more constant reflection of consciousness in the mind. The individual soul, as body-mind complex, lives in the environment of an external world, and draws its sustenance from that world, which is hence referred to collectively as its 'food'.

This brings us to our fourth point: Shankara's theory of the external world. By and large, he simply reproduced the typical doctrines of Hindu cosmology, an amalgam of different conceptions going back to earlier

sources such as the Upanishads, the Epics and Law-Books. We find, for instance, the doctrine of five great elements corresponding to the five sense-organs of hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell. The composition of these elements is of little interest to us today. Perhaps the one interesting point about the old Hindu cosmology was its open-endedness both in time and space. Unlike, say, the classical Christian conception of the world, the Hindu conception of the cosmos recognized no limits in time or space. Shankara accepted the view that the world and also the individual soul were beginningless, and that the world went through a beginningless and endless series of world-periods or kalpas. All this multiplicity is, of course, ultimately dismissed by Shankara as illusion. Only the one immutable Consciousness in perfect peace truly exists. Yet there is so much evidence of harmony and order and purpose in the universe that so long as we are in the grip of nescience and take it as real, we are forced to postulate an inner ruler and controller who presides over all activity and in the long run, if only in a future life, awards the performers of all actions their due. Our notion of such a divine ruler, however, is relative to the world-appearance. In the end, when man throws off nescience and awakens to his true Self, he realizes that there never was a universe of plurality external to himself, and that what he had thought of as a deity external to himself, controlling the world, was, in fact, only the infinite, immutable Consciousness, his own true Self.

What one naturally wants to know is what Shankara did with the universe. As the English Absolutist philosopher F H Bradley complained, the Absolutist philosopher has the world on his hands. And one might ask of Shankara, 'If the Absolute is as homogeneous and infinite as you say it is, what is the world-appearance doing at all?' The answer Shankara gave depended on the standpoint of the enquirer. From the standpoint of ultimate truth, there is no world and not even a world-appearance, so there is no problem. Shri Shankara's Advaita takes a very firm stand here. We can readily grasp the importance of the notion of cancellation for the system. When the rope that has been wrongly taken for a snake is recognized as a rope, we do not, so to speak, just say good-bye to the snake. We realize there never was a snake. Still, as long as we are acting and thinking from the standpoint of nescience, the standpoint of time, space and causation, we continue to think that there was at least the

mental representation of a snake or the illusion of a snake, under which we suffered for a time, but of which we are now, thank heaven, cured. But the full awakening to the Self taught in the Upanishads cancels everything but the supreme Self, including the notion of time, the notion that there ever was an individual experiencer and so forth. So the earlier teacher, Gaudapada said: 'There is no dissolution, no origination, no-one in bondage, no-one pursuing discipline, no-one striving for release from ignorance, no-one released. This is the final truth.'

But, of course, this is not how it all appears to the student, who is still in ignorance but striving for knowledge. To him, Shankara offers several different provisional ways of accounting for the world-appearance. For example, he maintains that from the standpoint of nescience, accepting the commonsense view that there is a world of multiplicity, then we should assert that the Absolute is the cause and the world is its effect. However, the analogy to be recalled here is the Upanishadic one of clay and pots. Clay and pots are cause and effect. Yet the pots are strictly nothing over and above the clay. We may even speak of the identity of cause and effect here. But if the cause is said to be identical with the effect, this means that the effect has the nature of the cause, while the cause does not have the nature of the effect. Of course the pots and clay analogy is very imperfect because the clay undergoes actual modification to form the pots, whereas the world is a mere appearance manifesting in the Absolute, which remains unchanged. So the clay and pots analogy has to be supplemented by other analogies, such as that of the magician and his magic display, the snake appearing in the rope and so forth.

A very characteristic analogy used by Shankara in this context is that of water and foam. The relation between water and foam illustrates that between the Absolute and the world in two ways. First, the foam is non-different from the water in the sense that there can never be foam without water. And secondly, foam is not identical with water either, as water is transparent and foam not. In the same way, the world is non-different from the Absolute. It is not a second independent reality over against it. And yet the Absolute does not have the characteristics of the world: change, variety, pain, imperfection and so on. So on one view, the world is left as having a mysterious character, indeterminable as either different from, or identical with, the Absolute.

Apart from this brief outline of the theoretical part of Shankara's teaching, there are two points left to be dealt with. Did he defend his doctrine polemically? Yes, he did. On the one hand, he pointed out the insufficiencies of those interpreters of the Veda of his own day who failed to penetrate to the heart of the Upanishads. On the other hand, he attacked the various rationalistic schools of philosophy current in India in his day. Probably there is only one part of all this polemical work that is of more than historical interest today, and that is his attack on the various Buddhist schools. It seems safe to say that when he was attacking his Hindu brethren, he was attacking a view not remotely approaching anything that would be seriously maintained today. No-one, for instance, would seriously believe, with the Purva Mimamsakas, that the Veda was entirely concerned with injunctions to perform ritual and that the sublime metaphysical teachings of the sages of the Upanishads could be explained as a round-about form of exhortation to perform ritual. And the atomism of the Vaisheshikas would have little to commend it to nuclear physicists working at the Cavendish laboratory in Cambridge. On the other hand, I have heard of a modern philosopher, admittedly an Oxonian, saying that the Hinayana Buddhist views attacked by Shankara were very much like views he had recently heard propounded at Cambridge. And, as long as our academic philosophers continue to make genuflections before the portly figure of David Hume, they will remain in the same kind of philosophical climate as several of the Buddhists whom Shankara attacked, and they may find some interest in studying the way Shankara attacked their theories.

In general, the Buddhists started from the succession of sense-impressions and were eager to explain them with as few assumptions as possible. They dismissed substances and attributes, causes and effects, timeless universals and permanent egos as mere mental constructions, based on nothing more than useful imaginative habits. Shankara's line was to show them how difficult it was to account for the facts of memory and recognition without at least enough duration for the rememberer or recognizer to remain identical during two experiences at separate times. And once that point is granted, an eternal Self can be made to follow.

Finally, there is the practical path. Shankara laid stress on the need for qualified guidance in the student's approach to the texts. He took the text

'That Thou Art', metaphysically interpreted, as the central text of the Veda, in terms of which all the rest had to be interpreted. Meditation on Upanishadic texts and affirmations of the great metaphysical truths therein enunciated were important elements in spiritual discipline as he conceived it. Worship of the Absolute in the form of a personal God was regarded as a preliminary purifying practice, but also important.

This is not the time to embark on any detailed explanation of the way the Teacher was supposed by Shankara to communicate the texts to the pupil. So I would like to close with a few verses he composed, obviously intended to be learned by heart by those aspiring to that knowledge of the Absolute that the Upanishads exist to promote. They constitute a form of spiritual affirmation that could well be treated as a *vade-mecum* by any serious practical student of the Upanishadic path.

O my mind! My nature is pure Consciousness and my connection with the body, O my mind, is but a product of thy delusion. No result whatever accrues to me, O my mind, from all thy activities, as I am even without distinctions of any kind.

Give up thy intense activity, O my mind, bred of illusion. Abandon thy weary struggles and attain the great peace. For I am the supreme, the Absolute, ever free, unborn, One without a second.

I alone exist, ever the same in all beings, all-pervading and indestructible like space, undivided, partless, actionless, the supreme Good, the transcendent: no result, O my mind, can accrue from thy activities.

I myself am my own sole possession. I recognize nothing else as my own. Nor do I belong to anyone else, for I am relationless. Yes, O my mind, I am relationless, and have nothing to do with thy activities, for I am One without a second.

**A.J.A.**

## SHANTI SADAN NEWS

The Wednesday evening talks at Shanti Sadan during the Summer term were a further series on meditation, under the title *Meditation - Light for the Inner Life*. Each talk considered different aspects of the spiritual Yoga, leading into a guided session of traditional practices. The same set of practices was given for three weeks each, providing continuity and reinforcing the value of regularity and rhythm in meditation. Each set included a breathing practice, a visualization, and a meditation on a text expressing the pure, non-dual truth. The importance of approaching meditation in the right spirit with an expression of reverence was included, as was the traditional way of closing the practices with active thoughts of goodwill to all without exception. The presentations drew much on Dr Shastri's *Meditation - its Theory and Practice*, and they were deeply informed, more or less explicitly, by the great wisdom and insight to be found in the writings of Marjorie Waterhouse, Dr Shastri's successor as Warden of Shanti Sadan, including her books *Training the Mind through Yoga* and *Power Behind the Mind*. All these books continue to be among the most studied and popular of Shanti Sadan's publications.

The Friday evening talks covered a wide range of spiritual subjects, including the ideals and ethics of Yoga, the view of the world as the Sport (*Lila*) of the Lord, the life and teaching of Shri Dada of Aligarh, at whose wish Dr Shastri established a centre of Adhyatma Yoga in the West, and the great Christian mystic and teacher Saint John of the Cross.

On Sunday 7 June the afternoon course of the Summer term took place, with three talks and two meditation sessions providing an opportunity to hear about the foundations, practice and ultimate goal of the Yoga. The event proceeded in an atmosphere of peace and concentration to which all present contributed. The first talk considered *The Inner and Outer Worlds*, over one of which it is possible for us to gain spiritual control. The second talk was on the practicalities of *Clearing the Mist in the Mind*. And the event concluded with a talk on the inspiring subject of *The Liberating Truth* that is ever the basis, as well as the final goal, of the spiritual quest.