

**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.

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### EVENTS FOR THE AUTUMN TERM 2013

#### Weekday evening meetings at Shanti Sadan

Meetings will be held every Tuesday and Thursday evening at 8pm from 8 Oct to 5 December 2013. The Tuesday evenings will be guided meditation sessions. On Thursday evenings there will be a series of discourses on the Yoga teachings with spiritual practices.

#### Afternoon Course

The afternoon course will be held on Sunday 20 October, 2pm - 5pm, at the Columbia Hotel, Lancaster Gate, London W2.

## SELF-KNOWLEDGE

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### SELF-LOVE

It is natural to love oneself, and this tendency goes deeper than self-preservation. But what exactly do we find lovable in ourselves? We may love our appearance, glancing with approval in the mirror. But our self-love is life-long, while our appearance changes completely.

Perhaps we love qualities we discern in our mind and conduct: generosity, cleverness, humour, courage—qualities that make us a splendid person. But no mental quality is free from alteration, and no mental quality as such can be the source of our self-love.

We may love what we have created: the books we have written, the speeches we have delivered, the paintings we have produced, the

projects we have led, the good we have done. But such self-indulgence is also fleeting, and the touch of criticism may fill us with self-doubt.

No doubt all living creatures love themselves in a certain sense. In lines of supreme empathy from Shakespeare, we are reminded that

the poor beetle, that we tread upon,  
In corporal sufferance finds a pang as great  
As when a giant dies.

Self-love is intrinsic to what we are.

But if neither our bodies nor our mental qualities are the true source of our self-love, there must be something deeper and abiding in us at the very core of our being, behind our changeful human attributes. And if this interior principle transcends change, what we are loving is not personal at all. At this level of being, what I love in myself is precisely what you love in yourself. It is the same thing!

The sage Shri Dada of Aligarh once said:

Meditation is the means by which the meditator tries to realize the presence of the object of his love in his own being. In the Upanishads Atman, the higher Self of man, is said to be the object of the highest love; it is also called bliss and in fact love and bliss are but two faces of the same coin. For this reason meditation with a view to realizing the presence of one's higher Self (Atman) in one's own intellect, is the most worthwhile attainment.

Over and above body and mind, we are spiritual beings, and the divine consciousness pervades our being as space pervades the universe. It is this divine presence that confers beauty and attraction on the things that pass. Deep down, we know there is perfection at our centre, and the idea that there is something fundamentally wrong with us goes against our private intuition: it contradicts our self-love.

But what we love within ourselves—the ever-adorable true Self—needs to be inwardly discerned as other than the body and the mind, and not separate from anyone. This understanding is first sensed in the serenity of deep reflection, hence 'meditation with a view to realizing the presence of one's higher Self in one's own intellect is the most worthwhile attainment'.

## TO POSSESS IS TO BE POSSESSED

I saw the lotuses of white, red and blue colours in full bloom in the lake Dal of Kashmir. The rays of the sun bathed them in brilliance; the breezes waved them to and fro; the swarms of bees kissed them and sang sweet songs of love. What a sight of great delight and shanti (peace)!

As my tiny boat sailed through the lotus field, I forgot the source, the cause of this spectacle of beauty and peace. In ignorance, I gave them an objective reality and forgot that there are no colours and forms except in my eyes, and no sounds except from the nerves of my ears. I forgot the sweet song of Swami Rama Tirthaji: 'O beauties of the world, your youth and charm are the shadows of my raven locks.' I wanted to possess the lotuses. How ignorant was I, alas!

I jumped out of my tiny boat. The boatman tried to restrain me in my mad career. But intoxicated with the objectivity, I pursued the blossoms. With what result? I was deep in the mud. My feet sank in the mud field, and my torso was submerged. Yet the blossoms were far off. In desperation I cried for help and forgot the lotuses. The self is the dearest object to the self.

The boatman rescued me. He said: 'I warned you against the danger, the pursuit of the lotuses. We just enjoy them from a distance and adore the Lord who is manifest in them. Allah is the greatest.'

Indeed I was wrong, and so are they who run after the beauty of the world to possess it. To try to possess wealth, nature and youth, is to be possessed by them. How strange—the insentient possessing the sentient! I cannot suppress my laughter. To possess the starry heaven, the rainbow, the roses of spring, the sailing cloud, the singing robin, the breezes whispering through the pines, is madness. Let us possess wisdom—*jnanam*—which gives us the eyes which see the Self in all and all in the Self, infinity in the finite, the heavens reflected in a dewdrop.

To love means to allow the heart to be possessed by the Supreme through learning and devotion-knowledge. Possess my heart and soul, O soul of the universe; occupy my heart, O Love.

**H.P.S.**

## From Egoism to Divinity

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TO THOSE whose spiritual eyes are open, there is one power supreme underlying this world of appearances, and it is the ultimate source of all the laws that hold our universe together. The very word ‘universe’ (‘uni’ meaning ‘one’) implies a single complete system embracing all space and time, matter and energy. But when we enter the world of man, there is a change of perspective. In our all-too-human affairs, the underlying unity is forgotten, and we focus on establishing our particular stake in the universe, often clashing with others in the process. Nonetheless, the hidden harmony is always there and can be realized as the only true experience. The knowers of ultimate Truth have awakened to this underlying spiritual unity and this experience brings inexpressible peace and complete fulfilment.

Peace and fulfilment have personal meaning, and this is the crux of the matter. For it is in the person that the great discovery is made, through acquiring the deepest kind of self-knowledge. And this self-knowledge paradoxically transcends what is personal and limited, just as pure space transcends all boundaries and enclosures. Spiritual self-knowledge confirms one’s intrinsic identity with that supreme Power which underlies all multiplicity. The realization is: ‘One Power Supreme is the only one Self in each and all, and That am I.’

These are the words of Swami Rama Tirtha, a knower of Truth who taught the spiritual Yoga in the early years of the last century. He was a universalist, and recognized that the same non-dual Truth was the essential teaching of all religions.

On one occasion, Rama Tirtha had some guests who followed the Muslim religion. His guests found it difficult to grasp the teaching that the innermost Self of man is identical with the supreme Spirit that rules the entire universe of appearances. We may share their perplexity, because the doctrine is a very subtle one. But in his explanation, Rama Tirtha shows that this view is implicit in all religions that teach the omnipotence and omnipresence of God, for God’s dwelling within man as his essence and true Self follows logically from this teaching. Here is part of their interchange.

*Question:* You say that man is God. Is it at all possible?

*Answer:* Why man alone? All that we see, feel or imagine is nothing but God.

*Question:* But how is that possible?

Rama Tirtha then reminded his guests of the saying in their own holy book: ‘God is nearer to you than the jugular vein.’ This statement of the immediacy of God has to be taken as applying to everyone and everything. ‘Therefore, according to your own Koran, you have to see God in everything, because He is in everything.’

He once again reminded his guests of the teaching that runs all through their holy book: that God is limitless, present everywhere and all-powerful. Such a view of God must abolish any idea that He is fundamentally separate from man. ‘He is therefore not at all separate from you. As such He is one with you. And when He is one with you in entirety, where is the difference between you and God?’

This characteristic teaching of the spiritual Yoga is not just a religious point of view, a matter of faith. It is subject to confirmation in our own experience. It is revealed in Self-Knowledge. Adhyatma Yoga is a walkable and well-signposted path that leads to this realization.

But if the Self of man is identical with God, which Self are we talking about? It is surely something very deep. What is meant is that the Spirit of man is the true Self, and *that* is identical with God. To realize this Truth, Swami Rama told his guests, ‘You have first to forget whatever you have learnt so far. Change your worldliness to Godliness. It means that you should sublimate your selfishness into the selflessness of Godhood.’ Elsewhere he said: ‘The spirit of religion is essentially a change of heart. It is to replace egoism by Divinity.’

In order to effect this change of heart, man does not have to do anything complicated. The solution to his spiritual problem is close at hand. The secret doctrine of the Upanishads is that the Divinity, the Godhead, already underlies human egoism as its true nature. Our higher path is to learn how to transcend selfish egoism—this preoccupation with our individuality—in order to realize the glory and freedom of the true Self that underlies it. All spiritual practices are devised in order to help us effect this transcendence—to forget our limited self and lose ourselves in the beauty, truth and purity of the infinite Self.

Our sense of 'I' may at present appear to be stubbornly entangled in our individual bodies and minds, like a graceful kite that has got itself caught in the branches of a tree. The purpose of the kite is to sail free in the sunlit air, and the purpose of man is to realize the freedom and infinitude of his spiritual Self. In practice, we feel a keen sense of identity with our passing vehicles, the body and the mind, which seem to keep us entangled in this world of limited experiences. But there are ways and means of extricating ourselves from this false and restrictive sense of identity, and of withdrawing our identity back into its true base, the infinite Spirit, the innermost Self, which is one with the divine ground of all being and intelligence, the Supreme Spirit, God.

The ego is what man refers to when he uses the word 'I'. When we speak of egoism, it can mean something excessive, as when a person not only thinks about himself all the time, but tends to believe he is the main subject of everyone else's thoughts and conversation. But more simply and universally, egoism is the natural sense of identification with an individual body and mind. The more thoughtful we become about life, the more we are likely to realize that this identity is a state of bondage and restriction. Not only do we find ourselves imprisoned in something that is bound to perish one day. If we think we are only the body and mind—only what is called a 'psycho-physical being'—then we are certainly vulnerable to 'the heartache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to', to quote the words of Hamlet.

But we may draw comfort from the higher flights of the spiritual philosophy of Yoga. This philosophy shows clearly how our sense of identification with the body, mind, intellect and individualized ego is a false identification. It is an illusory connection, set up by wrong knowledge. And this connection is dissolved by right knowledge—the realization of the essential truth that the Self of man is in essence identical with God. On the realization of this Truth, any real connection of the infinite Self with the limited and perishable body is seen to be impossible. It is the light of spiritual knowledge that will eventually dispel all our limited notions of selfhood, and effect the realization of our natural state, perfect freedom, peace, fulfilment and fearlessness.

Man has the opportunity to bring about within himself a change of heart, replacing egoism by divinity, and that divinity lies behind the

ego. Divinity unrealized is the real cause of the ego's restlessness. The ego knows that there is greatness within it, but sources it in the wrong place. The greatness belongs to the underlying spirit—which not only fills this one ego, this one individual body and mind, but fills and enlivens all egos, and is one in all. Through egoism we limit ourselves, and through realizing our divinity we free ourselves, and enter a spiritual life which is infinitely greater and more rewarding, the very Life of life.

This opening up of our experience is expressed in a poem by Swami Rama Tirtha called The Fruits of Renunciation:

When I renounced enjoyment of the flowers  
for my personal pleasure,  
The whole earth became my garden.  
When I renounced joy in taste,  
The whole world became a delicacy.  
When the eyes gave up yearning for beauty,  
Beauty displayed herself before me.  
When I ceased to desire the delights of the open air,  
The morning breeze became my own.  
When I gave up the desire for listening,  
All music and song became mine.  
When dreams of personal advantage left me,  
I myself became all beautiful dreams.  
Strange, I own nothing at all,  
I lay no claim to body or personality.  
If I have eyes, hands and feet,  
They belong to everyone;  
Yet the whole world has become my own.

Therefore our self-centredness is entirely natural and for a very good reason. It turns out to be an indirect indicator of our divinity. The ego of man, deep down, will always crave significance, for the simple reason that in its spiritual nucleus, it is infinitely significant, itself being all. But in this spiritual realization, the limited phase of the ego is transcended. Then, there can be no return to the constricted idea that our real being, our true Self or I, is imprisoned in a perishable body and mind.

Similarly we are right to love ourselves the most, because our innermost Self, our true centre, is the home of beauty, harmony and peace, and is lovable above all else. But to get this self-love right, we have to see through the limited phase of our egoity, which may at present be wrapped up in the body and the mind. To penetrate our own essence is to realize that our innermost Self is all-in-all, one in all, the supreme Spirit itself.

Emanating from this highest Truth, the meditation texts of Adhyatma Yoga are often expressed in the first person, namely 'I'.

OM I am alone the One without a second. The sun is my semblance. OM.

OM I am taintless, immovable, infinite, pure, free from old age and death. I am not the body, which is ever changing and unreal. OM

*Direct Experience of Reality, verse 28.*

With such texts, the ego sings the song of its true nature. Its limited circle widens and dissolves, and merges with the infinite Truth that underlies it.

This notion of 'I', which is first associated with egoity and personal identity, is the precious clue to the divinity that lies close behind it. By knowing the true nature of the Self, one knows all. We discover our Godhead, our divine nature, through centring our attention on this sense of 'I' within us, and withdrawing more deeply into it, with the help of a holy text, forgetting all limited ideas of who or what we are. What remains is pure existence, consciousness and bliss. In the words of Swami Rama Tirtha:

Get rid of this false notion. Realize your true Self to be the All. Rise above selfish egoism and you are happy this moment, one with the whole universe. You have no right to claim this mind or intellect to yourself and deny everything else. The wide world, the whole universe is yours. Realize that. Just regain your birthright, and all anxiety and misery ceases.

This is a challenging course, because of our rooted habits and ways of thought. But we can establish new ways of thinking, feeling and acting, that will introduce a free and spiritual dimension even in our

lives of action and communication with others. The divine Self, the supreme Spirit, is present in all experience. Man's powers of action and knowledge have their source and origin in the spirit, and not in his mere physical life. The spirit sustains the world, as its inner ruler. This is the great teaching of the Upanishads and the Gita—that the supreme spirit does not rule the world from above, but from within, just as the thread is the unseen internal support that holds together the pearl necklace. One of the names for God in the Upanishads is 'thread' or *sutra*, and Rama Tirtha calls this thread 'the subtle principle, Truth'.

If God is ever-present, man can make the transition from egoism to the ever-present divinity at any point in his daily life. This is the secret of the Yoga of action. The life of work, whether in company with others or alone, is a heaven-sent opportunity to dissolve the ego and realize Godhead. But the secret is to forget oneself in the work, to lose oneself in it, so that all selfish motivation and anxious concern for appreciation or reward, are expelled from our consciousness.

This is not the way of the world. But we are seeking something higher than the puerile and transient worldly gains and, as we shall find, if we can work in this spirit, the best possible work will always be done through us, and our daily bread will not fail us. We will not miss out on the little gains the world can offer, but we *will* miss out on the anxiety, the stress, the tension, the feverish concern with what people are thinking about us, that so often accompanies and mars our work in the world. The real work is not that which is done when all the time we are wishing we were somewhere else, or hanging on the appreciation of others. The real work is performed with happy absorption in the work for its own sake because it ought to be done, because the divine life has connected us with this particular type of labour, and for the time being this is what we are meant to be doing.

The whole point of working in this way is that our work itself will throw us, so to say, into a higher state of consciousness. Swami Rama Tirtha says: 'Work keeps us with God above the body or little self.' How is this so? Behind the curtain of egoity lies the infinitude and freedom of divinity. If we can forget our individuality in work, of whatever kind, we can rise above this ego idea, and rest our consciousness in the divine.

It is true that many people who know nothing about this higher Yoga work with utter absorption and self-forgetfulness while the work is going on. They may be said to be practising Yoga unconsciously. The real source of their joy is what percolates or comes through from the divine region above the ego, when the ego itself is forgotten. But in these worldly instances, the workers, afterwards, will most probably feel intimately connected with the results of their work, and suffer or enjoy accordingly. Thus they remain in the bondage of individuality.

In Yoga we are taught to work in this self-forgetting way *consciously* by offering our actions and their results to that Divine Power that stands within us and within all. In this way, the actions become sanctified for their own sake, and we transcend identification with them and their outcome.

When man offers his work to the supreme power, the divinity, the inner ruler, that subtle principle Truth on which all experience is threaded, he enjoys a great inner relief. The negative trends of his personality are forgotten and fall away. In other words, his inner being is purified. And the purer his internal being, the more he will become aware of the divinity behind his own egoity.

So the idea in Yoga is not to renounce work, but to renounce the selfish undercurrent of thoughts, distractions, resentments and temptations that so often accompany work and reduce its effectiveness. This is summed up in Krishna's advice to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

Renouncing all action in Me (the Divine), with thy thought resting on the Self, being free from hope, free from selfishness, devoid of fever, do thou fight (i.e. work). (3:30)

In order to work in this way, we need to develop a certain degree of self-awareness. We need to sharpen our understanding about what our mind is doing at any given moment. This kind of alertness is greatly helped by daily practice of meditation. For in meditation, we not only try to calm and spiritualize our mind. We also get to know something of the mind's way of functioning. We gain in alertness and self-knowledge, and this alertness will naturally feed into our life of action. For example, we will quickly become aware of our reactions, and then

we can intervene and correct matters by replacing tension with equanimity if necessary.

As a complementary practice, Swami Rama Tirtha recommends deliberately taking a timely pause during our life of action to consciously affirm our higher nature and to forget the body and mind. In an essay entitled 'Rest', writes:

While at work, between whiles, devote a spare interval of a moment or so to the thought that there is but one Reality, God, thy Self. As to the body, etc., you never had anything to do with it. You are simply a witness, you have nothing to do with the consequences or the result. Thus contemplating, you may close your eyes, relax your muscles and lay the body perfectly at ease, unburdening yourself of all thought. The more you succeed in taking off the burden of thought from your shoulders, the stronger you will feel.

The general principle is clear, even if we may need to adjust some of the details to suit our own circumstances. There are always such intervals in a normal working day, however brief. Many people at work arrange for themselves deliberate times to have a little snack. We also need spiritual nourishment, so we may compare our efforts to rest our mind and focus on the One Reality as taking a spiritual snack of wholesome food, that will do us great good on every occasion.

These are short but effective practices through which we can learn to rise above the ego even in the midst of daily life. Here is another such practice:

OM. For one minute, cast overboard all desire; chant OM; no attachment, no repulsion, perfect poise, and there your whole being is Light personified. OM

Or, we may spend our minute focusing on the central thought: OM. I am Light. OM.'

The feeling of self-love is quite natural to man, and can never be eradicated because it is based on the deeper truth that his inmost Self—the divinity behind the egoity—is the home of all beauty, bliss, peace and delight. While man is unenlightened about his deeper spiritual Self, his self-love gets hijacked and confined within his individual body and

mind, because that is what he thinks his self is. Wherever we feel selfhood, identity, there our love flows quite naturally. The mother's love for the baby is quite natural, because, springing from her own being, she naturally has self-feeling for the baby and therefore loves it.

The logic of this is that as our self-feeling widens, so does our love. And when our sense of Self is firmly planted in the divinity that lies close behind our egoism, we realize the infinity and underlying unity, and our love floods all. We naturally love all, because we realize our oneness with all. If we can love our little self so faithfully, we can surely love our Self in its realized and expanded nature as one with the Self of the universe.

In fact, we do not love the Self. We love *as* the Self, because the Self is Love itself. In this way, Yoga leads us to a new way of feeling as well as of acting. If we cannot immediately feel our oneness with all, at least we can turn our thoughts in that direction. This has to be done consciously through meditation on the underlying unity of all, on the sanctity of all life, by virtue of that divine *sutra* or thread running through it as the vital and enlivening factor.

At the same time, our universal vision must be a sympathetic one, seeing the good in things and ignoring what we think are the defects. Love unites, but criticism divides. The critical spirit that fixes on the faults in our fellow men, darkens our own minds and keeps us in duality and difference. It is never relieved by expression. One of Swami Rama Tirtha's mottoes was this: 'If you know anything unworthy of a friend, forget it. If you know anything pleasant about the person, tell it.' Instead of focusing on the faults of our friend or acquaintance, the best criticism is to make people feel from within what you wish to make them realize from without.

It means replacing antagonism with peace and goodwill, and seeing people differently. Instead of 'demonising' individuals or groups, we think: How would I like them to be? What is the ideal? And for a spiritual person, the ideal is summed up in the sentence from the *Isha Upanishad*: 'Cover all with God'. In covering all with God, we are covering all with what they really are in essence. And this constant God-thought, applied not just to others, but to ourselves, is the real way to render spiritual service.

The innate nature of man is divine. Any other manifestations of human nature are due to ignorance, of confounding our true infinite nature with the individualized body and mind. This notion deludes us like a hypnotic trance, and is upheld by wrong self-suggestions. The spiritual practices are undertaken to dehypnotize us and enlighten us with self-suggestions based on the highest Truth. These true suggestions enable us to extricate ourselves from this wrong identification, and to discover our authentic selfhood in the divinity that lies hidden close behind our egoism, and which is the true source of our self-love.

We are what we persistently, consciously and intelligently affirm ourselves to be. If we affirm our innate divinity, the inner darkness which appears to hide it from us at present, will be dissipated. The central method to effect this realization is that of self-affirmation of a spiritual kind. The divine Self is man's true being, and the spiritual affirmations express what we actually are on the deepest level, the eternal ground of being.

When we want to awaken a sleeping man, the best technique is to call him by his own name. His own name, above all other words and notions, has the power to penetrate the inner darkness of sleep, and cause an awakening stir of recognition. In the same way, the spiritual affirmations, which join this little word 'I' with the Divine, make their appeal to our spiritual heart and rouse the sleeping godhead within us.

From the spiritual point of view, what, then, am I?

OM. I AM THE SUN THAT NEVER SETS.  
I AM IMMORTAL, ALL-PERVASIVE AND BLISS. OM

Thus affirming and contemplating, rays from that sublime inward Sun, the divinity behind the egoism, will break through, give light and true guidance to our life, and finally lead to self-realization.

**B.D.**

## SOME VERSES QUOTED BY SWAMI RAMA TIRTHA

A pure-hearted person, even if he sits in silence, affects all others by his pious purity.

I found everyone advising others. But I rarely found anybody advising and correcting his own self

All that is apparent is God's own manifestation in the various forms and names. That is not only his creation, but his own Self is permeating all.

Had you killed and reduced to dust your carnal desires, it would have been transformed into the elixir of life. O alchemist, it cannot be called an extraordinary deed if you have transmuted mercury into gold.

The lamp of divine knowledge is forever lighted in the minds of the wise. Whenever indolence creeps into their hearts, the light of the divine knowledge keeps the darkness of ignorance away from them. The moths of carnal desire are burnt by the flame of divine knowledge. Their selfless deeds are the flames of the divine lamp. The oil of love keeps that lamp burning. Such a lamp is lighted only in the hearts of the most fortunate.

Keep your eyes on the honey, ignoring the stings of the bees, and proceed on. In treading the path of self-realization, there are many hazards and privations, but you should cross these hurdles calmly. There are hardships and sufferings in the path of spiritual pursuit to attain eternal peace and divine joy. Do not lose heart in the midst of adversities and failures. Do not relax your efforts until you have attained the objective of realizing your true Self.

I roam about listlessly like a madman full of ecstasy. I am free from fear or sorrow—I tread on the path of endless bliss and I am the sole monarch of the heaven. Time does not worry me. All bliss—all joy.

## The Eternal Wisdom

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

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THE FAME of the young ascetic, the saint Gargi, had travelled far and wide. She was a blazing light of Truth, for, by knowing the Self (Atman), she had known all that is to be known. Shri Gargi had impressed the sage Yajnavalkya with her great experience of the eternal Truth in her own being, and with her acumen in the subtleties of metaphysics. He delighted when Gargi was with him; she, on her part, looked upon the illustrious sage as Shiva Himself, incarnate on the earth. The Shruti has said: 'A knower of Brahman (the Absolute) verily is Brahman.' The greatest and highest privilege any soul can obtain is to come into touch with a God-illuminated man or woman (mahatma). The being of such a one can only be known through extreme reverence for such a person, who is like a fountain of Truth and bliss.

Access to such a mahatma lies through a negation of all worldly conventions and narrow-mindedness. According to the Shruti, the only being who can recognize a true mahatma is another who is also illumined, one of those who, through discipline (tapas), devotion, metaphysical study and meditation, have lifted up their own consciousness to the highest level of spiritual awareness. As to others, if their good merit is ripe they may have glimpses of the Truth in and through such a person; but often ignorance (avidya), ever trying to keep the universal spirit of man under a veil of limitations, intervenes and creates doubts about the personality of the divine sage. Agnostics can never know the Truth; they live a life of agonies, despair, sufferings and unfulfilled ambitions.

The saint Gargi and Shri Yajnavalkya were the closest of friends. Often she visited the holy rishi in his hermitage and brought him fresh fruit and flowers. The yogi-raj, on his part, worshipped this illumined devi, whom he pronounced to be an ornament of the universe, one whose presence decorated the starry heavens. Yet in the assembly of King Janaka there sat a pseudo-ascetic who, on seeing Gargi supporting the cause of Truth upheld by Shri Yajnavalkya, and himself filled with

petty jealousy, accused the maharishi of having a worldly relationship with her. (The Self-realized mahatma Swami Rama Tirtha has said: 'Such abuse of an illumined rishi is like a sword which will merely serve the sage as a good razor for a clean shave.')

On hearing this accusation the holy Yajnavalkya sat silent, but some of the sadhus who were present warned the accuser of the dangers to himself incurred by such abuse of the sage. The unwise man persisted in his course, until one day he suddenly fell dead in the assembly.

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It is a late afternoon in early autumn. The sky is a clear expanse of lapis-lazuli, while the earth glistens like a pavement of emeralds. Some high peaks at a short distance, rising above the green slopes, look like sentinels which guard the sacred valley. Here dwell the hermit-philosophers with their disciples and their families. A cool breeze wafts gently over the valley. A few birds are singing; they seem to repeat, 'Thou art one! Thou art one!' The flowing streams, descending from the high hills, strike the pebbles with a music which is pleasing and peace-giving. The sun is just declining behind the lofty peaks and their giant shadows cross the valley.

It is said that in the Lake Sahasrataru— the Lake of a Thousand Trees— which is about 10,000 feet above sea-level, there bloom in the season of autumn a few blue lotuses, and that their fragrance, charm and beauty are admired by the seven luminous Maharishis (the constellation of the Great Bear) coursing through the heavens. The great poet Kalidasa has spoken of them in his poem *Kumara-Sambhava*. The fragrance of these rare blue lotuses helps the blossoming of many other flowers on the slopes and in the valleys of the holy Himalayas. Similarly, the presence of one mahatma or of a colony of God-communing sages who have discarded the temporary, fire-fly glory of all worldly phenomena, influences the blossoming of God-consciousness in the hearts of those who are ready to receive such holy influences. The sages of the Himalayas state that the heaven above and the earth beneath are supported not by any physical force, but by the spiritual power generated by the purified and God-intoxicated intelligences of the great sages.

The holy Yajnavalkya, his matted locks showing some threads of silver, is walking slowly on the grass in front of his ashrama. His students are bringing in the cows from the pastures to their pens; they come bellowing and in great haste, happy to meet the calves they have left behind. The little calves too have recognized their mothers and are coming, jumping and running, their tails lifted horizontally, their necks stretched forward in eagerness.

The yogi-rajā is absorbed in contemplation, his long white robe and sweeping beard stirred by the breeze which plays around him. He looks up at the sky to see how far the day is spent. The time of the evening devotion has not yet come; smoke is rising from the hermitage kitchen and diffusing the sweet smell of fresh milk which is on the boil. His beloved wife, Katyayani, is arranging the seats for the evening meal of the brahmacharis in the large hall. She has already spread dishes, improvised from large green leaves fresh from the trees, held together with straw. There are clay pots for the drinking-water, which is brought to the dwelling of the holy rishi through specially constructed channels, from a neighbouring clear stream.

Shri Yajnavalkya, musing to himself, thinks:

'This body of mine has no more significance to me than a tree or a rose. The subject is surely different from the object, and the attributes of the one are not the attributes of the other. It has been my vehicle, my servant, and has proved itself a fit instrument for climbing to the spiritual heights. My mind, too, has helped, since I have always been careful in supervising its functions, ensuring that the principle of harmony (sattva) controls the elements of activity (rajas) and inertia (tamas) in those functions, otherwise the divine part of my personality would have remained identified with the body and the mind. A man takes care of his horse, and in its old age he pensions it off to pasture. I too have to bestow legitimate, because necessary, attention on my mind and body; yet, in spite of all such attention, they are sure to change. I now see that the body is changing rapidly.

'I have instructed my disciples; I have provided for the future maintenance of this ashrama and for the two dear ones who have served me through the long years of life with skilled service and sincere devotion. What now remains to be done? Shall I continue as a

householder? Shall I go on visiting the court of King Janaka and instructing him, his friends and fellow-students? It is a valuable activity, but it is said in the holy shastras that in old age one should formally renounce all possessions, and becoming a universal recluse (sannyasi) devote oneself to the service of the divine science (Brahmavidya).

‘When I took my vows of asceticism (brahmacharya) at the age of eight years, I announced my intention of studying the holy shastras to perfection. Before I was eighteen years old, I had finished all my secular learning and the higher knowledge. I served my holy Guru, though not to my own satisfaction, and I have some regrets regarding such service to him and to his wife, the holy mother.

‘I well remember one day when she asked me to go to the forest and bring back some tulasi leaves for the devotion chamber of my revered Teacher. (The basil plant, tulasi or tulsī, is sacred for the worshippers of Vishnu.) I started out at once; as I entered the deep shade of the forest, I saw the glimmer of the eyes of a tiger, sheltering in a shrub. I did not retrace my steps but went forward, penetrating deeper into the forest, to obtain the sacred tulasi leaves. So great was my enthusiasm and my idea of service to him, the Guru to whom I owed my “second birth” as a learned brahmana, that I passed close to the tiger and it did not attempt to molest me. But this is all history now.

‘Have I done my duty to the science of immortality (Brahmavidya), to that eternal fount of peace, that celestial stream of the knowledge of non-duality (Advaita)? I have delivered discourses, I have given my commentaries. But is it enough? Is it enough?

‘King Janaka is now enlightened. My hair is turning grey and my eyes are not as bright as they used to be. I think the time has come to renounce all. O, the joy of spiritual renunciation! Man only really enjoys what he cheerfully and willingly renounces in the interests of a great spiritual cause.

‘These household duties, my brahmana caste, my appellation of “great acharya”, after all, are all limitations. I am Atman, all-pervasive, the One-without-a-second; I am mass-blissfulness, and although nothing disturbs my inner peace, still I will keep the tradition and embrace sannyasa. This is the end of my life.’

The sun set and the birds returned to their nests. The mountain peaks

were still lit as the cows were being called by the flute of a disciple. Smoke was rising from the sacrificial pavilion where the holy fire had already been lit.

Gargi, the perfectly illumined brahmani, unsurpassed in physical beauty, spiritual eminence and intellectual vigour, came slowly towards Shri Yajnavalkya. She was not a disciple of his, only a true friend. Real friendship exists only between two illumined souls when they become like the two sides of an oyster-shell, enclosing the pearl of Self-realization.

Gargi said: ‘Namo Narayana’, (‘Salutations to the Lord in human form’—a form of greeting between yogis.) ‘O holy Yajnavalkya! Am I disturbing your contemplation, venerable mahatma? Your disciples have gathered together and are waiting for you to pour the sacred oblations of butter, sugar, honey, sesamum seed, barley and fragrant herbs on to the sacrificial fire, to feed the invisible deities. Come, holy sage and be our guide. Infuse into us, into the whole creation, new gusts of the winds of spiritual life. Reverence, reverence to you!’

The maharishi returned the greetings of his young friend. They walked together, like Knowledge and Devotion incarnate, or as the holy rivers Ganga and Yamuna flowing side by side, and thus came to the sacrificial pavilion. In the centre of this building, which had been built according to the instructions of the Veda, the fire had been lit, created by rubbing one piece of wood against another. Shri Yajnavalkya occupied a slightly raised seat on which the beloved Gargi had spread a black antelope skin. The face of the yogi-raja was lit with divine peace. He looked like the sun slowly emerging above the Himalayan peaks. His mind was at one with the cosmic mind, his soul was absorbed in contemplation of the infinite bliss; and even his body, a part of external nature, was not different from this bliss, either in substance or in quality.

What peace, what serenity pervaded the whole atmosphere! It appeared as if real peace (shanti) was being sent forth by the rays of the supreme Sun, thus permeating the universe, or as if a thousand streams, pure as crystal, were issuing from the glacier between the Badri and Kedar peaks. This sight was so memorable that hosts of invisible deities (devas) gathered there and absorbed the holy influence.

As the flames leapt high, Shri Yajnavalkya filled the wooden ladle with clarified butter and, being seated as the head priest, offered the oblation, saying:

OM. May He who shines by His own light and by whose shining the whole world shines forth, be pleased with us. Svaha!

The brahmacharis followed him with a sonorous chorus of 'Svaha!' and they also poured their oblations into the fire. The flames leapt higher and higher. For some twenty minutes, to the accompaniment of a chant from the Veda, the oblations continued to be poured, with devotion and reverence, on to the flames. Then all present sat like statues, meditating on OM, the source and symbol of ultimate Truth. As the fire slowly began to subside, the sacrificial rite came to an end.

Man surely is not a conglomeration of oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, salts and other elements. He has a mind which is much more subtle than the physical body; by its functions it can bring the stars within its range. Beyond the mind is the spirit, the one all-pervading reality, neither one nor many. From the personality of man, the influences which the higher part of his mind (buddhi) emits, ever radiate. They are the atmosphere, so to say, of the man. The good radiate goodness, which is felt by all those who come into contact with them. Thus, as the holy sage Yajnavalkya used to walk in the Himalayan valley, the trees would let loose their blossoms over him. And similarly, the chief beauty in a Sat-Sang (an assembly of yogis) is that man, by his attunement with them, imbibes the spiritual influences which emanate from the visible and invisible devotees and the knowers of Brahman (mahatmas) who are present. No-one can be blessed by the holy influences of a God-man if he clouds the sensitive part of his own personality with doubts, criticisms, conceit, or the feeling of separateness.

In the holy tradition it is said that if anybody should see a knower of Brahman in any garb whether in that of a man or woman, a monk or a householder, a king or beggar, or even someone of untidy and unconventional appearance and recognize that person as a sage, that fortunate one should straightway surrender themselves completely and without any reservations, to the holy influence of such a mahatma. It is by complete relaxation of the nerves and the mind that the channels of

receptivity to such holy influences, either of a sacred place or of a knower of God, are opened in the soul.

The few who recognized the divinity of Christ and became his disciples were indeed blessed men; they knew the science of inner and outer relaxation. Yet the eyes of many who saw that holy light treading the shores of Galilee with his sacred feet, recognized in him only a hypocrite and an audacious Essene.

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When Gargi asked her companion, the illustrious Yajnavalkya, to discourse about Brahman and the nature of the spirit of man, the great acharya answered in peaceful tones, his words like drops of nectar or golden daffodils falling from his lips:

'O Gargi, in truth the spirit sees but is not seen; hears but is not heard; perceives but is not perceived; knows but is not known. To comprehend the nature of the knowing Self, or the subject of knowledge, we should regard it as the spirit, the principle of Consciousness, called Self (Atman), by whose Light all things are lit. The essence of the subject consists in knowing. It is conscious; whereas the essence of the object consists in being known, for the object is devoid of consciousness.

'The subject cannot be anything other than the knower, and an object cannot be anything other than an object, that is, it can never be a knower. One's body, thoughts, feelings and desires are all objects of knowledge, and though closely related to it, they are not the Self. It is entirely wrong to superimpose the quality of the subject on the object, and vice versa. The subject or knower cannot itself be objectively known.

'O Gargi, how can the knower become the object of knowledge, for who can know the knower? The Self is imperishable and indestructible by nature. Then, O beloved one, how should the knower know the knower?'

*To be continued*

## MEDITATION AT SHANTI SADAN

As we make our way in life, we may find ourselves developing on the lines suggested by T S Eliot, where our minds are enriched by

Knowledge of motion, but not of stillness,  
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;  
Knowledge of words, but ignorance of the Word.

Our meditation session is an opportunity for us to taste a little stillness, savour a little silence, and to absorb words that aim to take us beyond the realm of words, into the spiritual ground and essence of our being.

Our founder, Hari Prasad Shastri, once wrote: 'In your own mind is a cosmic laboratory and a universal library. You can command it.' He was referring to the deeper knowledge, the knowledge uncovered by meditation and spiritual living—the knowledge that satisfies for ever.

Let us first settle the mind by forgetting earthly matters and, with reverence and calmness, make an interior, sincere salutation to that great and loving spiritual Power in whom we live, move and have our being.

### Breathing Practice (5 minutes)

Breathe slowly in, imagining the word 'Peace'. See the word peace written in front of you. Feel you are breathing in peace, your whole body is filled with peace. You are peace and nothing but peace. Peace is radiating from you.

### Visualization (in three stages, 2 minutes each stage)

Visualize the ocean. See it extending to the horizon and beyond in all directions. See waves rising and falling, and know that they are all the ocean, nothing but the ocean.

Next, lift your eyes to the sky. See the infinite blue sky.

Finally, concentrate on the inner light that reveals the whole experience. Focus on the light that illumines the ocean and the sky with the feeling 'I am that light'.

## Meditation on a Text (10 minutes)

OM. I AM LOVE. I AM THE OCEAN OF TRANQUIL BLISS,  
ABSOLUTELY SELF-SUFFICIENT AND SELF-ILLUMINED. OM

The subjects offered for meditation do bring peace and have power to transform the mind. They need to be welcomed and cherished with a kind of tender receptivity, so that they enter the infrastructure of the mind, and create an opening through which the fountain of spiritual peace and light may gush forth.

We end our by offering thoughts of peace and goodwill to all, and making ourselves receptive to the good influence emanating from others of like mind.

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## A PRAYER

We meet to still and purify our restless mind.  
The mind is our instrument;  
It can create bondage and also release.  
It can diffuse spiritual beauty  
And infuse the atmosphere with peace and love;  
But when uncontrolled it becomes a force destructive  
and productive of strife.  
O Lord, grant that we may train and restrain this mind  
And devote it to Thee for the good of all living beings.

H.P.S.

## The Spirit of Universality

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THERE ARE two Sanskrit words: *vyashti* and *samashti*. *Vyashti* means the individual and *samashti* means the universal. In between these we find the family, the clan or perhaps the association of those who do the same work as us, and the nation which embodies a particular set of values, a language, a law and a religion. Beyond our particular nationality, there is our humanity, our membership of mankind.

We know that there is a universal aspect to our life, but we pay it little heed. What is meant by this? There is so much we take for granted: the air we breathe, the sunshine, the sun, the stars, the moon and Milky Way. All these are only background for us, the wallpaper, as it were, of the room of our life. We cannot but admit that we belong to the human race, part of the congregation of all living beings, endowed with special abilities and powers which are only foreshadowed in other species. But we see little significance in it.

There are those who argue from our kinship with the animal kingdom that we are just animals. But this is similar to saying, on the grounds of the kinship of all life, that animals are just vegetables. Animals and vegetables have much in common, but clear differences can be observed. The same is true of the animal and human kingdoms. The bee has a wonderful dance which tells its fellows where the nectar is. Then there is the Ballet Rambert. There is a difference of kind between man and animal, not merely a difference of degree.

One specially developed feature of human life is the desire for knowledge. A cat may be curious, but only man has developed the great enterprise of testable knowledge called Science. The spirit of science is certainly universal. It pays no heed to language, nationality, age, gender. What is found to be true, in principle, is true for one and all. We cannot have a set of scientific laws which apply in Japan but not in South Africa. The advance of science has tended to dissolve the prejudices of mankind.

The eyes of many people in China have a distinctive shape. Apparently this variation only arose 20,000 years ago. Physical variations between human beings exist, but are insignificant compared

to the genetic material we all share. There is no basis in biology for the racism of Count Gobineau. He was a French diplomat of the nineteenth century who developed the theory that the aryan race was the master race. The European peoples who descended from the aryan clearly had the hegemony of the world at that time and what could be more natural than to think that they were naturally superior to others. This type of thinking, like so many false ideas and superstitions, does not stand up to scientific scrutiny.

The investigations of science have revealed the kinship of all living beings; each animal and plant is a cousin. The children of our parents' sisters and brothers are our first cousins, their children our first cousins once removed and so it expands. So when we see an elephant or a whale, we are seeing maybe a 13,000<sup>th</sup> cousin so many times removed, but a cousin for all that.

But we do not seem to feel this kinship very deeply, otherwise we would not be making such a mess of the world. It is said that even in those parts of the Pacific Ocean which are furthest from land, a cubic centimetre of water will contain particles of man-made plastic.

We think that our cousinhood with the daffodil and armadillo is too distant to mean much except as a joke. But this only reveals the way we see ourselves. A champion egotist feels that it is him against the whole world. A good family man will promote the interests of his family at the expense of others, what to say of a nationalist and his nation. Who is there who can feel all living beings as his family? Very few. But the great Yogi is described in the classical texts as *sarva-bhuta-hitah*, friendly to all beings. He knows intuitively they are his kin. Now the researches of the geneticists have proved that intuition was right. Watson and Crick deciphered the structure of DNA, which carries the voluminous data required to form the body of any living being on this earth. But this amazing discovery is not enough to change the way people feel about other living beings. To know something intellectually, as they say, is not necessarily to appreciate it fully.

To feel all beings as part of one's family is an inner achievement. To be able to empathize with all living beings as they pass through the cycle of life and death is a noble aim. To live in such a way that we do not ignore our kinship with nature is indeed worthwhile.

Dr Shastri's teaching is based on the old Upanishads and the *Bhagavad Gita*. These ancient spiritual texts hold out the possibility of enlightenment through a new self-knowledge. Man lives in a fairy world, says the Gita, deceived by the glamour of opposite sensations. What we are deceived about is what we are, and the teaching is the knowledge which will undeceive us.

There is a verse in the Upanishads which says, 'Your own Self is within all, nothing else really matters.' This is not our everyday experience of ourselves. In everyday life we conceive of ourselves as individual agents involved in particular relationships and actions. Let us describe this honestly without fault finding. We may be co-operating or competing with other individuals. We set a little limit around ourselves of what is my concern and what is not—between those things over which we have some control and those we have not. When we are not otherwise engaged, our thoughts circle round the world of me and mine, my family, my children, house, my aches and pains, hobbies, etc. Our occupations involve co-operating with others for a common end which is usually commercial. But at least we are cogs in a greater enterprise than our own individual interests. Again we may be part of a club, a mosque, a church which gathers together for its own purposes. There are many groupings of people between the individual, *vyashti*, and the universal, *samashti*.

In our parents' or grandparents' time the whole nation acted as one, fighting a war. The individual, so important to himself, was called up and sent to war. From the point of view of the state, the individual human life is expendable in self-defence. We tend to forget that it is within the power of a state to do such things. We think: 'This is my life and this is my money and I have my rights.' But you may be forced to sacrifice your life for your nation, and if the state runs out of money, it may simply take yours.

The whole contains the part. We have our individuality, our family, our associations and our nationality, but we also have our humanity. Every human being lives at all these levels. But where do we put the weight? Which level is privileged? Which is most important to us? In a pack of cards, there are four suits, and one, spades, is called trumps. Which of the levels of existence is trumps? When we are babies, the

world of the individual body is trumps. When we are older, we become more concerned with the welfare of our family or community. The point of view of a politician seldom rises above the welfare of their nation. But a few politicians become statesmen and their viewpoint encompasses the whole of humanity.

The best medicine treats the whole person, the best education produces a rounded character, the best politics pursues the welfare of the whole nation, the best economics is ecology.

These things are easy to say but our minds like division, they like the energy generated by opposition, by fights, our hearts are infested by possessiveness, by narrowness and resist expansion. Nonetheless we can see with our minds that a deep fellow feeling with all that lives is truly human. How can we develop it?

There is a verse in the *Chandogya Upanishad* which says that human beings are never satisfied under limitations. There is that within us which seeks infinity, complete fullness.

How then? The wider our hearts and the broader our minds, the more we see the fundamental mystery and wonder of things. We recover the wondering gaze of childhood. That wonder is akin to the great questions. What is this world, what lies behind the world appearance? The great teaching of this Yoga invites us to turn this question upon ourselves. Whatever that strange mystery is which lies at the root of things, surely that is within us as well. The mystery of myself is the same as the mystery which lies at the root of all.

So we make inquiry in that direction. What am I? The ordinary mind has an aversion to this question because it is more radical than any revolutionary thought. The words I, me and mine usually refer to something small, the body, my pains and pleasures, my family, my money, my retirement plans. If we are in a special position like Louis XIV one might say, 'L'état c'est moi' or 'I am the state'. 'I' can be identified with anything small or large, with *vyashti* or *samashti*.

The teaching of the Yoga is that this 'I', the universal 'I', should not be identified with anything finite by the mind, rather it should be identified with the infinite. Hence our meditation practices are intended to wean the mind from its addiction to the small circles of individuality, family, clan, occupation, nation. There is that within us which is not

satisfied or happy within any kind of prison. But it is nothing material, nor is it subject to definition. It can only be hinted at or indicated because it is not within the grasp of the ordinary mind. But once known, it is known more certainly than anything else.

How can we inquire into the nature of 'I'? We can ask ourselves, what in our experience cannot be contradicted? There is an experiencing entity, there is the witnessing element, the consciousness. Without this perceiver, there can be nothing. It is impossible to conceive of a world without a knower of that world. Dr Shastri called this knowing entity 'I am'. He said, it is not an experience, but it is the entity which cognises experience.

In the yogic philosophy 'I am' is the incontrovertible principle. I am not this body, or this mind, or these thoughts, feelings and sensations. It may sound like an introverted and selfish philosophy, but 'I am' is the same in all, the light of consciousness. But there is only one person whose consciousness is immediate to us, and that is ourselves. If we are to make deeper acquaintance with this principle on which everything depends, we have to go inwards and not outwards. We need to develop our interiority.

To quote from Dr Shastri again, 'The 'I am' is called light, because it makes the obscure mind operative and brings it from the state of potentiality into a functional and psychological condition.' As no experience is possible without 'I am', it is this persistent light which makes all experience possible.

The 'I' is spiritual experience. It is the infinite and universal. Christ, Krishna and Shri Dada—who all knew the universality of the 'I'—they abide in the 'I'.

We know about the physical self, about the social self, about the family self, about the patriotic self. The yogi's task is to understand the infinite and universal Self as the innermost subject within him.

**A.S-B.**

## Death and Immortality

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DESCARTES found that the fact of the existence of Self is self-evident and needs no proof. It is indubitable: 'I think, therefore I am.'

Kant postulates several ideas which he calls *a priori*, that is, they are not planted in the mind from outside but are natural to the mind.

'I am' is a fact and not an illusion. Some Buddhists doubt it and postulate the theory of *anatta*, self-lessness (in the sense that there is no self). But our experience contradicts it. The force which integrates the functions of the mind and gives a feeling of unity to our self is Self. He who says: 'I have no tongue,' contradicts himself. If he has no organs of speech, how can he say: 'I have no tongue'?

Our empirical experience also shows that the fact of the final death of the individual is undeniable. Man is under a constant delusion and cannot imagine the death of his body. What has cast this grand delusion? Death is as hard a fact as 'I am'. In spite of our care, the science of health-preservation, the occultism of the theosophist, the auto-suggestion of New Thought, and the claims of Christian Science, man is mortal.

Man is a thinking being. He is not an automaton. If he has to undertake a journey, he prepares for it. Even holidays are carefully planned by thoughtful people. As long as man desires a cold drink in hot weather, thinks of taking an umbrella on a rainy day, ties the laces of his shoes when he goes out, he must plan his life thoughtfully in the light of the fact of death.

But it is no use being too involved with the thought of death, like ancient Egyptians. Our main preoccupation should be life: how to live best according to the laws of nature, ethics and the spiritual laws, and how to make the best and wisest use of our physical energy, thought force and aesthetic nature. These are the most important matters for us. But we have to die one day. Yes, we have to. The inevitability of death points to two important questions, to ignore which is folly, dangerous folly.

Does death mean extinction of the flame of consciousness? It is unimaginable. It is beyond the range of experience through imagination.

No force in nature suffers annihilation. Nothing is lost when a candle is burnt out. Why should the force which is the subject of all natural forces suffer extinction?

I saw several enchanting sights in the far off Himalayas and had the sure feeling that I had been there before. What had I done in this life to warrant the company of that great spiritual light, that world of transcendental experience, that fountainhead of Truth, Beauty and Realization, Shri Swami Rama Tirtha? Nothing. It was an old tie which was renewed in this life.

The second problem in this connection is what must be our main way of life, if, as it seems, we have to leave all one day and disappear from the stage of time-space-causation. Man is partly animal and partly divine. He desires to possess the woman he loves. He forsakes the path of duty and beauty to carry out the dictates of greed, pleasure-sense, power and egoity. He tries to hide his motives. He inflicts misery on his fellow men for his material good. This is all the outcome of the beastliness in him. Yet he expects continuity of joy, and when truly in love, he sacrifices his pleasure and possessions to serve the object of his love. He often feels infinitude in his being, particularly when he is absorbed in music, poetry, the beauties of nature, and sex-love.

In moments of importance man often goes beyond himself. In spite of himself he accomplishes wonderful tasks. How is it? What force is it which tells man to be good and do good? There is no one who can be said to be dead to the good. How can we explain man's discontent with his achievements in the realm of time-space? We never say to our pleasure, to our wealth, to our love, to our study 'This is enough'. Love, Truth, Goodness seem to be inexhaustible. Our quest is endless.

Nothing but the immortality of the soul can explain this matter. Generally speaking, we seem to live on and on, even when death stares at us and the physician has abandoned all hope of our recovery. There are surely germs of the immortality of the soul inherent in our consciousness.

It is good to know the facts about nature, and to understand its laws with a view to overcome its tyranny, but a sure and profound knowledge of the nature of the mind and the soul is also essential. It is also vitally important to know the ultimate purpose of life. Every traveller knows

the goal of his journey. Why should not man know the purpose of his existence? Let us seriously think of the final accomplishments.

Then it is also essential to know of the power which conceals the main issues from us and deludes us into thinking that wealth, health, pleasure, power, name, and vanity are the only great values of life.

Every object seems to be a composition of the finite and the infinite. A blade of grass is finite. You can measure its weight, length and breadth, analyse its chemical contents and explain the cause of its colour, but you cannot count the number of its atoms and electrons, neither do you know much of its growth and its relationship with the remotest stars or the expansion of its inner life.

Man is no exception to this rule. The colour of his skin, his race, his individual habits, his likes and dislikes are known, but the life which animates him, his soul, and the peculiarities of his mind, are unknown and will remain unknown till the end of time.

Knowledge influences our conduct. The great power-lovers of the world, called conquerors, have been materialists. Attila, Napoleon, Louis XIV, Hitler, Caesar, the great Khan had no faith in the existence of God or the soul.

Death is an incontestable fact. It is inevitable. But it is the body which dies. To suppose the death of the consciousness in the body is unthinkable. Death being a fact, we must prepare for that radical change, which implies permanent separation from those whom we love, and with whom we enjoy the pleasures of art, literature, and beauty.

The first item of this plan is to know that all relationships in any form are temporary. To meet means to separate. To expect fire not to be hot is folly. Similarly, it is folly to expect that our loves and the objects of the world will be immortal. It is clear that the purpose of our life is to unfold infinity in goodness and knowledge, and not to live in the prison of love or hate, likes and dislikes. Let us love knowledge and delight in the extension of our sympathy with reason. Let us wake up to the sense of the immortality of the Self.

Dharma (the life of benevolence, harmony and inner quest) and not caprice is the true mode of life. Let us enrich our life with the practice of dharma and the light of devotion. What will you think of the wisdom of a student who falls in love with his school and wishes to continue in

it with no regard to his graduation, duty and legitimate career?

A wise man in the words of the English poet is one ‘Whose passions not his masters are; Whose soul is still prepared for death.’ The mind should daily be directed to the eternal interests. The spiritual values are the real values.

Primordial substance evolves under the direction of the all-supervising force, omniscient and omnipotent, yet compassionate and liable to be friendly to man, who is the eternal, inseparable essence—Self, matter, life, mind, intelligence and ego. The final stage in this evolution is left to the will of man. It is spiritual perfection, transcendence of matter, life, man, mind and ego, and realization of Reality.

As the flow of a stream leaps up in disorder when obstructed, so the life, mind and intelligence of man break out in distress, restlessness, caprice and folly when life is directed solely to empirical ends. Man’s chief duty is the conquest of death and the achievement of ceaseless contemplation of Beauty as Truth, ‘I am Shiva (the highest good)’.

The first and great step towards the absorption in the transcendental is logical investigation, vichara. Shri Shankara says in *Direct Experience of Reality*: ‘Without enquiry wisdom cannot be attained by any other means, even as the things of the world cannot be seen without light.’

Death is a stern reality in the empirical world. Let us solve the riddle now, today, and it is solvable.

The spirit looks not forward, nor behind;  
Here in the present, here our joy we find. (Goethe)

**Hari Prasad Shastri**

## The Bhakti Movement – Part 2

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### The Puranas

A very different expression of the Bhakti movement, which developed around the same time [during the first millennium AD], was the Puranic literature. The word *purana* means ‘ancient’, and the Puranas recorded old traditions which had accumulated outside the Vedas. Under the influence of the various sects of the Bhakti movement, they were largely recast and revised, while entire new Puranas were added.

There are eighteen major Puranas. They act as a storehouse for the traditional lore of Hinduism, recounting old ideas about the origin of the world and tales of the gods and sages; at the same time, they adapt them to give first place to their favoured deity – usually Vishnu, Shiva, or the goddess, Devi. Recited before large audiences, the Puranas, rather than the Vedas, became the real scriptures of the devotional movement.

In the Puranas we see a different and a much more orthodox face of the Bhakti movement than that presented by the Alvars, or by some of the later singer-saints of North India. The Puranas were composed in Sanskrit by Brahmins, and they combine commitment to the devotional movement with support for orthodoxy. As the Bhakti movement expanded, increasing numbers of Brahmins went over to it. Having lost much of the strength deriving from the old Vedic religion, they were now able to draw upon the surging new energies of the devotional movement. With it, the Brahmins gained a new lease of life, fashioning a synthesis between their own traditions and the new ideas. In the end, most of the leading figures in the new developments came to be drawn from their ranks. Brahmins founded temples, or even entire *sampradayas* or sects, and these remained associated with their descendants. At the present time, the great Bhakti sects are among the principal strongholds of the Brahmins.

### Ramanuja

The two traditions, that of the Alvars and that of the Brahmins who had embraced the Bhakti movement, came together during the eleventh

century in the person of Ramanuja. Ramanuja was a Brahmin from the Tamil country, who attached the highest value to the songs of the Alvars. He was also deeply learned in the Sanskrit tradition, so that he was able to argue for Bhakti positions in terms acceptable to learned circles throughout India. In this way he provided the theoretical basis upon which a large part of the Bhakti movement, not just in the South but throughout India, was to rest in future.

Ramanuja set out to construct a new model of the Vedanta, a different interpretation of the three texts on which Shankara had based his position – the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita. He had two objectives: first, to demonstrate the orthodoxy of Vaishnava devotionism; and, second, to show the superiority of devotion as a way of salvation. Subsequently, other Vaishnava teachers were to follow his example and propound still other versions of the Vedanta, each designed to support a particular devotional school. Each later system moved further away from the Upanishads and closer to the Puranas as its authority.

These efforts of Ramanuja and the later Vaishnava teachers have been influential, but the usefulness of their attempts to give the Bhakti movement an independent theoretical base is doubtful. The essence of Bhakti is that it is not theoretical. It is a way of practice, not a way of knowledge; and in it theory is always, in the end, made subservient to the practical requirements of the path. The real achievements of the Bhakti schools do not lie in the realm of theory, but in that of practice.

### **The Later Bhakti Movement**

During the last thousand years the Bhakti movement, particularly in its Vaishnava forms, has continued to flourish. The great Shri *sampradaya*, named after Vishnu's consort, the goddess Shri, is closely associated with Ramanuja. It is today the oldest of the Bhakti sects, and a pillar of strength in South India. Other traditions are centred on the major incarnations of Vishnu – Rama and Krishna. The story of the Lord Rama, which has spread from India throughout South-East Asia, is told in one of the two great epic poems of India, the *Ramayana*. The beautiful re-telling of this story in the Hindi language, composed by the poet Tulsidas in the sixteenth century, is today perhaps the most loved

and popular book in India.

At least as widespread and significant is the stream of devotion directed to Krishna, which, as we shall see, has developed in new directions. There is also an important form of the Bhakti movement directed to the formless and unknowable aspect of the Supreme Reality. This is known as Nirguna Bhakti, devotion to the unqualified Brahman, which is sometimes symbolized by, or seen in, the person of the Guru. This form of Bhakti has sometimes been able to find common ground with Muslim spirituality.

### **Krishna Gopala – the Cowherd Krishna**

Early in the sixteenth century, two of the most remarkable and charismatic of the Bhakti teachers, Vallabha (yet another South Indian), and Chaitanya (a Bengali, regarded by his followers as an incarnation of Krishna himself), came to North India, near the city of Mathura, in which Krishna is believed to have spent his childhood and youth. Here they founded new sects which carried the Bhakti movement to fresh heights of enthusiasm. The Hare Krishna movement, well known in the West, is an authentic branch of the tradition established by Chaitanya.

This new wave of devotion to Krishna centred on a different vision of him from that of the Bhagavad Gita. We have seen that in the Gita, Krishna is a noble and princely figure, standing, as does Rama, for the inner divinity of man at the centre of the great drama of life. But the Bhagavad Gita represents a relatively early stage in the Bhakti movement, and some centuries later (around the third or fourth century AD) a seemingly quite different tradition of Krishna emerges – that of Krishna Gopala, 'the Cowherd Krishna'. The magnificence and high drama of the epic literature is set aside and in its place we find a simple, rustic world. The setting now is the land of Braj, near the city of Mathura. Here is the enchanting forest of Vrindavan, through which the great river Yamuna winds on its way to join the Ganges.

Krishna is now found as a mischievous yet delightful child, growing up among the honest cow-herding folk who inhabit the villages of Braj. He takes the cows out to pasture in the forest with the other boys; steals butter, which he greatly loves, whenever he gets a chance; and occasionally, just to remind us that he is an *avatara*, deals with a

troublesome demon. Or Krishna is seen a few years later as the youthful and delightful flute-player: as *Murali-manohar*, ‘the handsome one with a flute’, he is often depicted standing beneath a sacred kadamba tree, with his flute to his lips, his legs crossed in a graceful pose, a garland of flowers round his neck. Sometimes a milk-white cow at his side affectionately licks his foot.

All of the Gopis, the beautiful dairy-maids who are the wives and daughters of the herdsman of Braj, are charmed by the divine child. At the sound of his flute, whether it be night or day, they drop whatever they are doing, leave their husbands and families, and run towards the forest. It was this Krishna, for whom what mattered most was love and who could so easily sweep aside conventions in his pursuit of it, who had inspired much of the devotion of the Alvar poets—Andal, for example, often imagines herself as one of the Gopis.

Around the ninth century, the atmosphere of devotion they had created in the South found decisive expression in the *Bhagavata Purana*, one of the last of the major Puranas, and for devotees of Krishna the most important. In the famous tenth book of this work, the story of Krishna’s childhood in the land of Braj and his love for the Gopis is recounted. Full of devotional fervour and charming detail, it has become the classical expression of devotion to Krishna.

From then on the imagery of Krishna’s love affair with the Gopis became irresistible. It swept across the whole of India, as poet after poet poured out his or her devotion to Krishna. For a thousand years the arts of Hindu India – poetry and music, drama, painting and dance – have found their greatest inspiration in this vision of love in the blessed land of Braj. The notes of Krishna’s flute drifting through the woods are the call of the divine. The butter he loves so much is devotion. The cows he tends are the bounty of nature. The lovely forest of Vrindavan is the world itself, made supremely beautiful by the divine Reality within it.

Thus the objective of Bhakti is fulfilled, and the emotional life of man in all its richness and energy is sublimated and lifted onto the plane of the spiritual life. And, as in all real love, the individual forgets himself or herself utterly and entirely: only the object of love, the divine Krishna, the Lord, the inner Self of man, remains.

S.C.

## Adventure in Self-Knowledge

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THE PROMISE of Yoga is not just inner peace but higher knowledge. This knowledge is of the true nature of the Self, and it is spiritual knowledge. It does not come to us as information, but is revealed inwardly as spiritual experience that carries with it a sense of fulfilment, completeness and finality.

There is a Sankrit proverb: ‘All feet are contained in the foot of the elephant.’ This means that the footprint of the elephant is so big that it will contain the footprints of all the other creatures. In a similar way, this divine knowledge, the deeper self-knowledge, in its completeness, contains within itself all that satisfies the soul and fulfils man’s deepest longings. Such longings include the need for peace, for expansion, for a joy unmarred by anxiety, and also our longing for freedom and infinity. As the Indian philosopher, Shankara, has written: ‘Know that to be knowledge which tranquillizes the senses.’

What is miraculous, yet true, is that this knowledge also heals the pain of love, love being the urge for eternal and unbroken union with the Beloved, so that man’s deepest urge for beauty, harmony and safety is satisfied for ever. Indeed the practice of meditation, through which we approach the divine within ourselves, has been called the method by which we discover the object of love in our own being.

This higher self-knowledge, as the *Bhagavad Gita* makes clear to us, also includes a rare and indescribable joy. ‘When the mind is freed from external objects, it finds the joy that is in the Self.’ This joy is held to be innate in the deeper self of man; it is normally missed in experience because of our preoccupation with external objects. But just as water will reach its own level and become calm if there are no disturbing forces, so there is a process to help the human mind to become calm and free from outer influences, and realize the joy that is in the Self.

Words like peace, joy, love, inner light and freedom serve as pointers and attractors to rouse people in this highest knowledge, for this special knowledge holds in itself the essence of these wished-for human fruits, yet infinitely transcends them.

Therefore self-knowledge has a specialized meaning in Yoga. The

yogi is someone who is interested, above all, in rediscovering the spiritual nature of the Self, through learning how to calm the mind and enquire within.

This one-pointed drive for self-knowledge draws into its channel man's deepest religious longings. The urge to comprehend God, the urge—as some mystics would say—to dissolve the individual consciousness in God; this urge is also embraced in the single-minded drive to get to the bottom of one's nature—to know the Self. The Sufi poet, Jamshid, wrote: 'How can he who knows not himself know God? True self-knowledge is knowledge of God.'

All great adventures begin from a base camp—from the position where we stand here and now. It is perhaps true to say that the vast majority of mankind never give a thought to self-knowledge, to questioning 'What am I?' Such an enquiry may be seen as a distraction from the pressing business of the moment. It may strike a note of inner discomfort. 'What am I?' may be something we would rather not probe. In a book written some years ago by Grace Halsall, a former aide of the American President Johnson, we find some interesting observations.

In Washington DC, I often do not see the personality, the man, but rather his costly suit or his impressive title. While working for President Johnson in the White House, I had come to know men with impressive titles and big salaries who had no awareness of themselves, no sense of their own personality. Also, I have watched one executive friend run without looking toward material goals. He once admitted, 'If I stop, I fear that I will encounter me. And I don't want to do that. I'm afraid.'

This fear of the inner enquiry is misplaced. For as a great sage of this tradition, Shri Gaudapada, has said, in the matter of self-knowledge, of digging deeper beyond appearances, people imagine fear where there is no fear. For the fact is, man will not find himself reduced by such an enquiry into self-knowledge, but he will discover shining facets of his own being quite surpassing all anticipation.

But let us return to the base camp view man has of himself—if any—when he first investigates the adventure in self-knowledge. It may be expressed as

I am the Body + I am the Mind (+ Spirit?)

Our identity, our selfhood, is plainly connected with a particular body and mind. The range of the mind infinitely transcends the limitations of the body, although the mind is affected by those limitations, and its performance usually weakens with bodily fatigue or illness. So we naturally feel we are a mixture of body and mind. By mind, let us include the whole psychic life: thought, emotion, memory, imagination, reason, will and intuition.

The word Spirit has been added with a question mark. Many people do feel there is an immortal part of them called the spirit or the soul which will survive the death of the body, but normally our understanding of this dimension is rather vague. Spiritual can simply indicate deep emotion, something that comes from the very depths of our being. Or spiritual can mean anything that is related to the religious side of life. But when analysed, it is not always clear how the spiritual can be separated from the mental, and whether it should be separated.

The Bible certainly ascribes to the spirit a unique and independent status: 'The spirit of man is the candle of God.' And there is St John's statement that God is spirit. But generally we prefer not to probe too deeply into this matter, which seems far removed from practical life. Hence the brackets and the question mark.

Now, in contrast to this everyday view of ourselves, let us look at the yogic view of our experience reduced to its most basic essentials.

#### Self + Not Self

In the whole of experience there are only two categories: Self and not-Self, and our bondage or freedom depends on realizing this Truth about the Self. A more direct way of expressing this is in terms of

#### I + Not I

where aspects of our nature first thought to be inseparable from I, turn out, on deeper examination, to be quite different from the I and not bound to it by any definite connection.

This is not just the simple break between Me and You, Me and the world. On the contrary, the adventure of self-knowledge involves a deep and guided enquiry into the meaning of the Me, and finding a distinction between Self and not-Self at the most profound level.

At the heart of the matter, we find a radical division:

Inmost Self  
Body, senses, mind

This is a courageous, even an extreme, dichotomy of experience and we need to know by what right and authority we are sanctioned to make this division, and what it really means.

To approach this question, let us look more closely at the most significant part of this division:

Self  
Mind

Again, with disarming simplicity, the most fundamental division is stated as that between Self and Mind. Here, the mind, however wonderful, is stripped of its honour of being called the self of man, and that honour is transferred to a level of our being which, in fact, transcends the mind.

When someone is a candidate to win the Nobel Prize, the award is not given lightly and may only be conferred after considering someone's contribution to new knowledge and human progress carried out over a large number of years. Many may feel they deserve the Nobel Prize, but on the highest criteria of assessment, it is found that their qualifications do not warrant such an award.

In a similar way, within the human personality, we can see that there are many competing candidates to earn the supreme award of being called the Self of man. The athletic, virile man may feel that his physical strength and bearing are the true mark of his self. The industrial tycoon may in his more successful moments feel that his business acumen defines most nearly what he is in his true nature. The artist no doubt feels his true self is being faithfully expressed through his art. A politician was chided for being outspoken. He replied: 'I will not be gagged. I am what I am.'

So there are many different aspects of our personality which promote themselves as candidates for the honour of being called 'the self', the real 'I', based on how we express ourselves in body, mind and speech. But the philosophers of ancient India applied the most stringent criteria before conferring the crown of selfhood, and they held that none of

these limited aspects of the human personality were up to the mark. For that which truly deserves the name of Self in the being of man is at the same time much greater than any personal expression and also—we may be relieved to know—much simpler. Their criterion was clear. That alone is the true Self which does not change in the past, present or future. So we now have another and clearly understandable division:

The Changeless  
The Realm of Changes

We will say: 'I cannot see such a thing in myself. Is it darkness, is it nonentity?' First, this innermost Self is too deep to be seen. In fact, anything that is seen, whether internally or externally, is by that very fact, not the Self.

Secondly, this innermost Self is not darkness or nonentity. It is the ultimate light of awareness which is aware from the inside of all the changes in the mind. It is also the ultimate light of revelation, which reveals the inner world of the mind and makes it consciously known by us. The Self of man is the only true and stable entity.

The contrast between the true Self and the not-Self can thus be shown as the division between:

The Changeless Conscious Light—The Revealer  
The lit and revealed world of the Mind,  
and, through the Mind, of outer experience

Therefore, in the Yoga philosophy, the ultimate light of experience is an inner one, and it is the true Self of man.

To share this insight, we need to be willing to step back from the fast-changing attractions that keep us on the run, and to seek the eternal and changeless in our own being—and to know how to seek it. It needs the vivid recognition that all experience, whether internal in the mind or external in the body and the world, is passing, and that if we build the deepest hopes of our soul on achieving something permanent and ever agreeable, in this realm of change, then we are sending an invitation to disappointment.

On the other hand, if we can lift our hopes away from the transient, and can strive for insight into the eternal spirit—the deepest Self present

in the innermost chamber of our personality—we will gain that finality and fulfilment that so many poets, philosophers and scientists have sought in vain through keeping their gaze fixed on changing phenomena.

Man's religious quest will in the end involve a cognitive swivel in which he comes to discover that his innermost Self is the true object of his love and quest.

The sages of the Upanishads were practical and methodical in their approach to the transcendental experience. They thought in terms of gaining a definite and liberating insight as a result of their dedicated quest for higher knowledge. They called this insight a 'fruit', *phala* in Sanskrit, and this fruit can be likened to what we in the West call religious salvation. A philosophical enquiry that did not promise a definite *phala* or fruit did not, for that very reason, qualify as a true philosophy, worthy of man's time and attention. For such spiritual adventurers, there is no such thing as the sentiment: 'Better to journey hopefully than to arrive.' On the contrary, Shankara's *Direct Experience of Reality*, begins:

The purpose of this book is the achievement of liberation. Good people must take pains to reflect on its contents again and again.

Thus a fruit is clearly stated—Liberation—and also a demand. The demand says, implicitly, take the teachings seriously and they will work for you personally. Give them time. Give them consideration. Try to go deeper into them. In his introduction to this work, Dr Shastri emphasizes the depth of the teachings, and hence the need for serious and persistent reflection, until their meaning is clear. The teachings may have a brilliant and striking simplicity, but they are also very deep—as deep as we are.

Let us not think that science will provide all the answers to our human problems. Science deals with the objective world, whether its field of study can be seen by the naked eye, or has to be inferred from signals registering on sophisticated instruments of analysis. But science can throw no light at all on the true nature of the experimenter, who will remain unfulfilled and thirsting for light as long as his or her own true spiritual Self remains unrealized.

This sense of unfulfilment is borne out in the Introduction to Stephen Hawking's book, *The Universe in a Nutshell*.

Are we any closer to our goal? ... we have advanced a long way but it is an ongoing journey still and the end is not in sight. According to the old saying, it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive ... If we reached the end of the line, the human spirit would shrivel and die.

How different is the yogic view, which aims at practical, all-fulfilling knowledge that can be confirmed by anyone who follows the path to its end, and which leads to the conviction: 'I have known all that was to be known'.

Let us now recapitulate. There is Self and there is not-Self. To know the spiritual nature of the innermost Self as one's own Self is to be enlightened. We found that there are some striking differences between the Self and the not-Self which may make us wonder how the two could come together at all in order to make human experience what it is. Here are some of the differences.

*Subject and Object.* The Self is the ultimate subjective pole of experience. There is an old verse Sanskrit philosophical verse:

The form is perceived and the eye is its perceiver. The eye is perceived and the mind is its perceiver. The mind with its changes is perceived and the Witness (Self) is its perceiver. But the Witness is not perceived by any other.

If we want to get a sense of this insight, we are invited to sit quiet, relaxed yet inwardly alert, and to become aware of the movements of thought and emotion that take place in our mind. We need to be calm and objective about this, seeing the inner traffic of ideas and memories without being tempted to hitch a lift from them, so to speak, and allow them to pull us away from our position of calm, objective observation.

When doing this practice of inward observation, we may, for instance, think of ourselves as being like someone who is impersonally conducting a survey of some outer phenomena—say, noting down the details of passing cars on a quiet country road. We simply watch the passing thoughts and feelings, knowing well that they are internal passers-by, thoughts that simply appear for a second or two, and then vanish without trace as they are quietly replaced by other thoughts. If

we give this practice our serious application for ten minutes each day, we will very soon find ourselves thinking consciously. That is, instead of our thoughts and feelings driving us along unnoticed and unmanaged, we will be able to see just what is happening in our own mind, and then we can learn to change things if necessary.

*Spirit and Matter* Another way of recognizing this great divide in the inner being of man is to view it in terms of spirit and matter. The true Self is spiritual. This spiritual dimension of our being is not limited, tainted or affected by material changes that happen in time and space. The spirit is immortal and transcendent. It is infinite. It is one in all. Those who have realized the true Self, the spiritual Self, report no difference, no limitation, in experience. The purpose of the scriptures of Yoga is to awaken man to the divinity of his innermost Self and its identity with the supreme spiritual force in which the universe appears.

The rest of man's being is classed as material. The material does not comprise simply the blood, bones and tissues of our body. The mental phenomena are also considered to be a subtle form of matter. There is a loose analogy with the life within a computer. The hardware has a definite form, weight, position on our desk or on our lap, and this weighty, hard physical thing can be compared to our physical bodies. But this is just the outer envelope of the real life of the computer. It is just a means, a casing; for the *raison d'être* of the computer is supplied by the software, the programs and the data, and this is a presentation of subtle events and changes that take place at micro level. This subtler, almost non-physical aspect may correspond to the mind, with its altogether subtler sphere of operation and lightning changes.

More fundamental and very different from both the software and hardware is the mysterious force of electricity, which, though domesticated in our home or office environment, transcends any individual machine, and is ultimately a cosmic force which is still not completely understood by the human mind. And this unlimited and subtlest of forces may be compared to the Spirit—the spirit of man and the spirit behind the Universe.

*Self is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, not-Self is name, form and action.* Now we come to another division expressed in a way that promises freedom and wider horizons. Each of us feels we exist. But

what is this root feeling or intuitive sense of existence? It seems to be elusive and to transcend definite specification.

Whether we are a baby expressing raw and primitive wants, or a boy of eight absorbed in football, or a teenager intent on sharing the latest hit song with the neighbours, or an ambitious young man trying to gain recognition and security through worldly occupation—all these phases may not seem to have much in common. Our thoughts, feelings and body at each stage are very different.

Yet all through there is a subtle thread of identity, in the form of 'I am'. One way of stating the nature of this thread is to call it the thread of existence. It can also be called selfhood or selfness. The yogis found in their adventure in self-knowledge that this thread of existence—of 'I am'—could not be separated from another equally fundamental feature of experience. This is the equally subtle feeling: 'I know—I am conscious.'

This is an intuitive sense of our experience being lit by a personal illuminating light of consciousness that allows us to know anything at all, however basic. And this light also has its source in the nature of the Self. Therefore the yogis called the true Self of man: Existence and Consciousness.

The spiritual enquirers of the East took note of another basic fact of human nature: that human beings are constantly seeking to feel better—in other words, to be happy. This feature is central to our experience, and not accidental or superficial. This constant sway towards happiness also points to something fundamental about man's Self: the source of our drive to happiness is the true and pure bliss that is the nature of the Self. As one Upanishad declares: 'Who indeed could breathe in, or who indeed could breathe out, if this bliss be not there within the heart?'

And so we are given this profound threefold pointer: the true nature of the Self of man is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. These are not three different qualities: existence, when fully revealed, is realized as consciousness and bliss, and so on.

In contrast, the realm of man's body and mind, as well as the outer realm generally, is summed up in the phrase 'name, form and action'. It is rooted in the realm of change, where all things, when analysed, can

be seen to be undergoing transformation at every second, and even the stable and developed forms that we see around us are, in the long term, hardly more durable than a dewdrop.

True self-knowledge is knowledge of God. Self is the innermost light of awareness and being that transcends the individual mind, yet is the very same changeless reality that is the single power behind all minds. Therefore, it is called the Self of all. The philosophy of Yoga initiates us in the idea that there is a level of our being which is impersonal, or rather, supra-personal. The aim is not to discover something we can call 'My truth' but to know 'the Spiritual Truth'.

On our spiritual journey, we rise to this understanding after first softening the heart through love and worship offered to the Divine as it confronts us in personal and approachable forms, such as the great incarnations and holy men whose presence has blessed the world.

Ultimately, in the Upanishads, we are guided to more abstract conceptions, leading to the realization as Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute. Note the word 'Absolute'. It denotes completeness, wholeness, universality, with nothing exterior to it, and no real divisions or gradations within it.

The innermost Self man, as Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, is declared to be the same principle as the Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute that reveals and pervades the whole cosmos. This, we are taught, is the true nature of experience, beyond personality, beyond argument and conflict, and also beyond the range of mind and speech to adequately convey its glory, completeness and finality. The purpose of the practical path of Adhyatma Yoga is to create the inner conditions of peace and spiritual enquiry that will enable us to confirm this identity in our own experience.

**A.H.C.**

## KARMA YOGA

*From a lecture by Hari Prasad Shastri given on May 19<sup>th</sup> 1943*

Karma Yoga means that our action in general should be of such a nature that we live, not for an egoistic end, neither for an altruistic end, but we live as instruments of the divine will. There are many wheels in a watch, but they all move according to the will of the maker of the watch. There are in man hundreds of elements, and man is living according to Karma Yoga, the Yoga of action, when he fulfils his destiny as a son of light, of God, working in accordance with His scheme of evolution.

According to the Sankhya philosophy, nature or Prakriti exists not to bind man but to free him. It is only in the complete freedom from his passions and emotions, from his identity with not-self, from his ego and mind, that he is able to recognize his real nature and fulfil the purpose of life. Who says that Maya binds man or that nature is a binding force? In the constitution of man there are two elements. One is the spirit and the other is nescience or ignorance of his divine origin and divine nature. Ignorance or avidya is insufficiency of the spiritual knowledge and vision, which distorts by means of a systematic pride, a kind of myopia in the spiritual eye of man, that he regards 'this is I' and 'this is mine'.

Confucius has said, 'There are no friends and no foes. All are teachers.' The whole of nature tends to teach man the way to God and if he recognizes it, he fulfils his purpose in life. If not, his education is wrong, he does not know what is dark and what is light. Man has to be wise and to act according to wisdom.

What is the wise code of conduct? It is not the clever code of conduct that matters. The Persians have a saying: 'The crow is the wisest of birds, yet it delights in filth.' The swan, on the contrary, which is not considered very clever, lives on water and enjoys freedom. We must not live like a crow but like a swan. It is traditionally stated that if water and milk are mixed together and poured in a bowl, the swan will suck out only the milk and leave the water behind.

The lotus is born in mud and water, but if the water rises two feet,

the lotus rises two feet and a few inches. Water never touches it; mud, though its parent, has no influence on it. This is Karma Yoga. Under the influence of it we can live in society in a way that society may not influence us and we live according to the divine way.

An ordinary man lives to satisfy his instinctive appetites, and if he is thwarted, he becomes your enemy. But a wise man is not at all concerned with appetites; he asks always whether any action he undertakes will bring him closer and closer to divine identity. Man is a spring in the vast machinery of the cosmos and that machinery is a manifestation of his Divine Father, the Father in Heaven. Let him live in such a way that he fulfils the purpose for which he is born.

Let a man find out his duty. A man owes his duty to his parents. The first duty of a karma yogi is to love and respect his parents, irrespective of what they are. The very foundation of Karma Yoga is filial affection. Prayer means love, and for the sake of his parents who are aged, let a man extend his sympathies to all who are aged.

The second duty that a man owes, is to the society in which he is born and in which he lives. Duty is not that which is imposed from without. Duty is that which is imposed on man by divine revelation and by the recognition of the law of ethics in his own being. Blessed are those who have a spiritual friend and seek his advice when they do not know what is their duty in a certain matter. Duty means unselfish service to all.

The third duty of a karma yogi is to Him from whom the universe proceeds, in whom it stays and to whom it finally returns. A man may perform his duty to society, but if he has not performed his duty to Him, he will have to return again and again.

The highest duty of man is to find in his own nature the Lord of the universe, and that can be done by righteous conduct in society. Any duty which is performed by man because it is ordained by God can be a great prayer and means of communion with God. It is our duty to be compassionate, kind, devout, and prayerful and to remember the Lord God all the time as our Father, our source, our all-in-all, and for Whose sake we treat everybody with compassion, justice and truth.

## SHANTI SADAN NEWS

Dr Shastri's *Teachings from the Bhagavad Gita* has just been reprinted in a new and improved format. When the book was introduced in 1935, it was 'Dedicated to all Eastern and Western students of the spiritual philosophy which confers eternal peace and freedom'. Dr Shastri's translation, with occasional comment, focuses on the great practical teachings which establish the Gita as the supreme text for the spiritual Yoga, with its thorough exposition of the yogas of action, meditation and devotion, leading to the yoga of knowledge. In his rendering of one of the final verses, he writes: 'This is soul-uplifting Truth. It surely (though often slowly) edifies the soul. Those who hear this great classic with faith, in course of time obtain perfect freedom. It does destroy the delusions of the mind.' There is currently a postage-free offer world-wide, as shown on the pamphlet that accompanies this mailing of the journal.

Two of Shanti Sadan's publications are now available as ebooks. *Meditation—Its Theory and Practice* and *The Power Behind the Mind* can now be obtained for immediate download from the Shanti Sadan website, in a choice of formats suitable for all major e-readers and reading apps. More ebooks will be coming soon.

During the summer break Shanti Sadan has remained open to visitors on Tuesday evenings for the regular meditation sessions. The main practices (breathing, visualization and meditation on a text) have been changed every 3-4 weeks, and one of the sets is in this issue. The sessions have been well attended throughout. In October a new term of talks begins on Thursday evenings with a wide range of subjects related to the traditional non-dual teachings. The Tuesday meditation sessions will continue and the Thursday evening meetings will also include some spiritual practices.

### **Autumn 2013 Special Course Sunday 20 October 2013 2-5pm**

Columbia Hotel, 95 Lancaster Gate, London W2 3NS

Talk 1 *Life is Progress to Enlightenment*

First Meditation Practice

Talk 2 *Creating Inner Harmony*

Second Meditation Practice

Talk 3 *True Knowledge is Self-Knowledge*