

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.

EVENTS FOR THE AUTUMN TERM 2011

Weekday evening talks at Shanti Sadan

Lectures will be given every Tuesday and Thursday evening at 8pm from Tuesday 4 October until Thursday 1 December 2011. **Autumn 2011 Afternoon Course**

The afternoon course will be held on Sunday 30 October, 2pm - 5pm, at the Columbia Hotel, Lancaster Gate, London W2.

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FORGIVE AND FORGET

‘I can never forgive, still less forget’ is a common sentiment, yet forgiving and forgetting is one of the secrets of successful meditation. Thoughts of resentment, of being wronged and bearing a grudge, hang on the heart like chains and hinder its serenity. Images of conflict and confrontation eclipse the feeling of our underlying spiritual unity with all, and turn our mind into a field of likes and dislikes. But when we ‘forgive and forget’, all this changes. Consciousness expands, the mind lightens and becomes the home of deeper, liberating insights.

In *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia pleads for mercy, or forgiveness, on behalf of Antonio, and in celebrated lines declares that mercy is ‘twice blessed; it blesseth him that gives and him that takes’. In human affairs, it is the forgiver who most evidently will feel better from this inner thaw, but to cherish the feeling ‘I have forgiven’ has also to be transcended. Forgive, forget, don’t talk about it, and, if possible, don’t think about it.

There is a prayer composed by Hari Prasad Shastri, which makes a deeper point. It begins:

Teach us to forgive all fancied wrongs,
For, in reality, no outside entity can harm or profit us.

These words remind us that our deeper spiritual nature is beyond the flux of physical events and their impact on the mind, and is never hurt by them. It also speaks of ‘fancied wrongs’, suggesting that we often misread situations and people’s motives, and weave a tapestry of imagination which may partially, or even wholly, distort the true position. The world is a realm of misunderstanding. Just as we ourselves often feel misunderstood, so too we tend to forget the bias in our own insight when we confidently assess the motives and intentions of others.

The ultimate and ever-present escape-hatch from these entanglements is to dive deep within ourselves, aided by our meditation practice. Swami Rama Tirtha has said it is necessary to plunge below the ‘talkative level’ of the mind, to the still depths. None would claim that this inner re-positioning is easy, but it is developed by practice. Abstinence from complaining speech is a factor, for such talk robs us of energy, depresses our hearers and leads nowhere. Pacifying and harmonizing our mind in the light of our communion with the highest Truth is the transforming medicine. When we connect with the inner sun, lesser thought currents lose their authority and quietly abate—if we allow them to.

Here is a meditation text which puts all mental activity into perspective, and draws us into the deeper centre behind and within the mental ‘veil’:

OM. ALL TALK, TURMOIL AND MOTION ARE OUTSIDE THE VEIL.
WITHIN THE VEIL IS SILENCE, CALM AND REST. OM.

Strength and Insight through the Spiritual Yoga

IN AN ARTICLE called ‘The Grand Delusion’ published recently in *New Scientist*, we were reminded how little we really understand ourselves and our surroundings. This lack of understanding is not a question of limited intelligence. It is due to certain basic facts about our physiology and our psychology.

For instance, what actually do we see when we look at something? The things we see in detail are registered by the fovea, which is a very small part of the retina where perception of detail and colour is at its best. This means that we only capture in full colour and detail a tiny percentage of what we see through our eyes. Evidently the fovea covers an area about the size of the thumb nail when the arm is held at full length. Away from the fovea, visual acuity swiftly diminishes and colour vision disappears. To compensate for this, we unconsciously shift our eyes around rapidly, with brief fixings of a few milliseconds between each shift to capture colour and detail in a slightly wider area. In simple terms, our brain then paints in the imagined detail and colour of what we see through the rest of the eye.

While our eye is shifting, our brain does not register what enters the eye, and only starts recording again when the eye is fixed between each shift. If the vision-time lost during these shifting manoeuvres is added to that lost due to blinking, it seems that our visual system is offline for a total of around four hours daily. So what we think of as a continuous movie of observations during the day is actually made up of separate snapshots interspersed with numerous gaps due to blinking and eye movements. Our brain has actually stitched all these fragmentary pieces of vision into a complete whole by imaginatively filling in the gaps to create the illusion that we have a continuous record of everything that has happened during our day.

The same article discusses how incomplete our picture of the ‘real’ world is with regard to other aspects of human experience. Our self-image bears little relationship to how others perceive us. Our current beliefs are based on prejudices, so that we routinely censor any fresh

data which conflicts with those beliefs. Our memory of past events in our lives is prone to all kinds of errors and distortions. And our freedom of choice in our decision-making is so constrained that one may query whether we have any freedom at all. All in all, this scientific account leaves the reader with a depressing picture of our lack of ability to grasp 'things as they really are', and leaves no clues how to improve the situation!

Now, if we compare these findings with those in the yogic teachings, there are many similarities. But there are crucial differences as regards the nature of the individual, the underlying cause of the universe, and what the individual is able to do to find out about both. This yogic view is much more optimistic and gives logical and philosophical explanations about the nature of the individual and of the universe, along with the methods and techniques to explore these explanations.

Like science, Yoga also teaches that we don't have a correct understanding of what we are really like. Most people believe themselves to be the ego-personality, without examining if this is really true. If we think about our personality, we can see that it is changeable and malleable, so that we present different aspects of it to match the circumstances we are in and the different people we meet. We may not be consciously aware of this chameleon-like side of our character, but consider whether you project the same personality to your family at home as the one you present to colleagues in your place of work. It is a well recognized phenomenon that some managers who are extremely strict, even tyrants, at work, are soft-natured and compliant when they get home to their families. Others, who are quiet and reserved during the day, become outgoing extroverts in the evenings when in a more social environment.

With a little introspection and self-analysis, we can identify these changes in our personality, which take place almost automatically. We may feel uncomfortable about some of the personae we project when circumstances are not to our liking. In the story of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Robert Louis Stevenson gives an insight into the extreme types of personality that can exist within one person. On a lesser scale, though, which of us does not harbour within ourselves a Mr or Mrs Angry, Rumour-monger or Jealousy, which surfaces sometimes?

The yogic teachings explain that we need to bring some control to our thoughts and emotions in order to minimize the disruption they cause to our mind, or we will be forever at their mercy. We have all observed manipulative people who know how to divert our attention from themselves by what is figuratively called 'pressing our buttons'. That is, if we are asking about something they don't want to reveal, they will distract us by making us angry or by sending our minds racing off down some other line of enquiry until we have forgotten what we were legitimately asking them about.

Shame on them for using such tactics, but we also need to take some responsibility for our own lack of control. Dr Shastri pointed out that people are keen on keeping themselves physically fit, and readily seek the help of a doctor to relieve bodily suffering. But how many treat their mind in the same way, by training it and seeking help from an expert when afflicted by anger, jealousy, greed and the like? Yoga practice begins when we train the mind in obedience to our will, so that we can start and stop it when we want. If we omit to develop this skill, then our own uncontrolled mind will divert our attention when we try to train it or to meditate.

A good starting point is to identify any traits in our character that we want to change. Last thing at night, we might profitably review our day and identify where we could have behaved better. Our own conscience is the guide here, and where we feel we have behaved incorrectly, we make a pact with ourselves by repeating inwardly: 'I am the master of my mind. I can control my I will change it, and from now on practise the opposite,'. In this way, one can replace traits like irritation with tolerance, arrogance with gentleness, flattery with sincerity, etc. We then try to live up to our resolution the next day, and then dispassionately review our performance, renewing our pact before going to sleep.

Spiritual thoughts, drawn from the classics, can quickly neutralize the lowering effect of certain worldly influences, if such thoughts are briskly invoked. Swami Rama Tirtha used this particular technique for stilling and calming the mind. He said that when faced with cynical or critical remarks, he would quickly afterwards take up a spiritual book

which inspired him and read a verse. It is likely that the book he referred to was the *Avadhut Gita*. He expressed the effect it had on him in his own way as follows:

When Rama reads one verse out of this book, that is enough to wipe out and wash away all pollution of lives and lives; it throws Rama at once into a state of ecstasy. One verse of this small book appeals to the heart and uplifts, reasserts the Godhead in Rama and rends asunder the veil of maya.

He explained that any book or reading which uplifts the spirit can be used, whether from our own religious background or a work of uplifting prose or poetry, and added:

After you have mixed with your friends or left any uncongenial company, instead of allowing your mind to keep on oscillating, instead of allowing your mind to remain in a disturbed state, at once take up this inspiring passage and make the mind steady.

Here then we can see how to build a platform of tranquillity within ourselves by ridding the mind of its disturbing tendencies through self-analysis and self-correction, followed by attempts to feed it on the highest qualities of behaviour and insight prompted by our selective spiritual reading.

The next stage is to train the mind to be obedient to our will, so that we can make it tranquil when we like, or active and energised when such engagement is needed. For this, we first learn how to give our attention to a particular subject, and also leave that subject when we wish to. This is sometimes called 'starting and stopping the mind'. This control is necessary so that when we come to meditate, we can turn the mind to our practice at our chosen time, and then end the practice after the planned duration. Like a pupil or an apprentice, the mind learns to obey our instructions by focusing on the meditation practice. The training is made more complete by choosing precise start and stop times and sticking to them as closely as possible.

Of course, the mind will resist all our attempts to control it.

Throughout life it has escaped this kind of guidance. In relation to meditation, we should not be surprised if the mind tries to undermine our resolve in many ways, suggesting, for example: 'You're running late, so just skip it for today.' If we do, this same thought will recur more and more frequently. Again, the mind will try to get us to vary the times we have chosen for starting and ending the practice, arguing for shortness of time when things are not going so well, but more cunningly, seeking to lengthen the period when we are having a good day. Both are equally bad for they undermine our will and determination.

Obviously we may have to make adjustments in certain circumstances. Let it be a conscious decision and not an automatic consent when our mind spontaneously makes the suggestion, or we will never bring it under our own conscious control. And after making an adjustment, we should then return to the plan we have agreed with ourselves on timings.

It is not a case of using brute force on the mind, but of treating it gently, as we would a wayward child. To attain anything worthwhile in life we have to be patient and persistent. As Calvin Coolidge, a former American president, counselled:

Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful people with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan 'press on' has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.

What is the purpose of making these efforts to train the mind and bring it under control? Our aim is to transform the mind into an instrument through which we may fathom the mystery of self-knowledge and the nature of creation. Instead of letting the mind loose on the outer world using the physical methods of science, we turn it inward to search out answers about our own nature using the spiritual science explained in the yogic teachings.

The fact that we can train our mind in this way, or even speak of it

objectively, as we are doing, indicates there is a power within us that is higher than the mind. This power can guide our character from darkness to light, weaning the mind from its undirected, almost random activity, rendering it a servant of our higher spiritual purpose. We will find that our spiritual practices open the way to deeper insight, and make the mind increasingly receptive to the influence of spiritual power that lies behind it.

When the mind is sufficiently tranquillized and freed of distracting thought-currents, the yogi experiences directly the nature of the Self as Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. We realize that this is what we are in reality, not the sum of the parts of the physical body, nor a combination of the body and mind, with all the 'heartache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to', as Hamlet put it. We are something beyond both of them, and the body and mind are nothing more than our instruments.

We are all that same Existence, Consciousness and Bliss which pervades and sustains the universe. As a man mistakenly superimposes a vision of a snake on a piece of rope, so do we all superimpose the body and mind on our real Self, and when we have this innermost experience of our real Self, it is never again lost, and all fear is removed from our life.

S.B.

The great and glorious King
Who rules the motions of your mind
And dispenses peace,
Is your own Self, your surest refuge.

From a poem by Swami Rama Tirtha

The Eternal Wisdom

Continuing Hari Prasad Shastri's imaginative portrayal of the life and teachings of the sages of ancient India.

KING JANAKA was sitting in his private apartment, wearing the simple dress of a peasant. He thought of his holy Guru and said to himself: 'Will my revered Guru ever confer upon me the favour of a visit?'

The following day Shri Ashtavakra came to the palace gate. The king was informed of his visit. He ran barefooted to welcome the mahatma and led him to the royal chamber. Then the king and his queen washed the feet of the sage with their own hands with water in a golden basin. The holy man occupied the throne and gave the following sermon:

My son, tell those who wish to attain liberation from the tyranny of time and space, from the bonds of necessity, from the dictatorship of birth, death and old age, to withdraw themselves from the sense-objects as though they were poison. Tell them also, my son, to pursue as nectar forgiveness, simplicity of life, compassion and contentment.

You are neither earth, water, fire, air nor ether. Being the Witness of all these (for the object is ever different from the subject), each one of us is pure Consciousness. All that is 'imposed' on man is not his real Self, which is formless and unattached.

The way to eternal happiness, peace and freedom from all limitations, is through detachment from the body, and through tranquil rest in the supreme Intelligence.

The Self is neither the doer nor the enjoyer. Egoism is a black serpent, highly venomous. Keep it away by spiritual faith. This is the way to real happiness.

The Self is Consciousness (chit), on which the world is superimposed like an imagined snake on a rope.

He who considers himself as free, is free. He is in bondage who considers himself a slave. As one thinks, so one becomes.

The body-consciousness is a noose; with the sword of the knowledge 'I am Intelligence', cut this noose and realize happiness.

Just as a mirror exists both inside and outside the image reflected in it, so does the supreme Lord, the Self, exist inside and outside this body.

Every mind is lit with eternal Consciousness; every atom is pregnant with celestial bliss. Know this and be happy. Om!

The sages, ministers and the queen, who were listening to the sage Ashtavakra, cried: 'Jai! Jai!', and flowers were showered on him from all sides. The birds in their cages in the royal palace listened silent and intent, and even the beasts in the wood seemed hesitantly to approach. King Janaka offered many salutations to the great sage and said: 'Blessed one, be good enough to enlighten us further concerning bondage and liberation. The whole world seems to be in bondage. Determinism, which rules nature, constitutes in itself a bondage to the Spirit dwelling within nature.'

The holy rishi lifted his right hand by way of benediction, and in sweet, slow accents, full of harmony, like the cadence of cool, flowing water, crystal pure and drawn from a mountain spring, he continued:

My son, it is the mind that is bound and the mind that seeks freedom. The Self, seemingly identified with the mind, imposes upon itself the condition of the mind.

When the mind desires or grieves, rejects or accepts anything, feeling now happy, now angry, it is said to be in bondage. Whereas when the mind neither desires nor grieves, and goes beyond the dialectic of approval and rejection, impervious to either joy or sorrow, then it is said to be free.

Again, when the mind is attached to the pleasure derived from perceiving any object through the sense-organs, then that mind is said to be in bondage.

It is liberation when the mind rests in itself and is not attached to anything perceived.

Where there is 'I' there is bondage, where there is no 'I' there is liberation.

My son, rise above all expecting and rejecting, and you are free. Give

up desire for pleasure, which is the chief enemy of the mind, and for all worldly prosperity.

The holy rishi brought the tips of his forefinger and thumb in contact, and using this great gesture (*mudra*) of non-duality, spoke with slight emphasis, saying:

O King, look upon friends, property, wealth, wife and every other good fortune, and also the opposite of these, as merely a dream, or as the show of a juggler, which lasts only for a short time.

Know well, where there is thirst (*trishna*) for happiness in any form whatsoever, there is the snare of the transient world (*sansara*). By creating in yourself the deep-rooted feeling of passionlessness (*vairagya*), conquer this thirst and be happy. OM.

The discourse ended. Salutations were offered by all to the holy Teacher, and the queen and her maids-of-honour came forward with the traditional gift (*dakshina*). Then the ministers and other courtiers offered their own quota of gold, silver and jewels. The sage consecrated the offerings by raising his hand over them, and said to the King: 'My son, now that this is mine, send half of it to the poor students for their maintenance, and the other half to the needy and the sick.'

King Janaka stood before the Teacher with his palms joined together. There were tears in his eyes but he restrained them. He seemed to be dazed and involuntarily began to murmur slowly and softly:

I renounce both renunciation and possession. I enjoy that tranquillity which is rare in this world.

The holy Guru orders me to rule and I obey him, yet how my mind wants to enjoy the tranquillity of the Himalayan valley, through which the Ganga, the celestial river, flows on and on, singing its heavenly songs.

Happiness belongs to those who are firmly convinced, in spite of the manifold appearances, that the world, operating in time and space, has no real existence.

No more duties have I to discharge. I renounce both action and inaction.

I have no association and no dissociation. In whatever state, wherever I am, I am happy, I am happy, happy.

I have cancelled evil with good, and the good I also transcend.

What can I say? What am I? Indeed, I am! I am! I am!

The wise one, though appearing as acting, sometimes in harmony, sometimes without it, is, in fact, neither active nor inactive. This is the essence of wisdom.

The wise one is never agitated, nor is he ever satisfied. He is neither dynamic nor static.

Free from all doubts, he shines, and the world shines after him!

The sense-objects are like tigers. The frightened ones, seeking refuge, enter the cave of the intellect (*buddhi*) for the attainment of control and meditation.

The wise, who have given up imaginings, who are no longer bound, unfettered by egoism, sport in the world, seeming to enjoy pleasures, sometimes retiring into lonely caves to meditate.

The worldly can never know the secret of their art.

The holy sage ordered the assembly to be dismissed. King Janaka, his queen and his family priest, all offered their worship in the form of the *arti* ceremony to Shri Ashtavakra. They invited him to ride in the golden palanquin, but he preferred to walk, wearing his wooden sandals, holding his staff and moving slowly with his eyes resting on the ground. Thus did the illustrious Ashtavakra, followed by the king and his court, return to the garden where, under a tree, he sat alone in samadhi.

To be continued

Enlightenment—The Crown of Life

AN OLD FABLE tells of a certain mysterious wall. Many tried to scale the wall to see what was on the other side, but failed. Then one man reached the top. He saw what was beyond, smiled, jumped and never returned. After a time another man made the ascent and exactly the same thing happened. The people were very puzzled about this. They resolved that the next climber should have a rope tied to him to stop him from jumping. Eventually a third man came, reached the top, smiled and was pulled back. When the people questioned him about what he had seen, they found he had lost the power to speak.

Something of this kind applies to our efforts to explain meaningfully what exactly is meant by spiritual enlightenment. For enlightenment is indescribable. ‘Those who speak do not know. Those who know do not speak,’ says Lao Tzu. The point is, we are dealing with the realm of the infinite, the ultimate, which transcends altogether the reach of thought.

Nonetheless, there are things that can be said about enlightenment to guide us in the right direction. So let us see how Adhyatma Yoga can aid our understanding, and impart to us some insights that may help us to see beyond the wall—because the wall is within us, and what is beyond it is also within us, and from the highest standpoint, there is no wall at all!

Enlightenment is the goal of life and the goal of our spiritual aspiration. It is to be experienced directly in this very life. This experience is one of identity, so that we know with certainty ‘I am That.’ Normally our identity, our sense of ‘I am’, is wrapped up in our personality. But underlying the human personality is something much greater, which transcends all limitations. This is our true Self and it is the Self of all. Enlightenment is, so to say, the recovery of our true identity.

Why should we be interested in this aspect of life, when there are so many absorbing things that claim our attention? How does such a quest apply to me personally? This knowledge will free us from anxiety and fear, and sweep away all the discontent and frustration that deprive us of our ease of heart and rob us of our joy in life. This enlightenment will

confer on us a fulfilled understanding about ourselves, the world and the reality behind it, bringing lasting satisfaction and the certainty that one has achieved all that was to be achieved in the deepest and most complete sense.

In the world, one goal tends to lead to another, and there is no end of it, because the thirst for lasting fulfilment has not been quenched. It is as if life is providing us with two kinds of water. The first is served everywhere, but it contains a pinch of salt, which, though invisible to the eye, soon makes its effect felt in the form of our wish to have another drink. This is similar to the effect of worldly desires, which are never completely fulfilled because they do not eliminate the crying need at the core of our being. Within us, there *is* a crying need, because something alive and expanding at the core of our being is driving us on to experience nothing less than infinity.

After a good deal of emotional wear and tear, we may start to suspect a flaw in all those worldly promises. At this stage we may become receptive to the idea that there is another kind of water, which is not drawn from outside but from the pure spring at the depth of our own being. This is 'the water of immortality'. It is a metaphor for the supreme spiritual experience.

What is the difference between the salty water of the world and this water of immortality? The water of immortality has to be tracked down and discovered within us. Once tasted, it will also stimulate a thirst for more. But this water has no unfortunate side-effects, and, if pursued, brings ever increasing satisfaction culminating in complete fulfilment. It will lead us to the discovery that underlying our personality is the source of everlasting life in the form of knowledge of the Self.

In the world, when we talk about crowning achievements, it always assumes that we are after something we do not already possess. As we know, everything worthwhile has its price in terms of energy, attention, dedication, perseverance, resilience in the face of opposition and setbacks. This also applies to our quest for enlightenment. It would be wrong to give the impression that a short course will secure for us the crown of life. For most of us it takes time to adjust our way of thinking in a spiritual direction, and not least to unlearn certain prejudices, habits and tendencies that may rule our understanding. So time well used is

our most valuable resource in the maturing of wisdom.

Sometimes it is said our journey to enlightenment is one that extends over lifetimes. A man once asked a spiritual teacher: 'How long will it take me to become illumined?' The teacher answered: 'Ten years.' 'O, that long!' sighed the questioner. Another man asked the same question and the teacher replied: 'Ten lifetimes.' This time, the response was: 'Wonderful, so quick!'

So whatever the requirements needed for us to progress along our own particular spiritual path, it would seem that time management is an important factor.

But is this the best way of thinking about what enlightenment really involves, a process in time, and this time seems to be rather open ended? It *is* a process in time for our instruments of body and mind. But from the standpoint of the deeper spiritual dimension of our being, this worldly framework of achievement does not apply. For example, consider this verse from Swami Mangalnathji's *Triumph of a Hero (Vira Vijaya)*:

'I was, I am and I shall be! Nothing other than Myself ever was or is now or ever shall be!' Such is the conviction of the natural hero, abiding forever in His own glory.

What we hear in this verse is that enlightenment is not something we lack, not something that is remote from us in time and place, nor is it brought into being as a result of our action. The verse tells us that there is no such principle as time in our deeper spiritual dimension. It points to an 'I' which is not the personal 'I' we are familiar with. 'I was, I am, I shall be.' There has never been anything apart from this 'I', so how can there be a process of work or steps to achieve it?

By using the word 'natural' the implication is that the state we believe ourselves to be in right now, identified with our senses and mind and subject to the uncertainties of life, is not our natural state nor our true identity. That true identity is limitless and is not separate from the inexhaustible fullness of its own glory. This is the natural state of the Self. Then what is the achievement, if any? The achievement is really to correct our lack of recognition of the ever-achieved.

We have all heard reports about people being surprised and delighted to learn that some antique or painting thought to be valueless, and dumped in a storeroom, turns out to be their most valuable possession, as revealed by an expert who knows its worth. A little time ago there was a case where a house was going to be sold. An auctioneer was called in to look at a table in the attic, where he noticed behind a pile of old mattresses, a certain painting that was thickly covered with the dust of decades. It turned out to be a very valuable portrait by the Victorian artist, John Everett Millais. The owner had been given it when she was a little girl, did not know its value and forgot about it.

We can take the house to symbolize our personality. Perhaps we can liken the attic to the highest part of our mind, not normally visited or explored as we go about our daily chores. The dust concealing the picture is our preoccupation with the material things of life and the incessant mental activity that is our usual state. Beneath this dust of thought and emotion there is a higher reality, infinitely superior. It is more inward than thought and cannot be made an object of thought. But we can gain intuitive insight into this precious depth of our being through creating some inner space and filling our mind with ideas relating to this wisdom. This is like removing the dust and learning to recognize the picture as something truly valuable and to be cherished.

So when we talk about achievement in Yoga, it is not a case of *becoming* enlightened, but of removing the whole set of errors that convince us we are limited individuals in need of a deep fulfilment we do not already possess. The role of the expert, namely the spiritual teacher, is to bring this fact home to us and help us to complete the process through which we will know in our own experience that our true nature is divine.

For most of us there is work to be done, and challenges to be met. But this process is a kind of unlearning, unloading and letting go of anything that weighs us down, so that our lightened mind can draw nourishment from the spiritual power that underlies it.

Let us go a little more deeply into this enquiry into the meaning of enlightenment. The model of discovering something in the outer world, like the picture, breaks down when it comes to the discovery of our true Self. With the picture, we can hold it up and look at it objectively. But

the quest for enlightenment is concerned with the innermost Self. This Self is obviously not an object of the senses, nor is it a thought. We cannot look into our mind and say 'Ah, there it is!' If we could discover the Self like this, it would be something limited and seen by us, and the term 'Self' would be inappropriate. Because 'Self' always implies the knowing subject, the conscious awareness, and not the thing it is aware of, which must always be an object of the Self in order to be noticed at all.

The curious fact that we can theorize about the mind and its faculties, assumes that something in us transcends the mind and is superior to it. Without it we would not be able to reflect on our own experience or be self-conscious in the deepest sense, able to step back and take a holistic view of ourselves.

Now we might object to this conclusion: 'Hold on! There is nothing transcendent about this kind of self-awareness. It's just a function of our intellect.' But even to judge that 'this is just a function of our intellect' implies there is a faculty of awareness that stands over and above the intellect and sees its parts and divisions, a faculty that is unified and constant. The Upanishads call this principle the 'Knower of knowing'. But it is not a mental faculty. It is spiritual, and being the only truly conscious principle within us, it is the source of light that activates and accompanies all our mental faculties. In the words of the *Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad*: 'You cannot know the Knower of knowing. You cannot see the Seer of seeing. It is your Self, which is within all.'

To try and see this Self with the mind, is a little bit like the man in the poem of Thackeray who wanted to see directly his own pigtail. In whatever way he turned his body, he could not even catch a glimpse of the pigtail.

Said he, 'The mystery I've found,
I'll turn me round.'
He turned him round;
But still it hung behind him.
Then round and round, and out and in,
All day the puzzled sage did spin;
In vain—it mattered not a pin.

The pigtail hung behind him.

Obviously the Self does not hang behind us, but it is sometimes called ‘the Power behind the mind’, and the mind itself can never make the Self its object.

Enlightenment, then, would seem to demand that the mind in some way must go beyond its limits. On the other hand, the Self, because it is our conscious Self, is already ours, yet not fully understood. This riddle, and its solution, is indicated in the following verse from the *Ashtavakra Gita*:

To attempt to think of the Self, which is beyond the range of thought,
is only to create a new thought. Abandoning such a thought, I abide in
peace.

We cannot think ourselves into realization of the Self, however long and hard we try. What we can do is to unthink our sense of identity with anything that is other than the Self.

We have used the expression ‘the sense of identity with our individuality’. What does it really mean and how does it sustain itself? From childhood onwards, one needs to establish oneself as a person, an individual, in order to survive and prosper in this world. There is no option about it, and nothing else makes sense. Yet the feeling that we are this person, *and nothing more*, is a problem, and is not the whole truth. For it imposes limits on us, such as conflict, change, decay and death, that we cannot be happy with.

In fact, this sense of limited individuality is not the final stage in our spiritual evolution, and is destined to be transcended in enlightenment. When we examine what it is that keeps us self-centred in a narrow sense, we find that it is very much related to our thinking processes—our thoughts. Our individuality can be thickened and hardened, or lightened and transcended, by the sort of thoughts that occupy the mind. Our sense of restriction is increased when we dwell on our fears, hopes, resentments, complaints, and so on. Yet we can also fill our mind with thoughts that open a way to the deeper self-knowledge and lift the mind above its worldly state. And a step towards this inner transformation is

when we learn how to give our thoughts a rest, in other words, to make our mind serene and forgetful of our little self.

When we make our experiments in tranquillity, as in silent prayer or meditation, we will discover that this individuality is not a solid mass that it is impossible to change, but is upheld by an illusory network of appearances, namely our transient thoughts, and thought can be transformed, quietened and enlightened.

The value of tranquillity and withdrawal, if only for a short time now and then, is the subject of a poem by Clive Sansom called ‘The Timeless Hour’, from his anthology, *The Witnesses*.

Let action go, and with it all the thought
Of action. Even when the world is racked,
It may be worthier to refrain from action
Than it is to act.

Forget the world one hour; when you return
Its beauty will be there, its tragedy;
And though the past and future shake their chains,
The now is free.

Think yourself out of thinking; exorcise
Even that ghost of thought, the echoing word—
Till in the haunted chamber of the brain
No sound is heard.

Then, when its windows open on a world
Beyond the world, when all its walls are dumb,
Into the silent room, the wordless mind,
The Word may come.

Coming back to our self-training, our training for transcendence, what is needed is to plant in our mind the right spiritual suggestions based on our divine nature. We remember that the divine nature is indicated by this little word ‘I’, signifying the ground of being and consciousness that underlies this apparently individualized ‘I’ and is one in all. This thought of the divinity of our true Self, is not really a new thought. It is meant to strike an echo of recognition, to wake us up. To

awaken us from what? From the dreamlike delusion, sometimes sweet, sometimes bitter, that persuades us we are mortal, limited and separate from the supreme Reality.

So, we have two practices: tranquillizing the mind, and affirming the presence and reality of the true Self. In time they will lead us to spiritual peace. It is not that our mental life is to be forcibly suppressed. Its serenity will become natural as our attention is captured by the superior attraction of the spiritual peace and light that is reflected in the deeper part of the mind.

This engagement of our attention is like what happens when we catch the sound of some enchanting music, and our trivial conversation ceases, because our mind is riveted by the music. At that moment we can't talk, we don't want to talk. We don't need to force ourselves to be silent. It just happens, through the superior attraction of the music. In a similar way, the mind becomes tranquil when it focuses on thoughts related to its spiritual source.

This process will set in motion changes within us. Our individualized consciousness will be connected to the deep spring of the water of immortality within ourselves. We will have a nourishment that far surpasses anything the world can serve.

Enlightenment is the realization of what is ever achieved. It is not the coming of light after darkness. The realization cancels the notion that there ever was any darkness. It exposes the unreality of everything other than the Self, as the source of all.

Every seeker goes through a period of struggle and inner conflict. This is between what might be called our higher nature and lower nature—our spiritual aspiration and our tendency to seek lasting happiness in the world. We all know this struggle. One part of us rises to the spiritual occasion, and says: 'Yes, this is the way forward.' Shortly afterwards, another aspect of our mind reasserts itself and tells us there is nothing really wrong with the old ways.

This tug of war can go on for a very long time. On this level, it would seem that spiritual success means a kind of conquering our lower self, much as St George conquered the dragon. But this picture of an inner conflict is a very limited one. The revelation of spiritual Truth can

dawn on us at any moment, if we are duly prepared and open to it. Illumination cancels all sense of struggle between good and bad, higher and lower.

The apparent struggle and its transcendence is indicated in a teaching from the Zen Buddhist tradition. Two bulls are fighting on the seashore. The fight goes on and on, sometimes one bull gaining the advantage, sometimes the other. Both bulls finally disappear into the ocean and are seen no more. Even their footprints have vanished.

What is the ocean? It is the ocean of consciousness, which, when realized, cancels the idea that our true Self was ever unknown, and also cancels the idea that there has ever been a struggle to recover this knowledge.

Let us meditate on this image of an ocean of consciousness that reminds us of our true nature above all apparent conflict and ever free and fulfilled.

OM. ONE OCEAN OF CONSCIOUSNESS EXISTS,
ALL LIGHT, ALL BLISS, EVER ABIDING.
THAT AM I. OM

B.D.

Those who cultivate the higher science of life do, incidentally, a great service to all living beings. Their thoughts enter the subtle realm and create stir in that realm. Unconsciously they inspire countless people with courage, with ethical considerations, devotion and love of higher duty.

H.P.S.

The Mirror of the Heart— Life and Teachings of Rumi

Rumi was born in 1207 in Balkh, which is now on the borders of Afghanistan and Tajikistan. At the time it was in the region known as Khorasan in the north-eastern part of Persia. Several generations of his family had been respected jurists and theologians in the city, and Rumi's own father, Baha-uddin Walad, was a highly regarded scholar and sincere spiritual enquirer. For reasons that we will come to, in 1219, when Rumi was 12 years old, his father left Balkh with his family. It is recorded that on their journey they passed through Baghdad, and then Baha-uddin took his family to Mecca. After further travels they eventually settled near Konya, in what is now Turkey. Baha-uddin's standing as a scholar was recognized and he was eventually invited by the rulers of the province to teach and preach in the capital Konya itself, where his pupils included the Sultan's family. The area was then widely known as the Sultanate of Rum, hence the name Rumi by which Jalaluddin is widely known. The name Rumi means the Roman, although he wrote in Persian and was steeped in the culture of Persia.

Before we go any further let us enjoy a little of his poetry. This is the beginning of one of his great works, here loosely translated by the scholar, R.A. Nicholson.

Listen to this Reed forlorn
Breathing ever since 'twas torn
From its rushy bed, a strain
Of impassioned love and pain.
The secret of my song, though near,
None can see and none can hear.
O for a friend to know the sign
And mingle all his soul with mine.
'Tis the flame of love that fired me,
'Tis the wine of Love inspired me.
Wouldst thou learn how lovers bleed?
Hearken, hearken to the Reed.

These are themes and images characteristic of Rumi. He compares himself to a reed plucked from the reed-bed and hollowed out to form a musical instrument that produces a gentle, plaintive music. He suggests that the deep need in the heart of all is to be reunited with the reed-bed, to return once again to our original source. The reed has become pure and empty, so that the Creator can play his sweet music through it. The only thing the reed could wish for is to find another like itself whose desire is to pass from individuality to reunion with the one source of all. He says that he will be understood only by those who feel the strains of this longing, and that the best way to prepare oneself for spiritual progress is to cultivate a love for those who themselves love God and have found Him in their own being. Here is another fragment translated by Nicholson;

Plug thy low sensual ear, which stuffs like cotton
Thy conscience and makes deaf thine inward ear.
Be without ear, without sense, without thought,
And hearken to the call of God, 'Return!'
Our speech and action is the outer journey;
Our inner journey is above the sky.
The body travels on its dusty way;
The spirit walks, like Jesus, on the sea.

Rumi often mingles spiritual images with practical advice. He says we must turn our ears away from the promises and allurements of the outer world, not only the ear but all the senses and the mind, in order to hear the call that is coming from deep within ourselves to return, to come back to what we really are. The outer part of our being, the body and senses, pass through this world, which is ultimately unrewarding and ends in physical death. But the spiritual element at the heart of man is more subtle than this and will not drown in the sea of time.

These words were not written by someone who was unfamiliar with the ways of the world or unconcerned with the well-being of his fellow men. He lived a very active life, caring deeply for other human beings, and his life and legacy were bound up with dramatic historical events. At the time of his birth the Islamic empire was splendid, but in some

ways degenerate and divided. During his lifetime the Mongols, under Ghengis Khan and his descendants, passed through this civilization like a conflagration, killing hundreds of thousands of people and destroying their cities. In fact Genghis and his army ravaged Rumi's native town of Balkh less than one year after his father had led his family away.

In February 1258 a Mongol army under a grandson of Ghengis reached Baghdad. The city was burned and most of its inhabitants killed. The last Abbasid caliph was executed along with his subjects, and the region became a vassal state of the Mongols. When this happened, Rumi was about fifty years old and teaching at Konya.

On the worldly level, what emerged from the ashes of this devastation was the empire of the Ottomans. During its long history, the order of Sufis, inspired by Rumi and organized by his immediate followers, held a particular spiritual authority throughout the Ottoman realms, and traditionally it was the head of the order who invested the Sultan with his ceremonial sword.

Still it would be wrong to imagine that Rumi sought influence in social or religious circles. He often indicates that true greatness consists in turning from outer appearances towards the reality within. Here is another fragment of his poetry.

Secret miracles and graces emanating from the Pir [spiritual Teacher] transform the heart of the disciple, for within the saints there are spiritual resurrections innumerable, of which the least is this, that all who draw near them become intoxicated with God.

If evidentiary miracles produce an immediate effect upon the soul, 'tis because the soul is brought into touch with the Producer of the effect by means of a hidden link.

The effects which these miracles produce upon inanimate things are only accessory: their real object is invisible.

So Rumi was not interested in worldly power nor in what is considered important in conventional religion. He says that the kind of religious conviction that is based on belief in external miracles is much less meaningful than the miracle effected by the saints. And saints here means those who have themselves attained knowledge of the inner

reality. Their miracle is an awakening in the disciple of similar yearning and understanding. The outer miracle is just an apparent temporary suspension of the laws of nature. But the real miracle is a process that culminates in a completely new understanding of nature, the self and the relation between them.

This is one of the places where Rumi's teachings closely resemble those of the spiritual Yoga. Beyond a certain point, spiritual progress depends on a connection with a teacher, one who is already illumined by the pure truth. And he illustrated this not only in his poetry, but in a very special way in his own life.

Before we can really understand Rumi's relationship with his teacher, we need to be aware of more about his times. Within Islam itself there was a tension between those orthodox theologians for whom the Koran, reason and law were the highest authorities, and those who sought a more direct inner relationship with God. Those inclined to this approach within Islam have long been known as Sufis, a term which covers a wide range of ideas and practices.

Speaking generally, the Sufis by no means rejected all orthodox ideas. However, they saw them as a part rather than the whole of religious life. Some reacted against the increasing involvement in worldly power. Others stressed the positive point that the heart of religious life is an intensely personal matter, not entirely a question of reason and legal consensus, and that its ultimate aim is a deeper experience of God as the basis of the world and the inner Self of all.

For the Sufis, an important starting point is the profession of faith, *lâ ilâha illallâh*: There is no God but God. God is one and there is none other like unto Him. Islam strictly forbids the worship of anything as God apart from God. The Sufis found that the more one contemplates this, the more one is led to understand that God is the only reality, that ultimately there is nothing but God, the Being of all beings. For them, the idea of duality—that there is more than one reality apart from the reality of God—has unacceptable moral implications; just as duality has intellectual conclusions unacceptable to the Vedantins. For the Sufis, the religious life is thus a search for a deeper and more direct experience of this reality, which is hidden by the layers of appearance and the activities of the workaday mind.

Although many of the Sufis held that the orthodox religious teachings should be respected, and formed the necessary starting point from which the individual began a deeper personal enquiry into the spiritual mysteries, a few claimed that the religious rules no longer applied to them and even indulged in deliberately shocking behaviour to assert their independence of conventional standards. Inevitably many more suffered some of the disrepute this caused.

Another cause of friction between the orthodox and the Sufis arose. The heart of Sufism, like all true mysticism, has always been an essentially practical affair. However some of those associated with Sufism came to develop elaborate ideas of what we might now call an esoteric or theosophical kind, proposing a vision of hierarchies of beings through which the soul evolves on its journey. This tended to challenge the strict monotheism of the conventional scholars.

An interesting figure in this connection is Bayazid of Bistam, a mystic born in Persia about the year 800. He taught that the aim of the seeker is *fana*, or the passing away of individuality in the supreme being, and this became a central teaching for the Sufis. The following is one of his sayings, quoted by Nicholson:

Creatures are subject to changing states, but the gnostic has no state because his vestiges are effaced and his essence annihilated by the essence of another, and his traces are lost in another's traces. For thirty years the high God was my mirror; now I am my own mirror.

Remembering that the theologians felt obliged to uphold strict propriety and firm monotheism, it is not surprising that the differences between them and the Sufis became more intense, sometimes with tragic consequences. A famous example is that of Mansur al-Hallaj, whose love of God led him to ecstatic utterances that attracted the disapproval even of more restrained Sufis. He declared publicly the celebrated formula, '*anal haq*', which can be translated as 'I am the creative reality', or, more directly, 'I am God'. The religious authorities took it that way, and at Baghdad in the year 922 AD he was found guilty of blasphemy and cruelly put to death. At the end he is reported to have pronounced these famous words:

These Thy servants who are gathered to slay me, in zeal for Thy religion, and in desire to win Thy favour, forgive them, O Lord, and have mercy upon them, for verily if Thou hadst revealed to them that which Thou hast revealed to me, they would not have done what they have done, and if thou hadst hidden from me that which thou hast hidden from them, I should not have suffered this tribulation. Glory unto Thee in whatsoever Thou doest, and glory unto Thee in whatever Thou wilt.

So the tension between the orthodox and the Sufis was another feature of Rumi's world and it directly touched his own life early on. As we saw, his father was also a noted student of spirituality and had strong Sufi sympathies, in particular for the poet al-Ghazzali, brother of the philosopher. Just before Rumi was born, the Khorasan region was taken over by an ambitious ruler who sought the support of the orthodox party and was influenced by one of their leaders, a prominent scholar known as Fakhr i-Razi. At Razi's instigation, the local ruler persecuted the Sufi circle to which Rumi's father belonged. This and the Mongol threat were both reasons for Rumi's father to leave Khorasan and seek a more favourable home for himself and his young family.

Later, Razi appears in Rumi's poetry as an example of one who is clever in a sense but lacks the insight to understand the teachings about the true Self, the light of pure consciousness in the heart of man, and that distinguishing the true Self from the individual mind is the way to spiritual liberation. Rumi writes:

The spirit was made glad by that 'I'-hood without 'I' and sprang away from the 'I'-hood of the world.

Since it has been delivered from 'I', it has now become 'I': blessings on the 'I' that is without affliction,

For it is fleeing (from its unreal 'I'-hood) and the real 'I'-hood is running after it, since it saw it (the spirit) to be selfless....

If the intellect could discern the (true) way in this question, Fakhr i-Razi would be an adept in religious mysteries;

But since he was (an example of the saying that) whoso has not tasted does not know, his intelligence and imaginations (only) increased his perplexity.

It would be an over-simplification to present the Sufis and the orthodox as two sharply divided camps. Rather there has been a wide spectrum of approaches, with unfortunate extremes at both ends. Rumi's greatness lies in the fact that he was both an excellent scholar, and, in the latter part of his life, an enlightened man as well. He realized directly that beyond the level of appearances is a reality in which there are no distinctions, and here the true Self of man is identical with the universal Self, with God or the Absolute. In this, Rumi is at one with the teachers of the Upanishads. He knew also that statements about this identity could be badly misunderstood if presented in an unbalanced, inappropriate way. He saw with exceptional clarity how the difficulties lie in the mind which is so fantastically creative and wilful in the way it casts everything according to its own light; and for the mind, nothing is more real than its own being and creations. And so he expressed himself with much care, and with him poetry, with all its capacities for subtlety, multiple associations and nuance, became a great tool for communicating mystical teachings.

All this came about through the encounter with his own teacher. Until the age of 37, Rumi was a teacher in the madrasa in Konya. He was married and had children of his own. He must have been a fine scholar because when his father died, the illustrious post he had held was given to Jalaluddin, although he was only 24 years old. He had no doubt made a deep study of the Sufi teachings with which his father was so much in sympathy. Still, his outlook was compatible with his highly respectable position as a preacher to the rulers and people of the city. And so far as we know, up to that point he had not written a single line of poetry. And then Rumi met his Pir.

Accounts of how this happened vary much. According to a popular version, one day in the year 1244, Rumi was riding on a mule through the streets of Konya after he had been preaching at the madrasa, accompanied by a group of his pupils. He was attired in the robes of a religious dignitary. Suddenly a wild-looking ascetic dressed in a rough black cloak and hat, approached Rumi, took hold of the bridle of his mule and said to him something like: 'Hey, my boy, answer a question for me. Who was the greater servant of God, Mohammed or Bayazid of Bistam?' For one of the leading theologians of his time, this was a very

simple question and Rumi replied, 'Mohammed was incomparably the greater, the greatest of all the prophets and saints.' The dervish rejoined 'So why is it that the prophet said to God "We have not known Thee, O God, as Thou rightly should be known", whereas Bayazid said, "Glory unto Me, how great is my glory!"?'?

Very little is certain about the dervish who transformed Rumi. He was known as Shams ud-Din, from Tabriz, hence his usual title Shams-i-Tabriz. Rumi recognized him as one for whom all the controversies had been resolved in realization of the Absolute. Rumi gave up his teaching post, installed Shams in his own home and for the next near or two they were inseparable. During this time Rumi's whole being became focused on the being of the Pir, until he realized directly that his own self was not different from the self of Shams-i-Tabriz.

Exactly what happened next is uncertain. Many accounts say that some of Rumi's followers were jealous of Shams and drove him away. What is certain is that after this time Shams did leave Konya and went to Damascus. Rumi sent his own son, Sultan Walad, to find him and persuade him to come back. Shams did return. Later on he left again and eventually disappeared for good. Some say he was murdered by his opponents in Konya.

Whatever the truth of the matter, it was at this point that Rumi became one of the great spiritual teachers of mankind, bringing a flood of light on the ideal relationship between a spiritual seeker and the teacher. It came in the first outpouring of Rumi's poetry. It was composed for Shams of Tabriz, much of it is about him, and often Shams' name appears as if he himself were the poet. These poems later became known as the *Diwani Shams-i-Tabriz*, or mystic odes to the sun of Tabriz. Here is one of them:

At dawn a moon appeared in the sky and gazed upon me.
Like a falcon, that moon took me and coursed over the sky.
When I looked at myself, I saw myself no more,
Because in that moon my being became, by grace, as spirit.
When I travelled in spirit, I saw nought save the moon
Till the secret of the eternal mystery was revealed.
The spheres of heaven were all merged in that moon,

The vessel of my being completely lost in that sea.
 The sea foamed and with every fleck
 Something took figure and bodied forth.
 Every foam-fleck of body which received a sign from that sea
 Melted again to spirit in the ocean.
 Without the power of Shams ul Haq of Tabriz,
 One could neither behold the moon nor become the sea.

Rumi would have assumed that his pupils were familiar with the basic teachings of Sufism and were sincerely trying to practise them. This means the aspirant would be leading an ethical life in line with the teachings of the Koran and the example of the Prophet, and be applying the time-honoured methods of purifying the inner being to free it of gross selfishness and become sensitive to the higher truths and beauty.

The first of these methods is self-restraint. The Sufi teachers have held that the most important points can be summarized as ‘eat little, sleep little and talk little’. Some of the Sufis took this to great lengths, and still do. It is worth bearing in mind the situation in which this teaching was formulated. Then, of course, there were no televisions and generally far fewer forms of entertainment. The most common form of recreation for most people would be to get together and talk and eat. A Sufi master alive today might emphasize the importance of being extremely selective about what we allow to enter our minds from the barrage of diversions presented to us. So let us say that the aspirant should eat, sleep and talk no more than is right, and seek only the kind of company and recreation that elevates the mind.

The next fundamental practice of Sufism is *zikr*, the constant remembrance of God. To this end the Sufis often recommend the repetition of a holy name or spiritual formula similar to the mantras of Yoga. The constant remembrance of God is meant to foster a perception of Him as the basis and controller of all things and thus a true love of God, expressed mainly through complete trust in him. The most important Sufi practice of all is complete trust in God.

The purpose of these methods is to remember God and see Him as the reality to such an extent that the sense of individuality is lost and only the universal truth remains. This is the ideal of *fana* or passing

away of selfhood. We have seen that Rumi would have been familiar with these teachings from the beginning of his life and no doubt they helped to prepare him. But he was actually transported from the theoretical knowledge and worldly forms of a scholar to direct realization, when he recognized the light of truth in a living teacher and he set about effacing his individual existence by identifying with the self of his Pir. Here is another poem from the *Diwani Shams-i-Tabriz*:

Happy is the time when we sit in the palace, you and I;
 With two forms and two faces but a single soul, you and I.
 The stars of heaven will come to look on us
 and we shall show them the moon, you and I.
 You and I, liberated from ourselves, will be united in bliss,
 Joyful and with no idle words, you and I.
 The birds will forget to fly there where we laugh, you and I.
 But the greater marvel is that you and I, huddled in the same nest,
 Are in fact at this moment, one in Iraq, the other in Khorasan,
 you and I.

Having given the world a new model of the ideal disciple, there was to be another phase in Rumi’s revelation of spiritual love, this time from the position of a teacher. Some time after Shams disappeared, Rumi saw in one of his followers a sincere desire to pass away from selfishness and for the ego of the disciple to make way for the God-realized consciousness of the Pir. In response to this true spirit of self-sacrifice, great love and compassion arose in Rumi’s heart and the two became inseparable, as Rumi and Shams had been. The name of this disciple was Salahuddin. He was neither a scholar nor a conspicuous ascetic and lived with his family as a goldsmith, gilding and illuminating. Later, Rumi’s son, Sultan Walad, married Salahuddin’s daughter, Fatima.

According to some accounts, those who had been jealous and resentful of Shams were even more put out by Rumi’s devotion to Salahuddin, who was said to be illiterate and sometimes made mistakes reciting the liturgy. But the pure heart of the goldsmith attracted to itself the essence of the teacher. According to Sultan Walad, Salahuddin once said, ‘I am but a mirror in front of the master. It is in me that he sees his

own face. If he chose me, it is because he chose himself.’

In the year 1258 Rumi was 51 years old and Salahuddin was probably about the same. In that year Salahuddin fell ill and died. This is one of Rumi’s poems from that time.

O for thy passing earth and sky have wept.
Hearts, minds and souls adrift in blood have wept.
Since there is none in the world to take thy place,
Place and no-place, mourning thee, have wept.
The eyes of the saints and prophets wept.
O Salahuddin, heaven’s eagle, thou hast gone.
You leapt like an arrow from the bow
And the bow wept.

Up to this time, when pupils gathered around Rumi for spiritual instruction, they would study together the writings of the famous Sufi saints. One day a pupil called Husamuddin requested that Rumi should compose a treatise of his own exposition of the answers to the spiritual problems. Husamuddin was cultured and said to be exceptionally responsive to the sufferings of others. Rumi saw in Husamuddin the light of a true spiritual enquirer, and there and then he recited the first lines of what became the rhyming couplets or the *Masnawi*, which fills six books totalling some 25,000 couplets.

For the rest of Rumi’s life, Husamuddin accompanied him almost everywhere, recording the verses of the *Masnawi* as Rumi composed them. This vast work touches on every phase of the spiritual life. It illustrates the heights of wisdom and the extreme follies which the soul will manifest on the spiritual path, often passing from one to the other—like the mind itself—with bewildering rapidity. Here is a fairly representative sample:

Go from the shadow, find a sun.
Grasp the robe of the spiritual king Shams, the sun of Tabriz.
If you do not know the way to this marriage-feast,
Ask the radiance of God, Husamuddin.
Although this body of flesh is the house of envy,
God first made that body very pure.

When the Koran says *Cleanse my house*,
It recalls thee to that purity.
The pure heart is a treasury of divine light.
Be dust beneath the feet of men of God.
Throw dust on the head of envy, just as we do.

It would be impossible to summarize the breadth and depth of Rumi’s teaching in this, one of the supreme classics of spiritual literature. As a sample, this is part of a commentary by Rumi on a recorded saying of the prophet about inner and outer struggle.

O comrades, we have repelled the outer foe,
But there remains in us an enemy worse than he.
To overcome this enemy is not the work of reason and intellect;
The inner lion is not subdued by a rabbit.
God, from the place where place is not, sets his foot on it
And then it subsides at the command ‘Be so, and it is’.
When I turned my back from the outer struggle,
I set my face towards the inner struggle.
We have returned from the lesser Jihad
And we are engaged with the Prophet in the greater Jihad.
I pray God grant me strength and right valour.
Deem of small account the lion who breaks the ranks of opponents;
The true lion is he that conquers himself.

Let us conclude by returning to the essential points where Rumi’s teachings accord closely with the traditional Yoga, the knowledge that separations exist at the level of appearances, not in the ultimate reality.

In one of his recorded discourses, Rumi speaks about al-Hallaj. Unlike Hallaj, Rumi did not make utterances that were likely to enrage and confuse the orthodox. He was most careful and subtle in his expressions, addressed as they are to the mind, which is itself the seat of the spiritual challenges. As we have seen, this subtlety and wisdom was the basis of his incomparable poetry. But the fact that he saw unity, as al-Hallaj had done, is beyond doubt. In this discourse, from the collection known as *Fihi Ma Fihi*, he speaks in private to dedicated students. He says:

When Mansur's friendship with God reached its logical end, he became an enemy of himself and annihilated himself. He said, 'I am the Real', that is, I have passed away; only God remains. To say this, that only He exists, is extreme humility and servitude. It is pretentious and prideful to say, 'You are the Lord, and I am a servant', for by so saying you will have affirmed your own existence, and duality necessarily follows. When you say 'He is God', there is also duality because the use of the third-person 'he' is not possible unless there is a first-person 'I'. Therefore, since there is no existent thing other than God, only He can say, 'I am God'. Mansur had passed away, and so his words were God's.

In the *Masnawi*, the point is made poetically.

The stone that is entirely transformed into a ruby, is full of the light of the sun.
 Stoniness does not remain in it, it is sunshine through and through.
 From then on its self-love is love of the sun,
 And if it love the sun with all its soul, that truly is love of itself...
 A Pharoah said 'I am God' and was laid low;
 Mansur al-Hallaj said 'I am God' and was saved.
 The former 'I' is followed by God's wrath, the latter by his grace, O lover,
 For Pharoah was a dark rock, Hallaj a pure jewel;
 That one was an enemy to the light, and this one passionately enamoured of it.
 His 'I' was He—God—in the inmost consciousness, through oneness with the light.
 Strive that thy stony nature may be diminished, so that you may shine like a ruby.
 Endure patiently self-denial and affliction; always seek everlasting life in dying to self.
 Then thy stoniness will become less every moment, the qualities of the ruby will strengthen in Thee.
 When self-existence departs from thy body, spiritual bliss will rise in thy heart.

P.H.

Liberation in Advaita Vedanta

SHANKARA'S doctrine of salvation or liberation (*moksha*) is defined exclusively in terms of knowledge (*vidya*) and its opposite, ignorance (*avidya*). Commenting on Krishna's words in the *Bhagavad Gita* (13.2), 'The knowledge of the Field [that is to say, the empirical world] and the Knower of the Field is considered by Me to be *the* knowledge', Shankara quotes a verse from the *Katha Upanishad* (1.2.4) which might be regarded as the keynote of his teaching: 'Wide apart and leading in different directions are these two, ignorance (*avidya*) and that which is known as knowledge (*vidya*)'.

We find a number of references to being 'firmly grounded in knowledge' (*jnana-nishtha*) in Shankara's commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*, but the knowledge in question is conceived not simply as intellectual and theoretical knowledge but as something existential, amounting to a fundamental change in our outlook and inner nature.

The bondage in which living beings find themselves, Shankara argues, rests upon an innate illusion consisting of false knowledge (*mithya-jnana*). This illusion is *avidya*, ignorance, and in its most important aspect it consists in the inability to distinguish the Self (*atman*) from the limiting adjuncts (*upadhis*), primarily the body and the mind, which, at least from the empirical standpoint, cling to and obscure it. Thus enlightenment is not the creation of anything new, nor is it, from the standpoint of true reality, a change of state, but rather it is the correction of an error.

At the beginning of his commentary on the *Brahma Sutras*, Shankara explains the process by which we are led astray and fall into the bondage which is *sansara* (the world of transmigration). The unchanging witness or subject (*atman*), and all that is object for it (that is, the entire universe), are, he says, contradictory in nature 'as much as darkness and light are'. In reality they can never mix, for they belong to different orders of being. And yet it is for man 'a natural procedure' to fail to distinguish the two, and to superimpose upon each the nature of the other. The procedure is 'natural' because it is precisely this which

makes man what he is; the procedure is co-extensive with existence as an individual and thus 'beginningless'.

In this way we confuse the truly real with the unreal. Activities and states of the body-mind are attributed to the pure centre of consciousness, the *atman*, and we say, 'I am stout, lean, fair, standing, walking, jumping'; and not only do we say it, we also believe it. Or, conversely, the Self is superimposed on the body-mind complex, and we say 'it hurts me', when in fact it hurts the body; or 'I am tired', when it is the limbs or the mind which are tired while the true Self merely witnesses this.

Thus for Shankara, the error from which all others arise is that of false superimposition (*adhyasa*), the failure to distinguish the absolute from the merely relative and empirical level of being. We superimpose upon the pure, non-intentional consciousness, which is our true nature, the forms of the world (starting with the mind and the body); and at the same time we also project our consciousness into these forms. In this way we continually confuse our true nature as the unchanging witness (*sakshin*) or consciousness with our ultimately fictitious nature as an individual (*jiva*) living and acting in the world.

Shankara gives an illustration of this in his commentary to the verse of the *Bhagavad Gita* (13.2) which we cited earlier:

For the well-known impulse of all living beings to identify their Self with the body and other elements of the not-self is certainly something introduced by nescience. Just as, when a post [seen obscurely in the distance] is mistaken for a man, the attributes of the man are not really introduced into the post nor the attributes of the post into the man, so, in the same way, the attributes of consciousness are not really introduced into the body [when the body is mistaken for the Self], nor the attributes of the body into consciousness.

This confusion of the absolute and the empirical, and the mutual superimposition of the Self and the not-Self which results, is the presupposition upon which all distinctions and all knowledge arising from them are based. It is a confusion that 'arises' in appearance only, from the standpoint of our present way of looking at things. In reality

the Self remains untouched, and is never commingled with the not-Self, the object, any more than darkness co-exists with light. Yet this false superimposition is at the root of empirical experience. As Shankara writes in his *Brahma Sutra* commentary:

Without self-identification with the body and senses expressed in feelings of 'I' and 'mine', there can be no empirical knower and so the process of empirical knowledge cannot begin.

All that we normally call knowledge is built upon distinctions, but all distinctions occur on the empirical level, and upon the attainment of true knowledge or *vidya* are sublated. Thus all empirical knowledge rests upon ignorance, *avidya*, the fundamental error of superimposition.

All commerce [writes Shankara] between the attested means of knowledge (*pramanas*) and their objects, whether in the Vedic or secular sphere, proceeds on the basis of this same mutual superimposition of the Self and not-self called nescience.

In truth there are no distinctions: there is but one Reality and all else is unreal appearance. In consequence, *avidya*, in Shankara's doctrine and that of his immediate followers, is not conceived as a positive power; from the standpoint of ultimate reality it is devoid of being, even though it appears real enough from the relative standpoint. Liberation, therefore, is seen as essentially the removal of ignorance; and upon this, the immediate knowledge, which was previously obscured, of the true Self or *atman*, and its identity with ultimate reality (*brahman*), shines forth like the sun emerging from clouds.

S.C.

Bhakti Yoga—Further Teachings

A lecture given by Hari Prasad Shastri on 21st May 1943

SO THAT you may be able to follow what I am going to present to you today from the holy scriptures of the East, please go into mental relaxation and fix your attention as much as you possibly can here [heart centre], withdrawing it from every other object. If you find it difficult to do so, breathe consciously and deeply up and down a few times and then again focus your attention here. When the attention is focused to any extent, think that the Lord of the Universe is abiding in your heart and you are offering your love and homage to Him. By doing this practice for a while, you will be able to follow what I am going to offer to you. OM.

Today I am going to expound the Bhakti Yoga, the Yoga which means a method of devotion, a life in general whereby our emotions are so trained and directed that they make the spiritual light within us clear to us and we realize that there is the Kingdom of Heaven within. The Kingdom of Heaven is within, but our souls have shut their eyes to it, and therefore they are in darkness and in this darkness the souls are dreaming dreams of ‘This is what I like’, ‘This I do not like’, ‘This I possess’ and ‘This I want to possess’. This is the kind of dream which the soul dreams in darkness, and the darkness is due to the fact that the soul recognizes, not the Kingdom of Heaven within, but its own petty kingdom.

There are two creations. One is the creation of the Lord, and the other is the tiny, arbitrary, presumptuous and often arrogant kingdom of the individual superimposed on the Kingdom of God. This kingdom is always a source of bondage, but the Kingdom of God is not a source of bondage; it is freedom, it is bliss, it is all light. Man first creates his kingdom in the realm of his thought and then objectifies it in his daily life by his actions. Each intensity of the objectification of the inner kingdom, conceived in the absence of recognition of the Kingdom of Heaven, becomes a source of greater and greater suffering and bondage.

As a hypochondriac takes delight in being sick and miserable, so when man is blind to the Kingdom of Heaven within, he becomes

spiritually ill, his organs of discernment, justice and discrimination are perverted.

Man lives, eats, uses his body and his brain. But he remains unaware of the great treasure hidden underneath his mind and personality. He feels his intellect and his personality are his own, but he misses what is truly his own, namely the great peace and sovereignty of the spiritual realm that is lying buried within.

The method whereby this treasure of the Kingdom of Heaven within is to be sought is called Adhyatma Yoga. It is divided into three parts: Karma—the Yoga of Action; Bhakti—the Yoga of Love, and Jnana—the Yoga of Wisdom or Knowledge. This threefold Yoga is nothing more nor less than was taught by Buddha, Krishna and Christ.

The only classic known to us in which this Yoga is thoroughly and competently illustrated is the *Bhagavad Gita*. To know the Gita is to have a key to this Yoga in your hands. No one can acquire perfection by following only one of its branches; all three Yogas have to go together. Man acts, feels and thinks: these are the three fields of his expression which have to be spiritualized. When all three are spiritualized, man obtains the freedom which is promised by the Lord Himself.

What is Bhakti Yoga? The strongest point about man is that he desires, he feels. Out of the sixteen hours that he is awake and active, for over fifteen he feels and he desires. If he is hot, he wants cold water; if cold, he wants a fire. Feeling, feeling, feeling. The greatest part of man’s life is passed in feeling. He lives partly in his senses and partly in his mind, which means feeling, knowing and willing.

But there is also a part of man which lives in the world transcendental. The true system of education or society is that in which the personality can find balance, harmonious expression in actions, in thought and will, and also in spirit. Which is the most important phase of the personality of man? Undoubtedly, the spiritual side. The disciples of Buddha and Jesus, and the sannyasins of India were not at all concerned with how they looked, but they were deeply concerned with how they thought and felt. The fact is that the average man lives a fractional life, and the object of Bhakti Yoga is to enable him to live wholly, through the cultivation of his emotions on spiritual lines.

The beginning of Bhakti Yoga is that man decides to discover God

in his own being. God is the name of all perfection, which man innately and naturally aspires to, consciously or unconsciously. How true are the words of St Augustine: 'Thou hast made us for Thyself!'

Bhakti Yoga begins with the observance of a rigid outer discipline and inner meditations. Unless the outer discipline is adhered to, prayers and devotion will be of very little use. There is a Zen Sutra which says: 'The inner devotion of a man who has not developed the outer discipline is like the bath of an elephant,' because after an elephant has bathed in a river or pond, he begins to roll in the dust and mud, and his last state is worse than his first.

The outer discipline of Bhakti Yoga is mentioned in the twelfth chapter of the Gita. There it is said that a man who wants to know God must be friendly towards all, he must be self-controlled, he must never rob anyone of his legitimate possessions; he should give as much help as he can to others, making their joys and sorrows his own.

Such a man cannot afford to be a sectarian; he cannot say 'I belong to this fold, this sect, and I can have nothing to do with those who are not of this persuasion.' Contentment and equanimity are two important items of the outer discipline. It means to be content with what God gives us, and not to run after things which are at present denied to us. A Chinese poet has said: 'Though I may not have wealth or a mansion to live in, I have a peaceful mind, my heart is free from malice and aversion; verily, I am happier than a king.'

Bhakti Yoga cannot be undertaken for five or ten minutes a day; it must be cultivated throughout the day. A yogi, whether he belongs to the school of Karma, Bhakti or Jnana, has to be a yogi primarily from the time he leaves his bed to the time he goes to sleep, and even in his dreams he dreams of goodness, beauty and so forth.

Bhakti is based on a burning love of God, and God is found everywhere. 'God is seated in the heart of each and every being, even of the lower animals', is the assurance given by the Master of Bhakti Yoga (Shri Krishna). If a man loves Him, he has to love all beings, and so to transform his own mind and personality that they are not affected or permanently influenced by any kind of feeling caused by external objects, experiences or events. He will not shed tears for very long. He will relieve suffering in the name of God.

The inner discipline is even more important. A Bhakti Yogi has to choose an Incarnation of God and to adopt Him as a symbol of the All-Highest, whether it be Christ, Krishna or, as in the Jewish and Islamic religions, a concept of virtue, justice and goodness, which also has to have some kind of symbol. Man cannot do without symbols. They are not kindergarten methods, they are the methods of post-graduate study in the science of mysticism and Yoga. Before a man can realize the all-pervasiveness of God and love Him, he has to offer his love to a particular symbol of God, to be adopted according to his own choice. The Cross or OM are very good symbols.

If a symbol is adopted, it must be universalized. Just as a true mother is not only a lover of her own child but of every other child as well; just as a lover of literature does not only love the literature of his own country but of each and every country where good literature is available; just as a lover of beauty does not only love Fujiyama but also the beautiful mountains of Scotland, Burma and other places; why should not Christians, Buddhists or Jews love God in the same all-embracing way? God is goodness, beauty and truth. Wherever there is goodness, compassion, beauty of conduct, peace and serenity of mind, it is an expression of God.

Many Hindus have as their symbol a piece of stone, and those who do not know say, 'He is worshipping an idol'. But no, he is not worshipping a stone. What he says when he stands before that stone is, 'O Thou Who pervadest the whole universe, Who art everywhere, without Whom there is nothing in the world; O infinite Love and Compassion, be compassionate to me also, scatter the grains of Thy grace over all humanity.' A yogi who is a Christian will have a crucifix before him, and he repeats the same or similar words; the same thing holds true in the case of Judaism also. The man who condemns all other religions has not touched the fringe of religious feeling.

A religious man cannot be a partisan. What is the meaning of such expressions as 'Do not worship idols'? Anything can be an idol: fame, country, nation, race, our own body can be an idol. Anything that occupies that place of honour and love in our heart which we ought to give to God, the Most High, is called an idol. A man may be worshipping a piece of stone, but if he ascribes universality to it and

there is no stranger in his heart, no other influence, and if his arms are open to receive the widows and orphans of each and every nation, that true man is really a yogi and disciple of his Master.

When a pupil takes his initiation in a certain mystic school, and if that mystic school is a true one, he will be taught that he is not joining a sect, that he has not been converted to a particular religion and that he is following a path which will broaden out in his heart every day, so that he may see the glories of all religions in his own religion and in that Path.

Now these are the things that we have clearly to understand. That man cannot love God who has any kind of narrowness in his heart. He who is not truly universal is not a lover of God. It is your duty everyday to broaden your heart.

Hari Prasad Shastri

A HYMN OF GURU NANAK

O my eyes, God put light into you,
So do not see anyone else except God.

Do not see anyone else except God
Everywhere and in all living beings.

The entire world which you see is God's image.
In fact, God's image exists in it.

When, with the grace of the Guru, I obtained the understanding,
I realized that God is one,
And there is none else except Him.

Nanak says: These eyes were blind without divine light,
But on meeting the true Guru,
They obtained the sight.

Swami Rama Tirtha on Liberating Action

SWAMI RAMA TIRTHA expressed the teachings of Adhyatma Yoga in a most positive and appealing way, based on his own personal experience of their efficacy and power. His writings and lectures are practical and inspiring. Shanti Sadan has published a range of them in *Scientist and Mahatma*.

How do these writings help us? They give us ways and means by which we can banish our own mental pain and feelings of restriction, and fill our minds with the peace and light of spiritual truth. His essential message is precisely the central message of Adhyatma Yoga: that we can learn to see ourselves in a new light.

Rama Tirtha was an outstanding spiritual personality who had achieved the goal of life, Self-realization, also called God-realization. He preached publicly for just a few years, from about 1900 to 1906, both in India and in America. He inspired countless hearts with faith in their own divinity. He introduced them to the spiritual precepts and practices that lead to the supreme enlightenment.

He would say: 'Anyone can do what Rama (i.e. he himself) has done.' This illumined understanding can be awakened in any of us, if only we adopt a new outlook based on a spiritual way of life. His lectures had such titles as: Out of Misery to God Within, The Spiritual Power that Wins, How to Make Your Homes Happy, and the one we shall be consulting in this article, The Secret of Success.

Rama Tirtha used to address his audiences as 'My own Self in the form of Ladies and Gentlemen', or 'The Immortal, in the changeable forms of Ladies and Gentlemen'. By speaking in this way, he gave expression to his spiritual vision. He also proclaimed his essential oneness with his audience from the standpoint of that direct experience of reality.

During the time of his preaching ministry he was a monk. Before this he had achieved outstanding competence as a mathematician. The career he renounced in his mid-twenties, in order to become a monk, was that of a highly popular college teacher in the city of Lahore, in the Punjab. He was a lover of learning generally. He fed himself on the most

nourishing intellectual food, the creations of the finest minds, in order to expand his cultural range. He came to be well versed in western science, literature and philosophy, quite apart from his knowledge of eastern mystical writings.

He had a keen sense of humour. His notebooks include several jokes or sayings that amused him. Most of these could be adapted to illustrate some spiritual point. Examples are: ‘What is the greatest riddle?’ ‘Life, for we all have to give it up.’ ‘What is the largest room in the world?’ ‘Room for improvement.’ ‘Is life worth living?’ ‘It depends on the liver!’

He also had a shrewd understanding of modern social and business life as he observed it both in India and in America. In one of his writings, we find what might be called a spiritual job advertisement. It borrows the jargon of the day, but features quite different qualifications and rewards:

Wanted
 Reformers—
 not of others
 but of themselves,
 who have won—
 not university distinctions—
 but victory over the local self.
 Age—The youth of divine joy.
 Salary—Godhead.
 Apply sharp—
 With no begging solicitations but
 commanding decision to the Director of the Universe
 Your own Self.

His teachings cheered the mind and gratified the heart. A sensitive hearer was likely to emerge with his outlook changed very much for the better. As one of them recorded: ‘His being was aglow with bliss and all those who came in contact with the Mahatma were caught in the electric atmosphere of his personality. No one who met him went away unchanged. His message was the divinity of man and a life of love and beauty based on renunciation.’

One of the most engaging of Rama Tirtha’s American lectures is called The Secret of Success. It was given by him in San Francisco on January 26th 1903, not long after his arrival in America, whither he came from India, after a short stay in Tokyo. He gave a similar though much shorter talk in Tokyo three months before.

The talk has a deceptively simple structure in which Rama Tirtha names and discusses what he calls the principles of success. Those principles are: Work, Unselfish Sacrifice, Love, Cheerfulness, Fearlessness, Self-reliance, Purity.

Rama Tirtha considers each of these, and enhances his exposition with vivid and sometimes amusing illustrations—which you can read in the book *Scientist and Mahatma*. We have called the structure deceptively simple. This is because the reader is likely to think: ‘Well, if I can just remember these qualities, then I’ve got the gist of the talk.’ But there is much more in this lecture than a list of virtues, which, to a modern ear, may even seem rather old-fashioned. For Rama Tirtha says:

The secret of success is manifold. There are phases of the secret. We shall take these principles one by one and find out their relation to Vedanta as expounded in the Hindu Scriptures.

So these principles are linked to Vedanta. Vedanta is the non-dual philosophy of the Upanishads on which Adhyatma Yoga is based. It is a practical philosophy that proclaims that man in his essential nature is divine. These ‘principles of success’— cheerfulness, love, purity, fearlessness, and so on—are not add-ons. They express our true being, the divinity within. They point to the profound source of our being, which is already the home of the highest and best spiritual qualities. By practising these qualities, we are getting our conscious mind in harmony with our spiritual nature. Our spiritual nature is bliss and freedom, and it is all love, purity and fearlessness in the deepest sense. We are simply being invited to bring our mind into harmony with the peace and power of the Spirit, which subsists as the Ground of the mind. This makes it possible for our mind to be infiltrated by the spiritual light and peace, that is always within us at the deepest level.

It is a little similar to what occurs when we want to pour sugar from

a dispenser with a turnable top. The sugar is there and it fills the dispenser. But it will not be released unless we align the holes. Then it is available, as much as we want. Bliss, like that sugar, is the nature of man, but it does not manifest in experience until we make the adjustments on the mental level. When we make those adjustments, our mind will develop apertures, openings to the higher light and peace of our being, and it will be penetrated by that peace.

So the message of Adhyatma Yoga is that we can learn to view ourselves in a new and revealing light. It will reveal more and more of our spiritual essence, freeing us from our sense of being defined by a particular human character or personality. We will come to see ourselves as essentially free, transcending all limitations. Spiritual wisdom implies the realization: 'My Self is the Self of all.' As for our personality, it will be viewed as a temporary appearance, a vehicle of the soul, an instrument, but a localized and transitory phenomenon when compared with our true substance.

This realization cannot be induced simply by adopting a few positive thoughts. The way to turn these suggestions into reality is to cultivate anew the garden of our mind. This means saturating our consciousness in the great thoughts of the spiritual masters. Ideally, one must get to love those thoughts, and also their way of life. This is one way we can gradually spiritualise the contents of our mind.

At the same time, we need to become increasingly alert about what is going on in our minds at any given moment. Instead of just focusing on outer things, like business or how we are going to enjoy ourselves with our friends, we need to appreciate the old principle: our happiness or misery depends far more on our state of mind than on the outer situation. On this theme, Rama Tirtha tells a story:

There was a man who was hungry, and in order to appease his hunger, he sat down, closed his eyes and began to eat imaginary curry. After a while he was seen with his mouth open, endeavouring to cool his burnt tongue. Somebody asked him what the matter was. He said that in his food there was a very hot chilli. Thereupon a bystander remarked, 'Oh, poor fellow, if you have to live on imaginary food, why not select

something sweet? As it was your own creation, your own imagination, why did you not make a better choice?'

According to Vedanta, all your world being but your own creation, your own idea, why think yourself a low, miserable sinner? Why not think yourself into a fearless, self-reliant incarnation of Divinity?

Regardless of any deeper metaphysical implications in this account, all can appreciate one basic point: that it is important to be alert to the sort of things we tell ourselves day and night. Through our meditations and our research into Yoga, we can learn how to send ourselves messages and signals based on the purity, richness and bliss of our spiritual nature. We do this firm in the conviction that this nature really does underlie this limited personality. And our spiritual nature will shine through the more the limited personality seeks to quieten itself and rest in the Spirit.

There is a sense in which Rama Tirtha's seven principles of success are concerned with the abolition of slavery—slavery to strange ideas and mental trends that seem to have taken us over and make us feel small, helpless, thirsting for a pat on the back or a look of approval, curious about things that don't really matter—as if happiness were not embedded in our very soul, but depended on these outer contacts.

For instance, at work it is very easy to get into this frame of mind, and be made miserable quite unnecessarily, like the man who felt his tongue was on fire because he was eating imaginary hot curry. Our job may be manageable and not in itself unpleasant. Our salary may be adequate for our needs. Then we know what happens. 'I wonder why he was promoted and not me....' 'So your salary rise was 2 per cent, and mine was only 1.8%....' 'Why wasn't I invited to the meeting?' 'My ideas are always rejected.'

These emotional intrusions can poison our minds and shut out the sun. But the enlightened sages tell us this small-mindedness can be completely outgrown. And when we drop these sweating concerns, which the *Bhagavad Gita* says are like a 'fever', we often find that things go well for us, inwardly and sometimes even outwardly.

The right attitude to work finds a prominent place in Rama Tirtha's

exposition. This is because most people spend a good deal of time in the working situation. But 'work' does not just mean our wage-earning activity. Even in the home, there are all sorts of labours involved. There are so many tasks we can either do properly and with tender care, or half-heartedly, or with resentment, or not do at all. It matters not whether the work is manual or intellectual, serving people or working alone. Let us just assume that there are things to be done. Few of us can avoid this basic feature of life.

The key spiritual point is that we can do our work in such a way that we transcend the narrow preoccupation with our little self and realize a very great freedom. If we think about it, the sense of grievance, of being fed-up, of getting up-tight, of being suspicious, 'taking it personally', and so on, are all expressions of the deep sense of personal egoism that upholds our separative individuality, encased in a particular body and mind. Instead of wearing our individuality lightly, like a loose shawl we can easily slip out of, it becomes like a tight corset that constricts our mental flexibility. The spiritual challenge, which is also the supreme gift of spiritual living, is that we can learn to transfer our sense of identity from the sensitive and easily offended ego, and restore it to our divine base, the Self that is the Self of all. And this process is vastly helped by cultivating a new way of working.

The teaching is that when we can work cheerfully, fearlessly, without desperate anxiety for others' appreciation, not even occupying our minds with the direct rewards of our own labours, then we are emerging from the state of slavery to that of kingship, or lordliness.

One point Rama Tirtha makes is that our best work is done when we have forgotten we are doing it. It is as if we absorb ourselves in the work, like an artist absorbed in a painting. We forget time, place, body, and our anxieties. Freed from these distractions and interferences, the work current flows perfectly. Very often, wonderful work is done. This is so whatever our situation. We may be writing an article or stocking a shelf in a supermarket; helping a customer or laying bricks for a wall; cleaning a room, or making our family a packed lunch. Whatever it is, there will be a kind a beauty in the work, and this beauty is present to the extent that the ego is absent.

This self-forgetting absorption in the job in hand, as if it were the

only thing that matters right now, has something spiritual in it. Behind our little ego abides the infinite Self, the home of peace, bliss and light. When our attention is drawn away from this little 'me', a partial manifestation of our divinity infuses our experience, and we feel a kind of happiness and relief that springs from our own being.

We can now appreciate how having something to do, whether privately, socially or commercially, is a blessing and an opportunity, a way to self-forgetfulness. Once we grasp this principle, we will find that it is possible to throw ourselves cheerfully and calmly into our tasks, and that the applause of the world will become a meaningless irrelevance. Regarding this, Rama Tirtha says:

Worry not about the consequences, expect nothing from the people, bother not about favourable reviews of your work or severe criticism thereof. Care not whether what you are doing will tell or not; think nothing of that. Do the work for its own sake. This way you have to free yourself from desire; you have not to free yourself from work, but you have to free yourself from yearning restlessness. This way how splendid does your work become.

If we are already spiritually minded, our strategy will probably include another element. This is to offer whatever we do, and the results, to God, and, as Rama Tirtha said, allow no worries about the consequences. It is a way we can trust, and it dramatically reduces the world's weight on our shoulders.

Following the guideline of the *Bhagavad Gita*, we remember that God is not a separate being who dwells behind the setting sun. He is present in us as our inmost Self. Offering the actions to God, and offering the actions to our own supreme Self, are essentially the same thing. This was the teaching the Lord, manifesting as Shri Krishna, gave to Arjuna, whose duty, as a soldier, was to fight in a righteous cause:

Renouncing all action in Me, with thy thought resting on the Self, being free from hope, free from selfishness, devoid of fever, do thou fight [that is, do what you have to do].

Note these words 'free from hope, selfishness, fever' and how they fit

so many situations in life. This same teaching is put even more simply in the *Gita* when the Lord says:

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you sacrifice, whatever you give, whatever spiritual practice you undertake, do it as an offering to Me. Thus you shall be freed from the bondage [that results from self-centred actions].... You shall be liberated...

But even if our mind refuses to engage in this way, such is our nature that when our actions are done in a focused, calm, dedicated way, something of the peace and joy of our higher being will ooze through, and we shall find ourselves in a very good frame of mind. If we want to discover the source of this joy, then we have to follow a spiritual path!

So Rama Tirtha reminds us that there is a secret source of happiness hidden even in the simple fact of having something to do, as long as we are willing to loosen the hold of the ego and check its cravings. The idea is: Don't mix your work with any desire at all, apart from the natural driving force of furthering the job itself. He told his listeners:

Attend to your labour to taste the renunciation it unconsciously entails, because work keeps you with God above the body or little self. Work minus desire is a synonym for the highest renunciation or worship. Why should you have any motive for work? Ignorant wretches believe that objects accomplished bring more happiness than the work. But happiness lives clothed in the garb of work itself. You can have your success always with you. This way the wide world becomes your holy temple and your whole life one continuous hymn.

It was said earlier that Rama Tirtha was blessed with an engaging sense of humour. Here is another riddle he jotted down in his Notebook, which, at first sight, seems to be without a particular spiritual message:

What is the difference between a book and a cat?
The one has the *claws* at the end of the *paws*;
the other has the *pause* at the end of the *clause*.

There is something to be learnt from this almost childlike bit of

punning. One of Rama Tirtha's principles of success is Love. Love means feeling our essential oneness with all. He quotes the beautiful lines from Coleridge's poem, *The Ancient Mariner*, said when the Mariner's heart had softened:

He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.
He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small....

But we know from experience that it is not easy to love universally, or live in perfect harmlessness in thought, word and deed. In fact, too often *we carry claws at the end of our paws*—that is, a kind of anger, tension, impatience, irritation, usually based on fear and frustrated desire, often lurks below the surface; and it springs up so suddenly that we ourselves are often taken by surprise. Therefore Yoga means purifying the heart—planting the spiritual thoughts well below the superficial levels of our psyche, so that we treat the very roots of the mind. And what is at the roots will flower at the surface, and produce lovely forms and colours, and a pleasing fragrance, if we pursue this spiritual self-cultivation through our meditations and our ever-deepening interest in lives and teachings of the wise.

Then, too, our mind has to be like that book, with *a pause at the end of each clause*. This means that in life that we need to introduce little pauses for spiritual self-recollection, for calming ourselves down, for recovering the true perspective. We create these occasional pauses, and we are also alert to take advantage of the pauses, the moments of enforced idleness, that come our way unsought. These moments come in every working day, even in the most frenetic office or shop situation, if we are alert to them.

Rama Tirtha was also aware of this dimension of working life, and refers to it in a different piece of writing, his short Essay on 'Rest'.

The multiform demands of life and the different demands on your physical and mental powers, are likely to keep you all the time strained and in tension.....How to avoid it? While at work, between whiles, devote a spare interval of a moment or so, to the thought that there is

but one Reality, God, thy Self, and that as to the body, etc., you never had anything to do with it. You are simply a witness. You [in your true spiritual nature] have nothing to do with the consequences or the result. Thus contemplating, you may close your eyes, relax your muscles and lay the body perfectly at ease, unburdening yourself of all thought. The more you succeed in taking off the burden of thought from your shoulders, the stronger you will feel.

The details of how we do this may vary, but the principle is the same. It involves taking a little pause, either by creating one deliberately, or else being quick to exploit the gaps that come our way naturally. At these moments, or minutes, we can briefly replace the material preoccupations with the spirit of peace, perhaps with the help of some sacred word or name, or profound spiritual statement about the reality behind experience.

The worldly thoughts may be necessary while the hand and brain are labouring; but should they also claim the gaps between concentrated labour? Must the gaps be filled with futile distractions, idle gossiping? Here is the opportunity to enjoy more of the spiritual light, peace and wisdom. If we already practise meditation, we shall find that our meditations will become deeper and purer if we make these spiritual efforts during our day, as chance presents them to us.

Towards the close of his lecture on The Secret of Success, Rama Tirtha reminded his listeners:

Your Godhead is not a thing to be accomplished. Realization is not a thing to be achieved. You have not to do anything to gain God-vision. You have simply to undo what you have already done in the way of forming dark cocoons of desires around you. Fear not, you are free. Even your seeming bondage is imposed by your freedom. No need to love your shackles and chains as ornaments. Shake off vain fancies, burn up all crookedness, and what power is there under the sun which will not be only too thankful to get the privilege of unloosing your shoes?

A.H.C.

SHANTI SADAN NEWS

During the Summer break, the planned on-line edition of *Self-Knowledge* was launched. All the issues published in 2011 can be read there in full, and, in future, as well as new issues, the archive of back-issues available will be enlarged. The site can be found at www.shantisadan.org/journal and is available to all existing subscribers at no extra cost. It is hoped that *Self-Knowledge* on-line will be of interest and value to those who use the Internet regularly in all parts of the world. Readers are also assured that the on-line version is an entirely optional extra for subscribers. There is no intention to cease publishing *Self-Knowledge* Journal in its printed form.

During the Summer between July and September, the Tuesday evening meetings at Shanti Sadan continued to be meditation sessions open to all. Each month a new set of practices was introduced, all including a preparatory breathing exercise, a visualisation, and a meditation on a traditional text. Some explanation of the principles on which meditation is based was also provided so that complete beginners and more experienced meditators could all participate and benefit. Those taking part had the opportunity to experience directly the way in which meditation leads to new awareness, sensitivity and insight, and is yet also a return to one's own deeper nature. The number of those attending and the spirit of the meetings has led to the hope and intention that they will be continued in future.

During the Autumn term the newly-established pattern of meetings on Tuesday and Thursday evenings will resume. The Tuesdays will be a further series on meditation and the Thursday evening talks will draw on the Upanishads, where the identity of Self and Truth has been unambiguously declared for all seekers of liberation and enlightenment.