

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 SPRING TERM 2011

Weekday evening talks at Shanti Sadan

Lectures will be given every Tuesday and Thursday evening at 8pm from Tuesday 3 May until Thursday 30 June 2011. **Summer 2011 Afternoon Course**

The afternoon course will be held on Sunday 12 June, 2pm - 5pm, at the Columbia Hotel, Lancaster Gate, London W2.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

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CHANGING ONE'S ROUTE

It is always possible to give an upward trend to our life by giving a new direction to our mind. This principle is suggested by some lines of the twelfth century Japanese poet priest, Saigyo:

On Mount Yoshino
I shall change my route
From last year's broken-branch trail,
And in parts yet unseen
Seek the cherry-flowers.

The Japanese people hold a cherry blossom viewing celebration each year, called Hanami, during the brief two to three week blossoming period. People take trips in great numbers to view the delicate beauty of the cherry blossoms. The sakura season, as it is known, is taken as a metaphor for life a time to remember that life is fleeting and therefore precious; a time to take stock and evaluate what

has been achieved and what to do next.

The appreciation of the cherry blossoms lies in their transitoriness. They impart a lesson in non-attachment, reminding us that we have no permanent grip on the things of the world, and that when the time comes for us to release our hold, we may do so naturally and with good cheer. In fact, the short duration of the blossoms enhances our appreciation of them.

In this poem, Saigyo resolutely proclaims that he will give up his old direction, his ‘broken-branch trail’ and pursue another path. Saigyo’s description powerfully evokes an image of a much-frequented way, littered with the debris of spike-ended branches, snapped underfoot by tramping over the same territory. It is easy to imagine the discomfort of the trail—the way in which the movements become hampered and jerky, occasioning a stumble here and there. The ‘broken-branch trail’ is a metaphor for the entrenched ideas we entertain, supported by the ego, about the kind of people we are. Such ideas impede the flow of harmonious thought and action, because they spring from a mis-understanding about our real nature.

Before we begin to meditate and dispassionately observe the mind, we are hardly conscious of the repetitive and rooted attitudes that we carry around like luggage. We think they are part of ourselves.

Saigyo’s changed route will be fresh and untrammelled. He will seek, with the intuitive eye, the cherry blossoms of abiding non-attachment to the world, that arises when its spiritual reality is apprehended. Saigyo’s ‘in parts yet unseen’ will be the hitherto unknown territory where exquisite beauty reveals itself in profound meditation on spiritual reality.

When we stick to the same ways of thinking and reacting, our actions are bound by egoism and we grow rigid, like the broken branches of Saigyo’s poem. The poem indicates that we can intervene in the world of our thoughts, and even ‘change our route’ if we are open to the insights of those steeped in spiritual thought and practice.

The universal Consciousness is in every particle of the world, including ourselves, and transcends it too. We are, then, essentially one with that Consciousness. Our personality is a matter of our own self-creation, and our potential is far greater than the limitations set by

our human character.

It has been said that everyone has an infinite world of beauty and goodness in his mind, by virtue of the higher Self, the spiritual reality, which is the Power behind the mind. By bringing our mind into contact with the powerhouse of the real Self, even in the initial stages of meditation, we will find that our life is favourably changed, because our mind will be clearer and more harmonious, capable of serenity. If our interest and efforts are sustained, the mind itself will reveal to us the path that leads to the realization of the unchanging, all-abiding principle as our true nature.

S.M.

THE POWER OF GOOD THOUGHTS

Every thought deliberately harboured is the stroke of a chisel on a rock, with a view to creating a statue. Casual thoughts are the falling of loose stones, causing only confusion. Thoughts build, first, our personality, and then, the suitable atmosphere in which the personality can grow. There can be no words without thoughts as their basis. Sometimes a hundred thoughts can be crystallized in one word, such as friendship, honour, love, study, etc.

To repeat the holy name ‘OM’ is to say a volume of prayers and conceive a legion of spiritual thoughts. OM, or any other name of the supreme being, thought and pronounced deliberately and with concentration, creates a spiritual personality and alters the circumstances in which that personality can flourish. This does not only apply to the individual. Our thoughts and repetitions of the holy name affect the basis of our being and society.

H.P.S.

The Universal Message of Yoga

THE HIGHEST spiritual teachings do not belong exclusively to any particular religion or school of thought. They show the way to peace, wisdom and enlightenment that is available to all mankind. They will come alive in us when we are prepared to pacify, harmonize and illumine our mind on the lines indicated by those who have realized the supreme immortal Truth as the very nature of their true Self.

Adhyatma Yoga is a name for the method and the path of self-unfoldment that leads to enlightenment. Wherever we find techniques aimed at spiritual self-discovery through training and transforming the mind, and transcending narrow egoity, one could say that a form of Yoga is being practised, though it may be called by other names.

When the great sage and founder of the Sikh religion, Guru Nanak, lay dying, we are told that he was attended by both Moslem and Hindu disciples. The Moslems asked if he wished his body to be buried, the Hindus if he wished to be cremated. He said: 'Quarrel not! Let Hindus bring flowers and place them on one side of the body; let Moslems bring flowers and place them on the other side. Then let each group do what it likes. But keep the flowers fresh!'

What are the flowers that must be kept fresh? Those of faith, love and spiritual aspiration. These are flowers that will fade if we do not tend to them; they will fade, without our even being aware that they have faded. They are the flowers that are being cultivated, or perhaps starved, within our own heart.

What Guru Nanak is saying is that the inner work of self-regeneration is more important than the outer adherence to rites and ceremonies. The story also indicates the essential inner unity of two outwardly different religions, and that happiness and peace will ensue, for ourselves and society, if we focus on that which unites, not on that which divides. Thus we shall find that in their deepest and highest teachings, all religions are aids to spiritual awakening.

Then what is religion? The enlightened view of religion and its purpose makes it clear that true religion is nothing less than the expansion of our consciousness from narrowness to universality, and

has nothing to do with adhering to a rigid stance in which we feel 'I am right and anyone who does not follow my way is wrong and worthy of condemnation.' Here are some words of Swami Rama Tirtha, written around 1905, which breathe the true spirit and purpose of religion:

Religion is that advanced stage of mind in which peace, felicity, spiritual bliss, *sattva-guna* (truth, equanimity and cheerfulness), large-heartedness, universal love, power and knowledge of Self become spontaneous and natural. ...Our thoughts, words and deeds will not remain tied to the limitations of our body, mind and intellect. These will be free in consonance with our unlimited universal Self.

Religion should help us directly to experience the true Reality behind all names and forms in the universe. If we take religion to mean what is stated above, it is the final goal of the creation and existence of the universe.

Religion is concerned with our inner spiritual state, what Swami Rama calls 'an advanced stage of mind'. In a sense, the vision of unity is natural to us. To a small child, there are no insiders or outsiders. But then the mind may be pressed into a mould. We may be told that our reverence and interest should be confined to our own religion, and no other. We may even become suspicious and defensive as regards those who are outside the fold. In contrast to that calm, cheerful, clear-sighted frame of mind, lit by that inner experience which knows that all true religions spring from the same source, the intellect becomes agitated, aggressive and divisive, and its spiritual evolution is delayed.

To remedy this narrowing of our consciousness, the intellect needs to know how to calm down and make its outlook open, unitive and universal. One can love one's own religion, and yet still appreciate the beauty and truth found in other expressions of faith. This is surely the way forward for humanity, as well as for our own personal enlightenment.

An 'advanced stage of mind' does not arise spontaneously. We have to work for it. This development calls for one-pointed interest and application. Our one-pointedness works on two levels. First, our life

generally must be one of spiritual purpose. Our supreme interest, what we think about most and read about, has to be the path to enlightenment. This should be where our mind wants to go whenever there is a free moment.

This spiritual field is replete with great and transformative thoughts. When, through assimilation, we make these our own personal thoughts, they will lead to that expansion of consciousness where we apprehend the underlying unity of all.

As regards this general sense of having a purpose in life, a spiritual drive or motive power, Jesus told the story of the treasure buried in the field. You remember that a man learned about the presence of this treasure buried in a certain field, and he sold all his goods and bought the field, so that he could devote himself one-pointedly to the task of unearthing the hidden wealth. This intense interest and priority is needed for ultimate success in the spiritual quest, which is concerned with the treasure enshrined within our own heart. As our interest is, as our love is, so will our capacities develop, and this dedication will open up the faculty of spiritual intuition.

The other phase of one-pointedness is a more inward one. It concerns the state of our concentration at any given moment. Some find it hard to concentrate on anything for very long, and constantly need diversion and fresh stimuli. But concentration is a matter of training, or re-training. We concentrate quite naturally on what we desire. We have to concentrate on matters to do with our work. And we can also learn to develop spiritual concentration.

Initially, spiritual concentration is to focus our mind on something that stands for the ultimate Truth, the truth about our own Self. It starts with interest, and interest must grow into love. Love is the easiest way to concentrate the mind. There is a great beauty in the world's spiritual teachings, running like a golden thread through all the traditions. It may take a skilled eye to discern that beauty, or it may suddenly take us by surprise, as with St Augustine, who said: 'Late have I come to love Thee, O beauty, so ancient and so new.' It is more than earthly beauty. In fact, all the beauty of nature is a fragmentary glimpse of that supreme spiritual beauty, the beauty of the Truth that underlies it. So one can come to love the spiritual teachings and what they stand for.

At any time, we can hold in our mind certain thoughts, or visualize certain forms that will help to awaken this recognition and spiritual savour. It can be a form of a spiritual master or an incarnation of God. We may choose a symbol of equanimity, like the statue of the Buddha. Or we may focus on spiritually charged words, as in a profound text for meditation, or the holy syllable OM. But our object of concentration must point to that supreme realm of purity, unity and untaintability, and be free from the associations of this world and the agitation and desire that worldly thoughts arouse in our mind.

There is the supreme potentiality for higher wisdom latent in our human intelligence. The process of awakening this wisdom is: First to train our mind so that we can withdraw its attention from the outer world whenever we wish. Then to channel our energies into the spiritual quest. Thus we prepare the mind so that its divine origin and source will be reflected in the highest part of our mind.

In the writings of Jalaluddin Rumi we find the following lines:

The gold, (which is) your intelligence, is in fragments.
How should I set the stamp of the die upon clippings?
Your intelligence is distributed over a hundred important affairs, over
thousands of desires and great matters and small.
You must unite the (scattered) parts by means of love...
When you become united, grain by grain, then it is possible to stamp on
you the King's die...
The King will make of you a cup of gold.

That is to say, our human intelligence is precious like gold, because of its divine potentiality. But to bring out this potentiality, the contents and interests of our intellect need to be harmonized and unified, so that the divine ground of our being may be revealed. Without this unification, our widely spread interests are like tiny scattered bits of gold, that are of very limited value unless they are gathered together and made one. The supreme spiritual power is our own higher Self. This power will illumine our intelligence. The mind will recognize that its essence is the supreme Reality. It will become, so to say, a cup of gold, that is, an instrument at one with its divine source.

The same idea is indicated in the saying of Jesus, in his Sermon on the Mount: 'If your eye be single, your body will be full of light.'

Another great universal teaching found in all true schools of spirituality, is that the time to practise and clarify our aspiration is here and now. 'Work', said Jesus, 'while the daylight is with you, for when the night comes, no man can work.' It means to take advantage of our spiritual opportunities while we still have strength and vigour to act, and also while those teachings are available to us; for who knows, our circumstances may change and the source of spiritual food may not be so easily attainable.

The secret of life is hidden in the reality of the present moment, and spiritual realization is not concerned with forward-planning, but with immediate recognition here and now. Therefore, let us maximize our chances of spiritual growth and enlightenment by holding our mind in readiness here and now.

This idea is indicated in a story about the Taoist master, Lao Tzu. It is said that he was travelling to a certain city on horseback with an attendant. Seeing the city in the distance, the attendant grew excited and spurred his horse forwards. Doesn't this happen to us sometimes when we near our destination? We find our mind races ahead. It is no longer here; it is 'there'. But the sage carried on riding slowly, and called back the attendant, saying: 'Here too it is good.'

This realization of the divinity manifest in this very moment also comes in the *Song of Meditation* by the Zen master, Hakuin.

Not knowing it is near, they seek it afar. What a pity!

This very place is the Pure Land paradise.

This very body the Buddha.

Spiritual practice always carries this sense of discovering what is immediate in our experience here and now, of breaking this habit of living in the future or the past. We have to draw on the spiritual treasures that are available to us right now, through linking up with the divine by means of our thought and memory.

A variation on this theme is set out in the book of Chwang Tzu. A fish, called a gudgeon, was stranded. Its river had dried up and it

desperately needed a source of water. It begged a passer-by for help. 'Just a dipper of water, and I'll be able to stay alive.' Chwang Tzu, who puts himself in the somewhat unflattering role of the passer-by, responded: 'Yes, yes, I'd love to help you. And I will. Before long, I'll be going south. I'll ask the King to dam the Western river, so that it may flow your way.' 'Oh dear,' said the gudgeon, 'I've lost my element. I've nowhere to go. If you give me an answer like that, you might as well string me up in the dried fish shop.'

One meaning is that when help is needed, give it straight away, however modest our contribution may be. It does not help to make high-sounding promises for the future when the person needs help right now. But there is also an inner meaning to this story of need and desperation. We too are thirsting for the water of immortality, drying up in the parched atmosphere of worldliness, which is not our true element. Let us seek that true water of spiritual life right away, and not in some hypothetical tomorrow, and then we will have the light and delight that will satisfy our soul. In the metaphor of Jesus, we will drink the water of immortality.

Knowledge of the Self has been called the greatest gain. But is it a gain? This divine knowledge subsists at the core of our being, unhindered and without limitation. It has, as it were, to be uncovered. No person is without this divine basis, none is essentially different from it. The supreme Reality is realized as immediate and direct, for it is the Self within all. The mind itself is, so to say, an outer covering of this innermost Self. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, there is a series of verses that affirm the divine presence permeating all our human faculties, whether it is recognized or not. Here is one such verse, clearly indicating the relationship between the mind and the divine Reality present in the mind, yet transcending it.

He who, dwelling in the mind, is yet other than the mind, whom the mind does not know, whose body the mind is, who controls the mind from within, he is the Inner Ruler, your own immortal Self.

It is the Self alone, apparently unrealized and impatient of restrictions and limitations, that is destined to realize its true infinite Being. But

because the Self is seemingly identified with the mind, we get confused, and this false identification is the cause of all suffering.

The strategy of self-realization may be seen as a kind of uncovering, a removal of the psychological material which apparently encloses and hides our true nature. The analogy with sculpture is taken up by the Christian mystic, Meister Eckhart:

When an artist makes a sculpture out of wood or stone, he does not put his idea into the wood, but rather he chips away the material that has been hiding it. He does not impart something to the wood, but cuts the covering away, and removes the tarnish, so that what was hidden there may shine. This is the ‘treasure hid in the field’ of which our Lord speaks in the Gospel.

Yoga is a kind of self-sculpturing, a process, not of adding anything to our nature, for our true Self is eternally perfect and transcendent, free and fulfilled. Rather it is a process of elimination and refinement—the elimination of that phase of our being based on narrow self-assertion, on *rajas*, on the seeing and insisting on differences, and expressing ourselves in terms of love and hate. What is to be refined and brought out is the *sattvic* potentiality in us, leading to ‘that advanced stage of mind in which peace, felicity, spiritual bliss, *sattva-guna* (truth, equanimity and cheerfulness), large-heartedness, universal love, power and knowledge of Self become spontaneous and natural.’

Then what is this Self that is to be known, to be realized—that Supreme Reality, immediate and direct, and is our Self which is within all? Are there many selves, as there are bodies? Are there many separate souls, like so many divine images, so many beautiful sculptures to be uncovered, each representing an individual person?

If we consider the human body, we find facts which are nothing short of astounding. For example, the body is comprised of something like a hundred trillion cells. In the nucleus of each cell there are 46 chromosomes. And within the chromosome there is the most intricate and precise double spiral structure known as the DNA.

Yet the Upanishad declares: ‘This is your Self which is within all.’ A verse on the Inner Ruler, if expressed in modern terms, might run:

He who dwells in the cell, yet is other than the cell, whom the cell does not know, whose body the cell is, who controls the cell from within, He is the Inner Ruler, your own immortal Self.

The Self is the same Self of all the cells, and it is the same Self in all beings. This supreme Self is subtle and universal; it is not partitioned by anything inner or outer, because it wears all forms, whether minute as atoms, or vast as suns, as phenomenal garments that in no way touch or limit its essential non-dual nature. This is the universal message of Yoga.

What are the implications of realizing this Truth in immediate experience? Here is a story told by Swami Rama Tirtha. A dog once strayed into a house of mirrors. It was immediately alarmed. On all sides, it saw other dogs, rivals and competitors. It growled, and above and below, hundreds of dogs growled back. It barked, and the others returned the compliment. It jumped about in panic. In the end the poor dog collapsed in exhaustion and terror.

Later, a prince entered the house of mirrors. He was pleased to see his image multiplied. He enjoyed looking at his features and his immaculate clothing. The house of mirrors was a terror for the dog, a matter of joy or sport for the prince. The dog did not understand that it was all his own Self, whereas the Prince knew this Truth. Swami Rama Tirtha concludes:

It is only when we know that there is only one Self and that all the shapes and forms we see under the various names are really our Self, that there is rest; otherwise, it is like the case of the dog. We are afraid: this one is going to deceive us; that one is going to harm us; the other one is going to take something from us, and there is a continual struggle against the forms which we imagine to be different. But once we realize the Truth, as did the Prince, we know that nothing can deceive the Self, for it is immutable and free.

The teaching is: End the restless outer quest for happiness and freedom. Learn to still the agitated mind and dive deep into the sea of your own being, and you will realize the Truth that there is only one reality, your own immortal Self.

The universal message of Yoga is that human life has at its core the divine light, and that this light can be realized in this very life. There are definite methods and ways, common to all the great spiritual paths, through which we may thin and eventually remove the inner veils that appear to stand between us and the perfect happiness, peace and fearlessness of God-realization.

Lasting happiness does not depend on outer supports. It is the result of spiritual peace of mind and the gaining of that deeper understanding that sees the one divine reality abiding the same in all beings, the Inner Ruler of all, our own immortal Self, which is immediate and direct. To turn in this direction, to make efforts on this path, is to gain nothing but good, and in time we will realize in our own experience how fortunate we are to have been brought into touch with these teachings.

Let us close by meditating on a Truth expressed here in the words of Christ. It is a universal message because the same principle is at the heart of all the great traditions.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

B.D.

From the Notebooks of Swami Rama Tirtha

I cannot excite your interest unless I voice what is already within you. No new ideas can be imparted. A little dynamite from within destroys the whole superstructure which held it.

Concentration is poise of mind, rather than forced action.

Repose of spirit is absolutely essential to the highest expression of power.

A man is rich in proportion to the things he can afford to let alone.

The Eternal Wisdom

Continuing Hari Prasad Shastri's portrayal of the life and teachings of the Upanishadic sage, Yajnavalkya.

IT IS THE rainy season. The clouds, rolling from the south-east and flying their banners of lightning, strike against the Himalayan peaks; torrents of water then descend.

Now the rain has ceased and the sun is shining brilliantly. The wind is rapidly drying the green slopes of the holy hermitage. The young men are working hard to keep the footpath open. They touch the earth with their fingers as if it were hallowed, because their holy Guru Yajnavalkya treads on it. Everything that may bruise his feet has been carefully removed.

The glory of the self-realization of the sage Yajnavalkya is now at its meridian, not to himself but to those who surround him. When the good karma of the past incarnations of the disciple is fructifying, he begins to understand his Guru and to see the glory of the holy knowledge reflected in his words, his gestures and his demeanour in general. Not that there is any rise or fall; the ever-blazing sun of self-realization, like the Pole Star, is steady. But it is the faith equipment of the disciple that makes the whole difference to him. The greatest gift of the spirit is spiritual faith. How true is the Urdu verse of the Sufi poet:

Do not fast; do not enforce hunger;
Drown thy books in water!
Take hold of the hand of the God-knowing one.
Take pride in being called his servant, his slave, his shadow.

The Teacher comes through the wood where he has been meditating alone. His disciples greet him with 'Jai! Jai!' He pauses and silently confers his blessings on them, then beckons them to the assembly pavilion. Hastily a few blankets are spread and the sage calmly sits down, while the youthful figures remain standing. He signals, and they seat themselves in rows, with heads bent low.

Silence reigns. Nothing stirs. Even the wind seems to enter this

pavilion with feelings of reverence. Shri Yajnavalkya says ‘Om Tat Sat!’ and the disciples begin to chant together the beautiful Creation Hymn from the Tenth Book of the ancient and holy Rig Veda.

There was then neither what is nor what is not.
There was no sky nor the heaven beyond.
What covered? Where was it and in whose shelter?
Was there water, the deep abyss?
There was no death, hence there was nothing immortal.
There was no distinction between night and day.
That One breathed by itself without breath:
Since then there has been nothing other than it.

Darkness there was in the beginning,
A sea without light.
From the germ that lay covered by the husk,
That One was born by the power of heat.
Love overcame it in the beginning,
The seed springing from the mind.
Poets, having searched in their hearts, found wisdom,
The seed of what is, in what is not.
Their ray was stretched across.
Was it below or was it above?
There were seed bearers, there were powers:
Self-power below and will above.

Who then knows, who has declared
From whence was born this creation?
The Gods came later.
Who then knows whence it arose?
He from whom this creation arose,
Whether he made it or did not make it,
Only the highest seer in the highest heaven knows.
Or perhaps he does not know.

The earth rotates and revolves. To what purpose do the seasons change? Races appear and disappear, like little systems that have had their day and pass away. But to what purpose? Is there any meaning in

this drama of nature, in the birth of the amoeba, in the arrival of the primate and the mammal? What mystery is hidden in the changes from the foetus to the infant, from the infant to the youth, amorous, ambitious and power-loving, then again to decrepit old age, and finally to the crematorium? What is the meaning of all this?

So many explanations have been given in Western philosophy of the meaning of history, from the time of Hegel to Toynbee; yet the explanation is simple to those who have the eyes to see. Nature wants to create not one, not many, but millions of spiritual, superior men. The supreme mahatmas, who have read the book of nature, have closed it and put it on the shelf forever, or have torn up the book of the history of the world from the time of the geological upheavals. Indeed, they have reduced life to smoke.

Plato endeavoured to establish a society based on justice; St Paul, one on love; Machiavelli, one on lies and deception; and a host of Fredericks and Napoleons, on armed force. Have they added an iota to the eternal good of man? Who knows?

If love is to be regarded as the greatest force in the world, then it must be the all-embracing love of the rain and the sunshine, of the morning and the dusk, of the sinner and the saint. Love is in search of knowledge. We want to know the nature and the characteristics of the object of our love. But how? By feeling inwardly at one with the spirit of it. This is the lesson to be learnt in life.

Again the great Teacher spoke to his disciples. He said:

Verily, this Self (Atman), the spiritual truth, which does not change, is not to be known by one of weak will, little endurance or small patience.

Shri Yajnavalkya paused. Surveying the faces of his disciples, he knew there were several among them who were willing to seek the spiritual truth at any cost, willing to make any sacrifice for it, and he was glad. It was for their enlightenment that he further added:

Not by intellect, nor by a deep secular study, but he who is favoured by the supreme Truth, knows Him.

This was the most pregnant sentence that the Teacher had uttered for some time. Those disciples who had not yet realized the imperfection

of that instrument of precision called the mind, seemed puzzled. The Teacher therefore repeated the dictum. A voice from the rear of the assembly cried:

Jai to thee, O holy Yajnavalkya!
It was to see thee once that the Himalayan streams came down
from their heights;
They have since flowed through the ages!
O perfect one! It was to kiss thy feet
That the Himalayan peaks emerged out of the sea!
It was to touch thy holy form that the moon,
In her anxiety, waxed and waned.
Jai to thee, O king of rishis,
Lord of sages, wisest and holiest Guru!

to be continued

A TEXT FOR MEDITATION

OM

WISDOM ARISES FROM THE DEPTH OF OUR BEING,
WHEN, FROM THE STILLNESS AND PURITY OF THE HEART,
THE FINITE MEETS THE INFINITE.

OM

Some teachings from the Gospels in the light of Advaita

IN THE WEST over the last hundred years, traditional religion has been on retreat. By and large, people still have respect for Jesus Christos, Jesus who exemplified the values which underpin western civilization. Most people know that he spoke of God as his father, that he gave the parable of the Good Samaritan, that he taught people to turn the other cheek, that he was crucified and was said to have risen again. But a detailed knowledge of his teaching as presented in the New Testament is becoming a rarity. This may seem to be sad, but everything has its good side. If people are unfamiliar with what he said, they may be the more open to the truth in it when they do hear it.

Then, what did Jesus teach? Towards the end of the Sermon on the Mount, the disciples are told to love their enemies as well as their friends because their Father, God, sends his rain on the just and unjust alike and makes his sun rise on the evil and the good. They are told to be perfect, even as their Father in heaven is perfect. These teachings have come to be known as the counsels of perfection. In ordinary parlance, the words ‘counsel of perfection’ have come to mean what you ought to do if circumstances were ideal and if everybody was behaving themselves, but as these conditions are never met, you never actually have to. And in the Christian religion, although the followers have given their lives and deaths and done great works, they have been haunted by a sense of failure. It is asking a lot of a human being to turn the other cheek when they have been struck. When it happens, you find yourself stunned and then outraged. It seems to be asking a lot of a human being to be perfect and yet Jesus said, ‘My yoke is easy and my burden is light.’

Dr Shastri’s own teacher, Shri Dada, worked as a chief telegraph officer on the railway system in India. There is one story about how he was seated, probably under a tree, and a glass of milk with some sugar to be added had been brought to him. He was withdrawn into himself. A passer-by, noticing that his eyes were closed, walked off with his

milk. But Shri Dada did notice and he stood up and ran after the man with the sugar and told him to take that as well, saying ‘Milk without sugar is bad for the stomach.’ On another occasion, there was a boy working in his telegraph office who made a collection of administrative irregularities which occurred there and showed them to the authorities in the next level up. He told them that Shri Dada was an old man preoccupied with religion, who wasn’t up to the job, and that if they sacked Shri Dada and gave him the job, he would do it for half the salary. When Shri Dada came to hear of it, he took no action, but allowed the young man to continue working at the same job as before. Later the boy came to Shri Dada in a state of agitation because he got in trouble over a substantial sum of money which was now required of him. Shri Dada asked around the office but no-one was willing to help a boy of such a character. Although Shri Dada was extremely poor and had a family to feed, he managed to find the money which was needed to save the boy from his creditors.

Shri Dada was not a baptised Christian, although he revered Jesus as an incarnation. He just taught by word and action that forgiveness is the law for spiritual people. If we look in the *Bhagavad Gita*, we find forgiveness listed as one of the divine qualities of a yogi in Chapter 16. It is true that bearing grudges is condemned in all the great faiths. Some years ago the Dalai Lama was invited by the Benedictine monks to comment on the Sermon on the Mount at a seminar in this country. A book was published with the title, *The Good Heart*. The Dalai Lama particularly liked the passage about the sun rising on the good and evil alike and he made a significant observation. If, he said, the Sermon was translated into Tibetan and hidden on a shelf in a Tibetan monastery and a Tibetan monk found it, that monk would assume that he had come across a sermon by a Tibetan Buddhist teacher. Extreme forgiveness and compassion is the Buddhist ethic as well as the Christian and the Hindu.

So Jesus’ teaching has this universality and corresponds very closely to the highest ethical teaching of other faiths. At the same time, for us ordinary mortals, the counsels of perfection would appear to be impossible to put into practice. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. But even among those who regularly ask God to help

them, how many impulses of anger, lust and greed, and their many children of irritation, petulance, possessiveness, anxiety, laziness and so on, arise in the mind every day. People of faith will say we must believe and keep trying. People who think they know life and human nature will say that it may be all right for saints, but for most people, perfection is not an option.

But there is another way of understanding. Perhaps we are looking at everything upside down.

The story of Jesus’ suffering, execution and resurrection forms the main part of all four gospels. An account of his final teachings to his disciples at the Last Supper before he was captured by the authorities, is given by St John. According to the Gospels, Jesus taught the crowds in parables and explained their esoteric meaning to the disciples in private. So there is reason to think that these final recorded teachings are the innermost of all. Firstly he washed his disciples’ feet and then he gave the most emphatic instruction that they should love one another. Then Jesus prays that all those who believe in him ‘may all be one, even as Thou, Father art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that Thou didst send me. And the glory which Thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them and Thou in me, that they may be perfected in one.’ (St John 17: 21-23). This is not the language of logic, which can only operate in duality, in the realm of Yes and No, this and that. The language of Jesus, the logos, transcends logic.

In theology there is a word, co-inherence, which refers to the relation between the Father, the Son and the disciples. I in them and Thou in me. This is a relation of love, of great intimacy where all the feelings of division and separation between persons have been dispelled. This sense of divine oneness, co-inherence and mutual indwelling is the final teaching which he reveals to his disciples.

We can have a simple understanding of Jesus’ teaching because we feel ourselves to be a part of those whom we love, our children, parents, friends; we keep them in our thoughts. So we are in them and they are in us, even when they are far away. However, Jesus seems to be talking about something deeper, of which ordinary love is an image, perhaps, a glorious vision which unites us with the Father of the whole cosmos,

as well as with one another and with him. Can we make sense of this?

Dr Shastri observed that from its beginning, Christianity did not have a philosophy of its own. When it spread north-west into Europe it encountered both the philosophy of Aristotle and the more spiritual philosophy of Plato. Although the new religion encountered much opposition from these world views, it eventually absorbed and incorporated them into its theology. The greatest medieval theologian, Thomas Aquinas, built his system using Aristotelian thought. The theologians of the Renaissance were more on the Platonic side. But even in 325AD at the Council of Nicaea, when Constantine made Christianity the state religion, the bishops had to borrow a word from Greek philosophy, *ousia*, to describe the relation between Father and Son. Jesus said, ‘My Father and I are one.’ There were those who said that this meant they had the same will, but Jesus was a creature and a creature can never be one with God. But the bishops said that the two are *homo-ousion* or, in English, of the same substance, to defend the unity of Father and Son.

But Plato and Aristotle are not the only philosophers in the world, great though they be. There is another philosophy, based on the Upanishads, which is called Advaita or non-dualism. This spiritual philosophy holds that consciousness is the ground of the universe, and there are no differences in it whatsoever. The consciousness in you is no different from the universal consciousness—not by a single shred. It is beyond the mind, beyond words, beyond symbols and therefore beyond logic. It is also called the *Atman*, the Self. We know we are conscious because we see, we hear, we dream, we know. But what is the root of this consciousness? It is not easy to say, because all our senses look outward into the world of separate objects. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, the sage Yajnavalkya says: ‘You cannot see the seer of the sight, you cannot hear the hearer of the sound, you cannot think the thinker of the thought, you cannot know the knower of the known. Your own Self lives in the hearts of all, nothing else matters.’ He repeats this expression, ‘Your own Self lives in the hearts of all. Nothing else matters,’ five times.

When we reflect on this teaching, we can see that, although separated by so many centuries and hundreds of miles, Yajnavalkya’s teaching

seems to have a kinship with the innermost and final teaching of Jesus to mankind through his apostles.

People’s feelings are very dependent on the attitude and behaviour of others; we do live in and through one another. Every good-hearted person can put themselves in other people’s shoes and feel something of what they are feeling, but to know that one’s true Self, one’s real ‘I’, is within another and that the Cosmic Self is within one’s own Self belongs to another level of consciousness.

The philosophy of Advaita teaches that this fundamental identity is reality, actuality, truth, and can be realized in this very life. Shri Dada had realized it and his actions can be comprehended—at least with our minds—on the basis that he knew the man who stole his milk and the boy who tried to get him sacked to be no different from himself. Just as one would try to look after one’s hand if it was injured, or feed oneself when hunger arose, or give a child a piece of bread if it asked for one, so he treated those who appeared to be opposed to him. When Peter went to Jesus and asked how many times he should forgive his brother when he offended him and proposed seven times, Jesus replied, Not seven, but seventy times seven, which is as much as to say the question is absurd. And he prayed for the people who were crucifying his body on the grounds that they didn’t know what they were doing. But he knew what he was doing, and he knew who he was and he knew who they really were however deluded they might be.

Here we come to the crux. People are apt to think that everyone at the Last Supper was in a very special state and Jesus gave them a poetic and mystical sermon. But what he gave them was a description in words of reality as it always is, as it always was and will be. Your own Self lives in the hearts of all, and the words of Jesus give us a glimpse of the way things are which is beyond words. When Jesus told his disciples, I am in you and God is in me, he was speaking to representatives of the whole human race. Implicitly he is talking to everyone. In another parable, he spoke about the Last Judgement when the sheep are to be divided from the goats. And the deciding question is ‘When I was hungry did you feed me, when I was thirsty did you give me to drink, when I was in prison did you visit me?’

The sheep are surprised when they are told that they have been doing

this. They learn that inasmuch as they have been feeding the least of Jesus' brothers they have been feeding him, which demonstrates again that his sense of identity was universally extended.

We do not see reality as it is because of the state of our minds and hearts. One of the great differences between the spiritual philosophy of Advaita and those of the West is the doctrine of illusion and enlightenment. In Advaita there is Maya and there is Brahman. Maya is the illusion which is based on Brahman, the universal consciousness, and conceals it. Maya is the whole world appearance as we see it with the ordinary mind, and includes the mind and the senses. When the illusion is dispelled by knowledge, the Maya ceases to be able to deceive and we see things as they are which is all-one. All is Brahman. My own Self lives in the hearts of all. The light of this knowledge shines in the darkness of ignorance, and the ignorance comprehends it not.

What is this Maya, this illusion? It is that I am I and You are You, the East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet. It is caused by mis-identifying oneself with the passing, with one's body and its desires, with one's family, with one's race or nation, with one's money, and neglecting the true Self, which is the pure consciousness. The philosophy of Advaita teaches one to abandon these self-imposed selves by ruthlessly asking the question 'What am I? Who am I? Can I really be my body, which is changing all the time and will pass away in a few short years? Can I be my mind which is so fickle and inconstant, thinking one thing one moment and another the next? Who is the real me?' This questioning has to become a serious research project, so to say, and one step has been taken when we realize that we somehow don't know who we are. It becomes a real question for us.

Now let us consider what the Gospels have to say about Jesus' way of talking about himself. It seems clear that he had a strong sense of mission, of spiritual duty. 'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' 'I have come to do the will of my Father.' He knew what part he had to play in the drama of life, even the drama of human history. It is wisdom to know what is to be done in the play of our lives, and if we didn't know, there would be no forwards or backwards, there would be no fresh creation of possibilities for mankind.

But he had another way of declaring himself. 'I am the light of the world', 'I am the good shepherd', 'I am the bread of life', 'I am the way, the truth and the life', 'I am the resurrection and the life', 'I am the true vine', 'Before Abraham was, I am.'

This is not the way people speak about themselves in daily life. But it is similar to the way that the philosophy of Advaita teaches us to meditate on ourselves.

This is the second arm of the research into our own nature. We call in question all the limited ideas which we have of our own nature and affirm, by meditating, that our true Self is infinite, pure, real and like light, in that it illumines everything and is illumined by nothing.

Dr Shastri wrote: 'Self is called light because of its revealing nature. It is truth because you cannot imagine any principle to be beyond Self. It is self-evident and self-effulgent, therefore beyond the range of physical light and darkness. It is under the light of the Self that we perceive the physical light and also darkness.'

'Know thyself' is a command, and the essence of philosophy. Our happiness and our liberty depend on what we know our Self to be. According to the Yoga philosophy, there is only one veil which obscures the Self. It is the restless, agitated and desire-distracted mind, the chief fortress of ignorance. The easy method to conquer it is to surrender it unconditionally in full faith to Guru and Govinda, which is a name for God. Here we are reminded of the words of Christ, 'Come unto Me ye who labour and are heavy-laden and I will refresh you.'

So it is a battle. We have to stop voting in favour of our little selves and lend our support to the reality of the true *Atman*, the true Self. Naturally, this entails a re-direction of our commitments. This is not an artificial matter of adding more and more qualities and virtues to our nature, but of discovering what we really are. When we admire the way that Jesus or other realized souls behave, we are apt to think that they were especially virtuous, but the truth is that they knew themselves fully. It was not a question of making a great moral effort to forgive the people who wronged them. The forgiveness was an expression of what they knew of Reality, that is of the Self. They knew that 'Your own self lives in the hearts of all', 'I am in them and Thou art in me.'

This point is the key. There are enlightened people and there are

more or less benighted people. Enlightened people know themselves as they are, see things as they are and therefore they are free of the egotistic way of seeing which gives rise to the restless, agitated and desire-distracted mind. Their freedom is unlimited and they cannot be judged by ordinary standards. They dance to a more sublime tune and follow a subtler law. The ordinary man and woman may be relatively clear-minded and lucid, they may be very perceptive and also lucid about what they themselves want. But they do not know how to step off the wheel of day and night into a place of true peace. Most houses have a front door and a back door. Take the front door to represent the life of the senses, taste, touch, smell, hearing and sight. The communications from these organs consume most of our attention. But there is also a back door which opens on to infinity, limitlessness, eternal radiance and life. Some people find it and make the way to it accessible to others.

Jesus said, ‘Wide is the gate and broad is the way which leadeth to destruction and many there be which go in therewith. Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it.’

Like so many sayings of Jesus this one sounds harsh. He also said, ‘I come not to bring peace but a sword’. But it is just the nature of things. There was a time when he was criticized by the Pharisees for eating with sinners and publicans. After all, every spiritual person knows that one should be careful of the company they keep. But he rebuked them and told them to learn the ways of mercy and compassion. ‘Those who are well do not need a doctor, but those who are sick do. I have not come to call righteous people, but to lead sinners to change their ways.’ There is reality and unreality, there is truth and falsehood, there is light and darkness, there is knowledge and ignorance. We have to discriminate between them and discard the illusion. So the saying, ‘wide is the gate and broad is the way’ is an invitation to leave the many, join the few and finally be perfected in one.

This is the way from darkness to enlightenment, as in Yoga. Jesus said, ‘Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me.’ The word Yoga and yoke are derived from the same root *yuj* which means to join. With what was he yoked and how do we take his yoke upon us? Let us

consider again his last and intimate teaching given to his disciples, ‘may all be one, even as Thou, Father art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that Thou didst send me. And the glory which Thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them and Thou in me, that they may be perfected in one.’ In all simplicity, does this not mean that he was yoked to his Father, the infinite God? And did he not intend that his disciples should share that oneness, that yoke? And did he not intend that his disciples should draw everyone else into this reality?

What should we do? Follow in his footsteps and disidentify ourselves from the body, from the mind, from the passing world, from all limitation. Just as he said, ‘I am the Light of the world’, so should we. If we feel too modest, we can consider that it is he in us who is saying these things: ‘I am the Good Shepherd.’ ‘I am the Bread of Heaven.’ But in the Sermon on the Mount, he addresses the crowd with the words, ‘You are the salt of the earth, you are the light of the world.’ Who were the audience? They were just people who wanted to hear what he had to say, some more sincere, some less sincere. None the less, he said, ‘You are the light of the world’, and the words in Greek are exactly the same—*phos tou kosmou*—as when he said, ‘I am the light of the world.’

Good evidence exists that later on, when his disciples were spreading the word, they used to speak like this to their hearers. They prophesied in the first person. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. It was because they had contemplated such sayings so deeply that they were able to speak in such a way.

So we should also do likewise, namely, identify our true Self with God and affirm the truth of it. If Jesus says, ‘You are the Light of the world’, well, thought is free, but who are you to disagree? So don’t dwell on: ‘I am a 37 year-old man, with two children and my wife has deserted me taking all my money’, but affirm, ‘I am the Light of the world.’

But what about sin, what about evil, cruelty and the desperate wickedness, as the Bible puts it, of men’s hearts? What about selfishness? The Yoga teaches us that the most purifying and cleansing of all forces is spiritual knowledge. The words of Jesus when he speaks

of himself are expressions of spiritual knowledge, like the many spiritual meditation texts we use. Their essential feature is that they affirm the infinity of Self, and take you out the back door of your being into the limitless realm. The cure of all sin, weakness and corruption lies in a deeper knowledge of one's own nature. No amount of training or discipline or attendance at rituals and services will do by itself. We have to know. When the knowledge begins to dawn, you will no longer want to do wrong. The sovereign secret, as it is called in the *Gita*, is *dharma*, that is, naturally righteous. What is natural righteousness? The heart cares for the liver and the liver cares for the heart. The lungs look after the blood and the blood feeds the brain. Hand washes hand. If I am in you, shall I want to do you any harm? Your happiness is my happiness. When Jesus said, 'Be perfect', he might as well have said, 'Be what you are', because the true Self, the true I, the true *Atman*, is always perfect.

Jesus had his authority because he practised what he preached and he said, 'My yoke is easy, my burden is light.' He knew the truth of himself and was free.

A.S-B.

HOLY WEEK PRAYER

O our supreme good,
O end of our life of enquiry and exertion,
One source of life and delight,
Who manifested Himself in the Roman world
As our meek and gentle Christ,
Grant that we may follow Him
In His life of unconditional love of Thee and all living beings,
And turn away from the life of sense pleasure and personal satisfaction
To the life of benevolence-devotion-knowledge.
May we live to follow the darling of Thy saints, Jesus,
The significance of whose teaching is interpreted to us
by the universal teachings of Yoga.

H.P.S.

THE GREATEST LOVE

The cat loves her kittens, and the monkey is most passionately fond of her young ones. What wonder is there if a woman loves her babies? Birds love their nests, and their lairs are dear to tigers. What wonder if man loves his house and property? The love of comforts is equally common to man and the lower animals. The love of conquest and power is also an animal property.

What distinguishes man, a civilized man, from lower animals and savages is the love of truth. Love of truth is inseparable from love of beauty and goodness. It embraces religion, culture and ethics, and is the highest kind of love. In the Indian terminology it is called dharma.

Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan and Napoleon are heroes in the eyes of bandits and robbers. They were forces of destruction and ruin. So too is any statesman who regards cheating and deceiving for his country as legitimate. Shakyamuni Buddha was really great, for the love of truth drove him to a great renunciation. That race, nation or individual is great who loves truth for its own sake, irrespective of its consequences. Swami Rama Tirtha, in modern times, loved truth more than anything else. Herbert Spencer, as a seeker after truth, is more worthy of respect than Peter the Hermit, who preached the First Crusade.

A lover of truth is modest, dispassionate, tolerant but uncompromising. He is free from egotism and vanity and is ever in quest of truth.

Love of truth means pursuit after truth. It is like scaling a high mountain, on the top of which, hidden in eternity, is the house of the Beloved. Each step is a fresh conquest, introducing us to new beauties of nature and offering fresher and fresher air for us to inhale. The end is never achieved through personal striving alone. But freedom comes in the form of supreme satisfaction and peace, in the long run, if the quest is sincere and continuous.

The most dearly beloved is truth. How beautiful is she! Is not life worth sacrificing at her altar?

H.P.S.

Mind in East and West

IN A TALK given just as the Second World War was coming to an end, Dr Shastri asked the same questions which must occur to us all from time to time: Why is this eternal strife in the world brought about? Why this error, individualism and suffering? What is the way to real and lasting peace and happiness? The cause of this strife, he goes on to say, is that there is duality in our lives. It is rooted in the mind. The thief is in our own heart, and it is ignorance, *avidya*. Ignorance of what? The answer is, ignorance of our own nature, of who and what we really are.

So to find the reason for the strife and suffering in the world, in which we all share in varying degrees, we have to look into our own nature, the nature of human beings. And we can best do this by investigating the way in which this has been traditionally understood, both in India and in the West. We shall find that there is a surprisingly large measure of agreement. Let us take the Indian view first.

In Indian thought, in both its Hindu and Buddhist forms, there are two words which are often translated rather unsatisfactorily, because they refer to two quite distinct faculties as ‘mind’. The first of these is *manas*, which is usually translated as ‘lower mind’. *Manas* is closely linked to the five senses; it is the faculty which coordinates the information they convey to the brain and shapes it into perception. As we know, sense impressions do not on their own give us physical objects; they have to be interpreted and turned into perception, and it is only in this way that the world appears in our consciousness. This is the function of *manas*, the ‘lower mind’; and in Indian thought it is generally grouped together with the five senses because it works so closely with them: it is the senses plus *manas* which tell us of the world. Without *manas* the senses, of themselves, would convey nothing more than meaningless physical impressions occurring in the eye, the ear, or on the surface of the skin.

Manas is not unique to human beings. It is shared by other living beings and it tells both them and us of the shape and size of the world and the relation of its different parts, including our own bodies, to each other. It is *manas* which tells us whether or not a given space is big

enough to pass through. It is recorded that at one point while Hannibal was leading his army across the Alps on his way to attack Rome, his leading elephant absolutely refused to step onto a narrow bridge over one of the ravines, although men and mules had already been over it safely. The elephant knew ‘instinctively’, as we say, that the bridge would not support the weight of its body. This is an example of *manas* at work.

In human beings, however, this fundamental faculty of understanding the world and its relation to our own bodies has become much more developed than it is in animals. It has gained, as it were, an entire further stage, that of turning perceptions into concepts, and in this way it has become the principal instrument or tool by which humans survive in the world. This further development of *manas*, with which comes language and the whole world of rational thought, is what gives us the power to control and manipulate the environment and other living beings in the way that we do.

This ability or power is generally thought of as the distinguishing mark which differentiates human beings from animals; but the division is not quite so hard and fast as we usually think, for we can see just the dim beginnings of the same capacity in some of the animals with which we are most familiar. One can occasionally see a cat, for example, seeming to calculate quite carefully when there is a long enough gap in the traffic for it to be able to dash across a busy road. Some dogs will go out of their way in order to use a pedestrian crossing in order to get across. And in India there is a famous holy site at which there are many monkeys. Some of these have worked out that if they can suddenly grab the handbag of one of the many visitors to the site and scurry with it up onto a high wall, they will then be offered pieces of fruit so that they will come down off the wall with the handbag, in which they really have no interest. It can be recovered whilst they are enjoying a banana or a mango. They make quite a profitable business out of this! But all this is just the beginning of conceptual thought, and it is only in human beings that it is developed to a significant degree, giving to us our ability to survive and dominate the planet in the way that we do.

All this, then, is *manas*, the ‘lower mind’. But beyond *manas*, and situated, as it were, ‘above’ it, is another power or aspect of the mind.

This is named the *buddhi* or ‘higher mind’. *Buddhi*, in Indian thought, is the power of choice, and ultimately that of spiritual intuition or vision. It is not concerned with how we do things—that is the province of *manas*—but it is the power of choice, of what it is that we want to achieve or do. For this reason, it is the *buddhi* which directs and controls the *manas*, using it as an instrument to achieve its purposes. These purposes can be wisely or unwisely chosen, and so it is the state of the *buddhi* which determines the moral nature of a human being. This is not the case with animals: in them the *buddhi*, although there in potential, is completely undeveloped; it exists in only the most basic form, as the urge to survival and procreation, and there is no real choice involved.

A person’s actions will be good or bad, moral or immoral, in proportion to whether the *buddhi* or higher mind is ‘pure’ or not, and it is when the *buddhi* attains to high degrees of purity that it starts to open access to superior levels of being and to the spiritual insight which comes with these. When the *buddhi* has been sufficiently purified, it comes to the threshold, as it were, of the highest element of all in the make-up of human beings, our ultimate nature, the *Atman* or Self, the unchanging innermost spirit. The *buddhi* is not itself that highest spirit, but it can attain a point at which it stands at the threshold of the Self and, because now pure, is filled with its light.

Let us now turn our attention to traditional Western thought and how it has understood the mind. When we examine European thought as it existed in the Middle Ages, and in fact right up until the seventeenth century, we find a broadly similar picture to that we have seen in India. This view goes back a very long way. We can find it in the writings of Plato, in Neoplatonism, in medieval Christian thought and among the thinkers of the Renaissance, and it is only because it came to be forgotten in later centuries that psychoanalysis and similar theories were invented in an attempt to fill the gap in our knowledge.

At the present time we use the words reason, intellect and mind (and sometimes also consciousness) in a very vague way, so that they are virtually interchangeable. But it was not always so. Just as in India, in Europe also the human mind was thought of as having two distinct functions or levels or aspects; these were called the *ratio*, from which

we get the word reason, and the *intellectus*. They were quite different functions of the mind; it was only in later times that they became confused, so that nowadays the words reason and intellect are used more or less synonymously. The *ratio* was understood as the lower form of the activity of the mind. It was located in the head, or the brain, as we would now say, and closely connected with the five senses and with perception. It was based upon our inborn knowledge of cause and effect, and was seen as essentially a tool by which we act and survive in the world: the power of thought in the sense of calculation, analysis, problem-solving logic, ‘working things out’.

But situated above this was a quite different power of the mind, the *intellectus*. This was thought of as situated not in the head, but at the centre of the body, in the ‘heart’. It had nothing to do with causality or calculation, but was concerned with values, with which purposes and results are worth pursuing in life, which are harmful, and which are indifferent and a waste of time and energy. It used the *ratio* to calculate the result of a certain course of action, but itself judged the value of that result. And like the *buddhi*, the *intellectus*, when developed to the full, gave access to spiritual awareness and the higher levels of insight.

This most developed form of the *intellectus* was sometimes given a separate name, the *mens*, or spiritual intelligence, through which one becomes directly aware of the divine. In Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, it is the *mens* which is represented by the figure of Beatrice, who shows the poet the way through Paradise. However, in Europe this understanding of the human mind and its different divisions and functions began to become obscured during the sixteenth century, and from about 1600 onwards, more and more attention came to be focused on the *ratio* or ‘reason’ and its wonderful powers.

For Francis Bacon and the increasing numbers who thought like him, knowledge has no point unless it is useful, and the true purpose of enquiry is not to increase our understanding of the mysteries of existence and of our own nature (which, it was supposed, we can never get to the bottom of anyway), but to increase our ability to manipulate and control the world about us and to improve the material conditions of life. To achieve this kind of practically effective scientific knowledge, Bacon believed, a ‘new instrument’, a *novum organum*,

was needed, and this was to be the *ratio*, the human reason, subjected to a new and stringent discipline. It had to be severed from the *intellectus*, which was of no real use, and transformed into an efficient and reliable tool for processing, analysing and organizing data collected from the world around us. The mind, Bacon wrote, must be ‘hung with weights’ to stop it from ‘leaping and flying’, and ‘must not be left to take its own course, but must be guided at every step, and the business be done as if by machinery’. In this way the *ratio* was severed from the *intellectus*. The latter was no longer needed; it had already been decided by Bacon and others that what was wanted was more power over nature, the greater grandeur of humanity and better conditions of life which would result from this.

And so the *intellectus* and its role were forgotten and more and more emphasis was placed on the *ratio*, or human ‘reason’, as it came to be called. It was cut loose and allowed to lead wherever it would. The project was brilliantly successful, as we know, and it is this emphasis on the reason and the systematic exploitation of its powers, its ability to gather together facts, to analyze, calculate and discover how things work, which is what distinguishes the modern world from the medieval and Renaissance world which went before it.

We can see this very clearly reflected in the great change which has taken place over the last three or four hundred years from religion to science. Science is almost entirely the work of the *ratio*, the reason. Religion is concerned with values and is linked to the *intellectus*. Today science, in the form of technology, is everywhere, and religion, especially in its Christian form, which used to dominate in Europe, has contracted to a mere shadow of its former self. When we wonder what it is that lies behind the immense changes in our way of life which have occurred in recent centuries, this is where the answer lies: in the withdrawal of energies from the *intellectus*, until its very existence has been forgotten, so that it has become just another name for reason, and the placing of those energies, in a very definite and systematic manner, in the reason and its ability to explore and exploit nature.

But what happens when reason is cut off from the larger picture of what human life is, and is allowed to go its own way like this? We can get some idea from the history of what occurred in Europe, and

especially in France, during the eighteenth century. Here the *ratio*, or reason, swept all before it during the ‘Enlightenment’, and it actually had the effect of dissolving the social structure of the nation and, to a large extent, destroying religion. ‘The human reason, acting alone and reduced to its own resources, is nothing but a brute whose power is restricted to destroying’, wrote Joseph de Maistre, who witnessed these events at first hand. ‘Wherever the individual reason dominates, there can be nothing great, for everything great rests on a belief, and the clash of individual opinions left to themselves produces only scepticism which is destructive of everything. General and individual morality, religion, laws, revered customs, useful prejudices—nothing is left standing, everything falls before it; it is the universal dissolvent.’

The eventual outcome was the French Revolution, a very bloody episode in which the *ratio*, or reason, was deified and worshipped as a goddess, and churches and cathedrals were turned into ‘Temples of Reason’. Since then there have been many further ill effects as well as certain benefits which have resulted from the isolation of ‘reason’ and the emphasis upon its powers over nature. We have only to think of the two terrible wars of the last century and of the growing ecological crisis. Not less important than the social effects is the effect upon the inner life of each one of us. In the era of the mobile phone and of the internet, those moments when we can look within and seek to make contact with our real nature become more and more difficult to preserve. This is why people turn towards Eastern religions. For in Indian thought, the original structure once known to Europe is still in place. The useful part which can be played by the lower mind or *manas* is admitted, but it is always seen in relation to the fundamental role of the *buddhi*. We see this in the Upanishads, in which it is from the *buddhi*, the *intellectus* and the *mens* of European thought that the ancient mystics of India speak to us. Without this connection with our higher nature, the inner life can atrophy and we are left with nothing more than a constantly active lower mind going its own way and leading ultimately nowhere.

S.C.

The Pursuit of Pleasure

Men, devoted to the glorious Vasudeva (the Lord), live not for their own sakes, but to promote the happiness, well-being and power of the world.

O Lord of Heaven! My wicked and unmanageable mind, poisoned with evil intentions, does not find delight in the knowledge of You, but is yearning after common pleasures, harassed by joy, fear and grief.

The insatiable tongue drags me this way; senses of touch, hearing and the body, in some other direction; the inconstant eye somewhere else, towards other objects.

If You, O Lord, confer on me desired boons, I seek from You this boon: that sensuous desires may not germinate in my heart; for when they arise, they destroy the peace in me and create fetters.

Shrimad Bhagavatam

WHO DOES not like pleasure? What is pleasure? It is merely the satisfaction which gratified desires brings to us. The ignorant man, like the Hindu materialist philosopher (*Charvaka*) cries: 'Let us live and be merry and drink *ghee*, for death is the end.'

Life to a fool is a garden of pleasure, but to the wise man it is the sacred material out of which God-consciousness has to be constructed. We must cultivate a benevolent disposition, free from private gain or personal interest, even from self-approbation. Pure disinterestedness is engrained in our souls, but unless it is brought to the surface by cultivation, our ethical and benevolent actions will bring no lasting good. St Bernard affirmed that the fundamental characteristic of love divine is the exercise of compassion towards others, both men and the lower animals. Tulsidas, great sage and poet, goes even further and says: 'Without compassion even a perfect man is a butcher.'

Utilitarianism, which seeks 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number', is objectionable on account of its non-recognition of the pursuit of goodness or righteousness for its own sake. To experience real delight, real happiness, we must part company with the owl-winged faculty of calculation. Love knows no profit and loss account. True

happiness comes when the little self is forgotten and put aside, or merged in a disinterested exercise of virtue.

To make pleasure an end in itself is an error. There are qualities in pleasure. We must choose those of high quality, such as are to be found in devotion, art, or spiritual justice. Socrates does not clearly differentiate happiness from virtue and virtue from knowledge. How true is the statement of Aristotle that 'to a virtuous person the very performance of virtue is pleasurable; but pleasure is not the Good'; nor is mere goodness enough without godliness.

Pleasure is not the goal of man, nor is he all matter; man is a triple alliance of body, intelligence and Spirit. His higher nature makes as great a demand on him as his physical and emotional needs. To think 'I am this body' is to show we have not understood the purpose of life. The body is an instrument of the Lord, and should be properly looked after according to the laws of hygiene, because it has been fashioned for a divine purpose.

We should not be afraid of being overcome by the pleasures of the world and so run away from life, for this is cowardice. A man feels a certain pride in riding a mettlesome horse, but none if he is riding a donkey. Let us not fear temptations. The mystics have all agreed that to be without temptation is a temptation. The superior horse in a race is the one who is handicapped; so, when trials and tests come to us, let us regard them as a tribute to the grace that is in us, and face them with courage and resolution. All sentient beings are dominated by *trishna*, which means the insistent thirst for life, the thirst for the gratification of our sensuous desires. Passion-struggle (*rajas*) is the father; ignorance (*tamas*) is the nurse.

The deeper spiritual quest of life may be ignored for a time, but it cannot be entirely silenced. We have to rise sooner or later above this insatiable *trishna*. What is needed is a psychological transformation of the little ego or personality, through the unselfish service of others, through daily spiritual devotion, meditations, love of God and the pursuit of Truth. This alone can lead us beyond sufferings, giving us a permanent understanding of the real purpose of life and the knowledge of its goal, which is God, the only Reality. In the Upanishads it is

written: ‘The path of pleasure is different from the path of beatification.’

It is *trishna*, together with ignorance as to the real goal of man, coupled with his deeds arising from the blind insistence of this pleasure-loving life principle, which constitute the nature of nescience, karma and the cycle of birth and death.

Mere pleasure born of the contact of the senses with their objects is common to both men and the lower animals; and Aristotle calls man a superior being by virtue of his power of ratiocination. Blind adherence to the dictates of the senses is the negation of our special prerogative, reason. The one defect in sensuous pleasures is that the instruments of enjoyment lose their power, their edge is dulled, as it were, while the appetite persists. Among the failures in life—the suicides, the criminals, the ever bored and ever worried—we mostly find those devoted to selfish pleasures.

When the heart is dedicated to a higher ideal, benevolent and spiritual, there is no room for despair or despondency. He who has made over his liberty to the fetish of pleasure will probably neglect his duty; yet one of the greatest joys in life is the unselfish discharge of our duty to our family, our country, humanity and God; and poor indeed is that man who is without this joy. To quote from the holy Sage Vyasa:

The deer loses his freedom on account of his excessive love of music; the moth from its love of the beauty of the flame; the elephant from its inordinate love of touch; and the greedy fish is hooked by the bait of taste. What then will be the fate of that man, who loves inordinately all the objects of his five senses?

Love of God, love of the higher spiritual ideals, is the only love that gives lasting joy. Though in the beginning it is hard to envisage the delight of spiritual devotion, love of Truth and the service of others, yet these alone are capable of satisfying the soul and are the abiding joys.

Shri Dadaji Maharaj, called by India’s so-called untouchables, who loved him, the Saint of Aligarh, has said:

Seek blessedness, edification of the soul and self-effacement, through Truth and worship of the Lord, also through love of the poor, the

oppressed and the ignorant. Lift your mind higher and ever higher in devotion and meditation. Nothing has caused me so much joy in life as sacrifices made by me for the good of others, through service and the divine Yoga.

Once, when a disciple asked what he could do to please him, the compassionate Mahatma replied: ‘To please me? I need neither happiness nor pleasure, my son. Please yourself by serving the divine Yoga unselfishly and by giving your devotion to Truth; give your best services to the poor, the aged and the sick, and then forget all about it! Do not seek pleasure merely in sensations.’

All emotions are aspects of the all-containing emotion called love. When the heart understands how to cultivate love towards God, then what is mystically called *para-bhakti* (or great devotion) is born. Like an iron filing, that heart rushes to unite itself with the great magnet which is God, through divine Love. Love is the ultimate goal of all life, all philosophy and all religion.

Truly, as the Lord Shri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*: ‘All the pleasures born of the contact of the senses with their objects are sources of suffering. They are shadowy. The wise do not indiscriminately indulge in them.’

So let us say: ‘I will appreciate the joys of life, of good company, of lovely scenery, of beauty, literature and art, as a master and not as a slave. I will ever keep my inner being in touch with Reality, God, pouring out all these joys at His feet, which are represented by His creation, by all His creatures, high and low. In the *Shrimad Bhagavatam* it is written:

A wise man should conquer passion by shunning the wish to gratify it, and conquer anger by eschewing a desire merely to gain pleasure, by a thorough perception of Truth...

Because the devout alone can understand the truth of God, therefore you, O blessed ones, are happy and wise in this world; for here you have set yourselves on Vasudeva, the Lord of the whole universe, regarding Him as all; and when the mind is set on Him, this fearful cycle of worldly existence does not come again.

Hari Prasad Shastri

The World-Honoured Buddha

BUDDHA was born at Kapilavastu in the foothills of the Himalayas, about three-quarters of the way east along the Ganges basin, about 560 BC.

The educated Hindus of Buddha's day were still mostly Vedic ritualists. That is, they retained in developed form, the ancient rituals of the Veda, and their belief in it was pushed to the point where they thought of the actual acts of the ritual as being what brought them merit and welfare by a sort of magic process. The ritual was regarded as more important than the gods it was supposed to honour, and the gods themselves were regarded merely as part of the decor, powerless to help anyone except as a result of the physical practice of the ritual. It is this form of religion that is attacked in the *Bhagavad Gita* when it speaks of those who are attached to pleasures and power, who aim for a sojourn in heaven, and whose minds are drawn away by the flowery words of the unwise, who are enamoured of the ritualistic teaching of the Veda and say that there is no more than that.

In Buddha's day, deep devotion or bhakti to a single god, so powerfully expressed in the *Gita* itself 300 years later, had hardly developed, though we catch a glimpse of the beginnings of it in the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*. Buddha rejected Vedic ritualism. He regarded the Vedic ritual as useless and also as cruel, in so far as it included the slaughter of animals. According to certain early Buddhist texts, however, the Buddha came, through his spiritual practices, into contact with some of the Vedic gods, notably Brahma*, but did not regard himself as a god, because he knew that he had attained enlightenment and liberation, whereas the gods were still locked into the world of transmigration, and would have to return again for human birth to escape.

In the four centuries from 200 BC to 200 AD, a great change came over the Hindu religion, which the *Gita* both reflected and mightily enhanced. Krishna and Rama, at first regarded as mere human heroes,

* Brahma, the Creator-God, not to be confused with Brahman, the Absolute.

were now seen as manifestations of the God, Vishnu, Himself the Lord of the Universe. Even the Buddha came eventually to be regarded as a manifestation of Vishnu by the Hindus.

Long after the Buddha, the spirit of *bhakti* (devotion) developed amongst the Buddhists too, and led to a new form of the Buddhist religion, which called itself the Mahayana, or greater vehicle, because in contrast to the original form of Buddhism, it promised the possibility of enlightenment to laymen as well as monks, and held out the high ideal of deliberately postponing one's final exit from the miserable realm of transmigration or rebirth, even when it was within one's grasp, in order to remain in the world as a Bodhisattva, working for the liberation of all suffering creatures.

Generally speaking, the scriptures of the new form of the religion were written in Sanskrit, the standard speech of the priests, the aristocratic military class and the new bourgeoisie of the burgeoning towns, and it was from Sanskrit that they were translated into Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan, with an accuracy that has often surprised Western philologists. But the general population of northern India generally spoke local dialects which were simplified and corrupted forms of Sanskrit, and the Buddha himself taught in the local language of the people where he lived, called Magadhi, the language of the people of Magadha. In later times, the texts and traditions of the Buddha's followers that were to be regarded as canonical were sorted out in great councils, of which the first was held a year after the Buddha's death. For centuries nothing was written down; all the great mass of teaching was learnt by the monks of succeeding generations and handed down by word of mouth.

In the third century BC, under the inspiration of the Emperor Ashoka, the monks took the teachings to Ceylon or Shri Lanka. Here, two centuries later, they were written down for the first time, and the language in which they were written, still close to the Magadhi of the Buddha, became frozen like Sanskrit as a sacred tongue, known as Pali. In their Pali form, the teachings spread to Burma and south-east Asia generally. There they continued to reflect the rather dry, monastic teaching of the Buddha himself. Meanwhile, in northern India this ancient monastic form of the Buddhist religion continued for many

centuries to flourish side by side with the new form, the Mahayana, which was extended to laymen living in the world and based on *bhakti* to the Buddha conceived as a personal god. It was chiefly, but not solely, in this latter form that Buddhism passed to China, India and Tibet. In northern India, Buddhism gradually passed away. The monastic form of it was found too dry and ascetic, and the devotional form, the Mahayana, in which Buddha was worshipped as a god, simply lost out to the attraction of devotion to Krishna, Rama and Shiva, and after about 800 AD, except in Bengal, Buddhism survived only in isolated pockets.

An important feature of the Mahayana in northern India was the composition of new works in Sanskrit, which were regarded as canonical scripture but which went far beyond the Pali canon. They exalted and glorified the Buddha as a god, illustrated his life with a tissue of legends, made provision for many Bodhisattvas who presided over heavens to which one could attain through *bhakti*, and made important contributions in the realms of metaphysical speculation and logic. These ultimately came to have their place in the development of the philosophical side of the teachings of Adhyatma Yoga. But philosophy formed no part of the discipline prescribed by the Buddha himself, who had said that if a person is wounded by a poisoned arrow, he does not waste time working out the size of the arrow and speculating about the metal of which it is constituted, but sets about pulling it out of the body as quickly as possible.

The Mahayana teachers were aware that their new works went beyond what was found in the old Pali scriptures, but maintained that they constituted a new revelation of material previously held back by the Buddha, because the people were not ready to receive or understand it. This was true to the extent that few people in India in Buddha's day, the early fifth century BC, would have been ready to worship him as a kind of personal god.

The Mahayana accounts of the Buddha's life are full of legends that are impossible to believe, and even the Pali texts contain much that is hard to swallow. The Buddha is pictured as having been brought up in seclusion by his princely father within the palace grounds, surrounded by dancing girls and all the luxury of an oriental court. On the one

hand, he was shielded from contact with worldly suffering; on the other, trained in horse-riding, fencing and the military arts. His father suspected that he would have an inclination to become a monk, and before his son rode out into the royal park, the way was cleared of any spectacle that might open his eyes to the suffering latent in worldly life. Nevertheless, on successive occasions, he did in fact see a man who had become decrepit with old age, another who was convulsed with sickness and also a corpse—and finally a monk, who looked serene and happy. In this way the desire to rise above the sufferings of the world through becoming a monk was planted in his mind.

But it was not until the age of 29 that he finally took the plunge, by which time he was already married and had a young son. With the help of his groom, he escaped from the palace and galloped off into the night. There is a traditional belief in India that success in the spiritual life comes from long periods of meditation in the forest, associated with ascetic life, living on berries and what can be found—just enough to stay alive. After approaching two teachers and finding them insufficient, Buddha went to the forest and practised severe austerities in company with five other monks for six years, when eventually it came to him that he was not going to succeed this way. To the disgust of his fellow ascetics, he accepted some milk and rice prepared for him by a young girl, remembered in tradition as Sujata, who came from a nearby village. He then went to a beautiful spot about 70 miles south of the modern Patna, now called Bodh Gaya, site of the Bodhi tree. He sat under this tree with the determination not to move unless he obtained enlightenment. According to tradition, he was attacked by Mara, whom we might call Satan, a personification both of desire and fear, but he remained firm in his determination, and enlightenment dawned.

He became a Buddha, one who had awoken. The word refers to one who has come to a perfect knowledge of the true nature of all things through long and hard struggle in the domain of meditation. This does not mean knowing everything about everything, but rather the firm conviction that everything in the world, including the human mind, is transient, illusory and a source of suffering. One who has this conviction ceases to act for his personal good and retires from the

realm of selfish action and the rebirth that follows from it. Such a person is forever released from sufferings and passions, and teaches deluded mankind the way to reach the truth. According to the Mahayana texts, Buddhas appear in every world-period to teach the way from darkness to light. Different Buddhist schools, what to say of modern scholars, have interpreted *nirvana* or enlightenment differently. But from the practical point of view, it meant escape from the ceaseless cycle of birth, suffering, old age, death, and then again rebirth and death, and was not essentially different from the liberation taught in the Upanishads and held out as the goal in the Adhyatma Yoga.

Buddha must have been about 36 when he obtained enlightenment, and from then until his death at the age of 80 he lived the life of a wandering preaching mendicant, to this extent not unlike the friars of medieval Europe. To become a member of his community, his Sangha, one had to take vows and renounce hearth and home as a monk. The early Buddhists formed a wandering community, surrounding the Buddha as he went from place to place preaching, but when the mass became unwieldy, he dismissed some, while others took their place. Those who sympathized with the movement but did not feel able to break away from their home life, contributed to the community with material gifts and made permanent quarters available to the monks during the rainy season. Rather reluctantly at first, Buddha made provision for an order of nuns.

On attaining enlightenment, he knew at once that he had to collect a community which would outlive him and carry on the teaching after his death. He first went to the two teachers whom he had earlier rejected, who would bring over their disciples with them if converted, but they both snubbed him. Then he went to Sarnath, about a mile north of modern Benares, to find his five fellow ascetics. When they first saw him coming they decided to snub him too, but were soon overawed by the majesty of his presence. They became his first pupils and here at Sarnath, Buddha preached his first sermon.

The line of teaching was: there are two extremes, O monks, which one must avoid. The first is the life of pleasure, which is low, mean, undignified and vain. The second is a life of extreme asceticism and self-mutilation, which is also sad, undignified and vain. One has to find

the path that passes between these two extremes, the path which leads to peace, wisdom, illumination and *nirvana*. Here is the truth about suffering: birth is suffering, old age, illness and death are suffering, enforced association with what one dislikes is suffering, separation from what one does like is suffering. The source of suffering is the thirst for pleasure, thirst for existence, thirst for that which is inherently impermanent. The cause of the removal of suffering is the removal of all thirst through the eradication of personal desires. Charity in all forms, knowledge and virtue are the merits that do not dissolve. It is better to do a little good to others than to conceive and carry out gigantic projects. A person may think himself perfect, but his perfection is nothing unless he spreads it out among his fellows, if he does not offer consolation to those in trouble. My doctrine is a doctrine of sympathy and compassion, which is why those who believe themselves to be steeped in earthly happiness find it difficult to follow. The Brahmin is born from the womb of a woman just as much as the untouchable to whom he bars the path to salvation. Crush your passions as an elephant crushes a hut of reeds, but know that he who thinks he can accomplish this by dwelling alone in a hermitage is mistaken. As the great ocean is pervaded solely by the flavour of salt, so is this teaching pervaded by the flavour of deliverance from suffering.

Buddha went to the capital of Magadha, Rajagrha, where the King, Bimbisara, received him kindly and erected a park outside the town where the monks could stay during the rainy season. Buddha also went back to Kapilavastu. There he consoled his father and his wife, and converted his son Rahul, now grown up to be a young man. He also converted his brother Nanda, and the skill with which he detached his brother Nanda from family life and made him a monk, became the theme of a famous Sanskrit epic by the poet Ashvaghosha.

There are many legends, particularly in the later Mahayana texts, about miracles performed by Buddha—not only the Buddha of world history, but in his form as a Bodhisattva in earlier lives. Buddha's community had its Judas, named Devadatta, who was jealous of the Buddha. He plotted with Bimbisara's wicked son, Agatashatru, to kill the Buddha by decoying him into the path of an enormous and fierce

elephant whom they had crazed with alcohol. But the animal simply knelt at the Buddha's feet, as depicted in the sculpture at the British Museum.

If we are to present the Buddha as the world-honoured one in the short span of this article, we cannot linger over Buddhist doctrine and its development and must pass over such details as are known of his personal life. We may just mention briefly on the practical side, in the oldest form of Buddhism, there are four stages of meditation. In the first, one fixes one's mind on the fact that whatever in the world seems alluring, eventually leaves us in the lurch. In the second, one enforces this sentiment by enjoying the resultant serenity. In the third stage, attachment even to this serenity is banished. In the fourth stage, the adept rises above all sense of joy, suffering or fear. He then knows that everything in the world is transient, including his own body and mind, and that he is different from it. From the standpoint of the Buddha himself, in Keats's words, 'This is all ye know and all ye need to know.' He did not encourage enquiry into the ultimate nature of the world or of the soul. All he would say was, that for one who had this knowledge, there was no further rebirth.

Buddhism began, as we have mentioned, in the eastern half of India's northern plain. Except in Sri Lanka, it never struck firm root in the south. However, in the north-west it flourished mightily for a time because it was adopted as a state religion by invading foreign war-lords of Greek and Scythian descent, who followed in the wake of Alexander. A foreigner cannot easily become a Hindu because of caste restrictions, but he and his invading armies can become Buddhists, since Buddhism rejects caste distinctions.

During the period 200 BC to 700 AD, the ancient form of Buddhism was by no means suppressed, but a new and magnificent form of Buddhism was constructed on the top of it. Not only was the Buddha himself transformed into a god in tune with Hindu *bhakti* of the time, but he was discovered to have had innumerable previous incarnations as a Bodhisattva, and these too were regarded as gods in their own right, presiding over heavens to which one had access through temple-worship and the repetition of mantras with a rosary, practices not known even to the Hindus in Buddha's day.

Now that the Buddha was a god, he and his Bodhisattvas could be represented in temples through sculpture. How beautiful are the figures of Bodhisattvas like Amitabha, Avalokitesvara, Manjushri and others, even when extracted from their proper place in temples and displayed in our western museums. The form of the sculpture is conditioned by the culture of the country in which it was carried out: Nepal, Tibet, China, Japan. Even in India itself, in the far north-west, Buddha was made to look like a Greek or like a Scythian warrior arrayed in Greek drapery. Deeper into India proper, he was represented with Indian features and with torso nude, as befitted the hotter climate. The Indian masterpieces far outshone in beauty the decadent Greek work. Near the Western coast of India, huge temples were cut out of the living rock, in which enough of the splendid frescos survive to demonstrate royal patronage and the aristocratic court life of the times. Not only the arts, but philosophy, too, shone brightly. Philosophers of every hue appeared, realist, idealist and sceptical, who battled it out with their Hindu counterparts of the Vaisheshika, Sankhya and Mimamsaka schools.

A turning-point came about 700 AD, when the love of the people for Krishna, Rama and Shiva began to outweigh devotion to the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. As a consequence, Buddhism lost royal patronage except in Bengal in the north-east, near the birth-place of the Buddha. Even to this day, interest in the Buddha is strongest in this quarter of India, and it is no accident that the University founded by Tagore not far from Calcutta has proved the greatest centre for modern Buddhist scholarship in India. The last remnants of Indian Buddhism were scattered when the Islamic invaders finally pushed as far east as Bihar and Bengal in 1193. Many Buddhist monks and laymen were slaughtered, some escaped to join their brothers in Nepal and Tibet.

Tibetans believe that it was the founder of the city of Lhasa in 629 AD who brought Buddhism to Tibet. About 100 years later, we hear of two great Indian Buddhist scholars, who lived just after Shankaracharya's day, Shantarakshita and Kamalashila, as being active in Tibet. In the piercing cold winds of the Tibetan climate, the monks could not keep to the strict ascetic rules laid down by the Buddha. About the year 1400 came a great reformer who insisted at least on

celibacy and revised the ritual. His followers wore a yellow hood and came to dominate over those who held to the old order and retained their red hoods. At that time, political power in different districts of Tibet was in the hands of senior monks called Lamas, who ruled from vast fortress-like monasteries. As the monks had not been celibate until the arrival of the order of yellow hoods, this office had become hereditary. But the reformer's nephew, who held the office of Tashi Lama, the second greatest in the land, was a strict celibate, and it was on his death that the belief arose that the Tashi Lama was a manifestation of the Bodhisattva Amitabha, and would soon reincarnate in a baby bearing recognizable signs. The more powerful Dalai Lamas began to follow a similar procedure, being regarded as manifestations of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, until the present Dalai Lama chose to emigrate rather than submit to the Chinese in 1959. Tibetan religion is easily caricatured as a mixture of prayer-wheels and primitive demonology. But it requires a heroic degree of courage and devotion to try to follow the discipline of a sub-tropical climate in an arctic climate. The Tibetan monks have preserved translations of many sutras and philosophical works of the Mahayana that have been lost in India, despite the fact that, until recent times at least, they could not work in the winter as they could not defreeze the ink.

Buddhism came to China earlier than it came to Tibet—at first in the old form, but later the Mahayana predominated. It is well-known that the fine ladies of the Roman Empire liked to array themselves in silk. Silk came by camel from China, and it was along the silk-route from Rome to China which passed through Afghanistan, that Buddhism entered China. It had a chequered history there, depending on the whims of royal patronage in different districts. The last great dynasty to adopt it were the Mongols, but they could not preserve control over such a vast country as China, and were eventually evicted. During the course of the long Ming dynasty that followed them in 1368, Buddhism faded away in face of the active hostility of Taoists and Confucians. The world owes to China the preservation through translation of many Buddhist texts, both of the old school and of Mahayana. Kumarajiva, about 400 AD and Hosien Sang, in the middle of the seventh century are two of the brightest of a whole cluster of stars in this realm.

A very different figure of importance was Bodhidharma. He is said to have been a prince from a royal family in South India, who came to the area in South China near modern Hong Kong about 620 AD. He founded the Ch'an sect, which specialized in meditation on problems set by a master, better known world-wide under its name, Zen. Philosophical speculation, study of holy texts and good works were not reckoned as essential to salvation, which came through meditation on set themes alone. Bodhidharma is represented in Japanese painting as a figure of immense power. It is said that his wisdom cannot be picked up from books or even directly from the words of a teacher. The teacher can guide and point out the way, but the work for enlightenment must be done by the pupil. No-one else can do it for him, any more than they can eat and digest his food for him.

Buddhism came to Japan via China and Korea. In China, it has hardly survived, but in Japan it is still alive today in many different forms, of which we may single out two: Zen Buddhism and worship of Amida Butsu or Bodhisattva Amitabha.

The importance of Zen Buddhism for Japan has partly been due to the fact that its discipline is not confined to monks. People with worldly careers are allowed to spend a certain time in Zen monasteries and then practise in the world what they learned in the seclusion of the monastery. In two areas, Zen Buddhism had a great effect on Japanese life: in the realms of art and military discipline. It has raised aesthetic culture to great heights. To quote a modern authority, it taught people to concentrate and to discover the presence both of themselves and of the all-embracing whole, even in the smallest objects, and created the finest works of Japanese landscape painting. On the other hand, it contributed greatly to the contempt for death and unbreakable loyalty to the feudal overlord characteristic of the Japanese military nobility. It is the harsh training of the will received from Zen masters that enabled Japanese military leaders to carry out extraordinary feats of daring, both in medieval and in modern times.

For the Zen practicant, it is not the historical person, the Buddha, who is the object of worship but the abstract Buddha-nature inherent in everything. This is in a sense a return to the Buddha's own teaching. But, as he himself saw and remarked, it can only be a discipline for an

élite few, not for mankind as a whole. Today, religion of any kind is not too fashionable. But in past times, what the ordinary worshipper has sought has often been a merciful god or goddess, who will forgive the worshipper his failings, help him with his or her grace, and conduct him to his or her heaven at death. This kind of religion was tolerated but not approved by the historical Buddha; but in northern India, Tibet, China and Japan, it eventually became the norm. He himself, most frequently in his form as a Bodhisattva before his final incarnation as *the* Buddha, was converted, against his own will, so to speak, into a god, presiding over a heaven. He himself had predicted that this was likely to happen among his followers unless they adhered very closely to his rules.

This view of how Buddhism developed in history can be substantiated from documents culled by historians and presented in handbooks of the history of religion. But if we turn to the sketches of spiritual life presented by our teacher on the basis of his two-year stay in Japan and published in his book, *Echoes of Japan*, a very different picture emerges. He found that the wisdom of Bodhidharma and temple-worship, based on faith in the compassion of Amida or Avalokiteshvara, are not really opposed, but are both emanations of the one Buddha-nature, the hidden principle of peace, present in all.

A.J.A.

MEDITATION ON OM

Ever I meditate on OM
Home of purity and holiness, the all-pervading,
Treasury of the essence of the holy teachings,
Source and support of the Vedanta,
Essence of the universe and origin of creation,
maintenance and withdrawal of the world,
Proclaimed by thousands of revealed texts,
Taintless objectification of Existence,
Knowledge and Bliss.

H.P.S

SHANTI SADAN NEWS

During the Spring term practical meditation sessions were held on Tuesday evenings and talks on the non-dual teachings were given on Thursdays. For many years the meetings have been held on Wednesday and Friday evenings and the adjustment was made because of factors that had long caused Friday evenings to be relatively less-attended. The new arrangements proved favourable all-round and the schedule of regular public meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays will continue in the coming Summer term.

At the Tuesday evening meditation sessions provision was made to allow plenty of room for those taking part to sit on cushions on the floor, together with the meditation leader, if they chose to. Care was taken to provide a setting conducive to meditation, and extra time was allocated to the practices themselves, while the introductory presentations focused on the key spiritual principles underlying meditation. The meetings were marked by close attention and full participation, to the great benefit of those taking part and the wider spiritual atmosphere.

The talks on Thursday evenings were on the essential teachings of non-duality, and the connection between this understanding and the practice of meditation was made clear. The talks considered the spiritual understanding of Self, illumination, action, knowledge, unity and reality, as well as the significance of the spiritual syllable OM, which appears in its written form on the cover of each issue of this journal. For next term a further series of talks has been planned, which will focus on the inner Yogic teaching as a most effective response to the deepest human needs.

As we go to press, it has been confirmed that throughout the Easter break Tuesday evenings will continue to be open meditation sessions, and readers of *Self-Knowledge* who are able to attend are very welcome.