

SELF-KNOWLEDGE is the official publication of Shanti Sadan, the Centre of Adhyatma Yoga in the West.

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ADHYATMA YOGA

The highest spiritual wisdom experienced by the Seers of Truth in ancient times has been passed down to the present day through an unbroken line of traditional teachers. Its metaphysical side establishes, by reasoning, a strictly non-dualistic explanation of the universe; its practical side gives clear guidance as to how man should act and the means whereby the purpose of life may be fulfilled. The essentials of the teaching are:

1. That God alone is real, and all else is unreal (transient).
2. That the Self of man in essence is identical with God.
3. That the purpose of life is conscious realization of this identity and that it can be achieved while actively engaged in the duties of life.
4. That it gives unbroken peace, poise and bliss, and the ability to impart these to others.

Adhyatma Yoga was introduced into Britain in 1929 by the late Hari Prasad Shastri, at the wish of his Teacher, the spiritually enlightened Saint, Shri Dada of Aligarh. The centre is at Shanti Sadan, 29 Chepstow Villas, London W11 3DR, where the teachings are given in the traditional way.

EVENTS FOR THE SUMMER TERM 2013

Weekday evening meetings at Shanti Sadan

Meetings will be held every Tuesday and Thursday evening at 8pm from 30 April to 27 June 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.

SUMMER 2013 Afternoon Course

The afternoon course will be held on Sunday 2 June, 2pm - 5pm, at the Columbia Hotel, Lancaster Gate, London W2. Please see the inside back cover for details.

All events organised by Shanti Sadan are free of charge, and there is no need to book in advance.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

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THE GREATEST RIDDLE

Swami Rama Tirtha had a playful sense of humour, and his notebooks are sprinkled with sayings that prompt a smile and make us think. One of them goes: 'What is the greatest riddle?' 'Life—because we all have to give it up.' The real issue is our attachment to life and the sense of permanence that settles on us, even though we know our stay in this world will come to an end.

Our love of life centres on our body and mind. Everyone can understand the force of Christ's saying: 'There is no greater love than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends.' Our own mind and its range of attitudes becomes an object of our dearest love. Our innate feeling is that we are always right, though we may be willing to compromise. This deep attachment to our living form and to the mental garden we have cultivated, carries with it a sense of ongoing life with no deadline.

This sense of permanence and personal perfection is not wholly delusive, and the Yoga of Self-Knowledge, drawing on the insights of the Vedanta philosophy, tracks the source of our intuitive confidence in our immortality. In one of the most approachable Upanishads, the *Katha*, the question is raised: ‘Is there an immortal Self or not?’ The Teacher tries to divert his questioner from such a pregnant enquiry, in order to test his sincerity and perseverance. Finding the pupil determined, he discloses the vital instruction.

The immortal Self is neither the body nor the mind, but the unimaginably subtle spiritual principle that underlies both. It enlivens all individual beings, but itself transcends individuality, being one in all. It is omnipresent, ‘smaller than the smallest thing, greater than the greatest’. To know it is to know the essence of all. ‘Know thyself’ in this profound way, and all uncertainties will dissolve in the light of an illumined understanding.

The search has to be initiated in what is closest to us: the mind. But first the mind must be made searchable. If the outer life is dominant, our inward gaze will only reveal objects and movement. If the meditative culture of stilling and emptying the mind is pursued, our search will deepen and there will be signs of the proximity of That ‘which rules the mind from within, whom the mind does not know’.

The *Katha Upanishad* tells of higher phases of the inner life which can infiltrate and rule the lower. The mind that is tuned to the sense world can be filled and controlled by the higher faculty of the spiritualized intellect-will, *buddhi*. *Buddhi* in turn can step beyond its individualized landscape, and merge with the whole of which it is a part—the universal intelligence. And all experience, empirical and spiritual, has ultimately to merge in ‘the Self of Peace’, the ultimate.

It turns out that the unimaginably subtle spiritual principle equates to that in us which is most obvious, but which defies intellectual analysis. It is our consciousness and our being—two ways of viewing our own fundamental nature. The riddle can be solved by following the guidance of one who has realized the universal nature of the Self; when taught by such a one to a qualified seeker, says the *Katha*, ‘there is no further cogitation with regard to it’, because the certainty in the teacher awakens the certainty in the hearer.

The Bridge Leading to God-Consciousness

There are mighty powers hidden behind the mind, but they will not come into focus or operation until the mind has been controlled, stilled and directed towards the Self within. Meditation leads to the removal of the barrier put up by the undisciplined mind and allows the supra-mental consciousness to function. When this takes place, the aspirant realizes that he is already divine in essence, and that there is in fact no impassable gulf fixed between himself and the supreme Reality.

Yoga Handbook

THE SUPREME WISDOM is to know that there never has been a gulf between man and God, or Brahman, and that this Lord is the very self of the individual when rightly understood. There seems to be a gulf, and the poet Milton has referred to that ‘distance immeasurable where God abides’—in other words, very far away from this human realm. But this is not the truth, for the spiritual reality is nearer than the nearest, closer to us even than our mind.

The spiritual path is the means that will free us from this false idea of the remoteness of the Divine, and lead us to realize that our own true nature is the treasure we are seeking. This process is purely subjective. It is a development that takes place within us, in the realm of the mind. It involves cultivating our mind in such a way that we learn to rest in the peace of the spirit, our true Self, what the *Bhagavad Gita* calls being ‘steady minded, undeluded, resting in Brahman’.

This truth is beautifully conveyed to us in many ways in the Gita, and this article will draw on some of the riches to be found in the ninth chapter. The pupil, Prince Arjuna, has already entered the path that leads to God-consciousness, and his readiness for higher teachings is indicated by the way his teacher, the Lord Krishna, addresses him: ‘To you who do not cavil...’ The word ‘cavil’ means making combative or frivolous objections, thus undermining the seriousness of the interchange between teacher and pupil. The word used in the Sanskrit verse, *anasuya* has a stronger meaning, namely freedom from spite or envy.

This freedom from these lower tendencies, which are often concealed within the human heart, means that Arjuna has purified his

mind to a certain degree. Now he trusts Krishna completely and is hungry for the great truth he is unfolding. He knows that whatever Krishna tells him is nourishment for his soul and will help his advance along the bridge leading to illumination.

What are some of the key revelations which Arjuna has already received from Krishna, and which have roused him to a new understanding? First, he has been told of the immortality of the true Self, his own Self and the Self of everyone else. The spiritual Self is supreme and divine, infinite and perfect, while the world of sense-experience is fleeting, transitory and not completely real.

Arjuna has understood that he is more than the body and the mind. He now has a partial idea of a deeper Self and knows that direct knowledge of this Self is enlightenment. But he is aware that there is a gap between his present experience and the liberated experience of the sages, who know themselves in spirit and in truth.

What is it that prevents us from enjoying the divine experience? It all depends on the condition of our mind. The Gita throws great light on the nature of our mind: its range, potentialities and limitations. There is a lower mind, restless, agitated, hard to control and familiar to us all. There is also a higher mind, the home of enlightened reason and right judgement. This higher mind is the bridge to God-consciousness, for in its deeper aspect, it is the abode of higher spiritual faculties of insight and wisdom. Through our practice of the spiritual Yoga, these faculties awaken and will enable us to realize directly the peace and light of the Spirit, our true Self. Plato was referring to this higher potentiality when he wrote: 'Every man has a faculty better worth saving than a thousand eyes, because it is our means of knowing the Truth.'

How may we elicit this supreme potentiality that is sleeping, so to say, in our soul? Train the mind in self-control, goodwill and harmony. Give it spiritual food, in the form of liberating ideas, thoughts that affirm the presence of our innate divinity, and have the power to pierce the veils that hide it. Here is such a thought from Swami Rama Tirtha:

OM. WITH A MIND AT PEACE, AND A HEART GOING OUT IN LOVE TO ALL, GO INTO THE QUIET OF YOUR OWN INTERIOR SELF. OM

Let us dwell meditatively on these words for a few minutes.

The Gita itself is a guide on our path leading to God-Consciousness. It is permeated by the revelation that God is all-in-all. When we hold a very fine porcelain cup up to the light, we will notice that the holding fingers are discernible through the cup. In the same way, if we hold the *Bhagavad Gita* verses in the receptacle of our serene intelligence, we will sense something deeper through the words. We will gain a sure sense of the divine presence. The essential teaching is always that this 'God' or Divine Reality, is not separate from or other than the innermost Self of man.

When a light doesn't work, the first step is to check the electrical connections, and very often, things are put right if we simply restore the current. Our spiritual well-being, our inner illumination, also depends on keeping our connection with the Lord, the source of all light. How may we do this? Through our memory and attention. Whether the mind is busy with affairs, or at leisure, whether it is heavy with worries, or light with peace, its main function is to form this connection with the Lord within.

In reality, there is never a break in the connection. Our mind is already permeated with the divine life and the divine light. Our life, in its essence, *is* the divine life. Our light—the light of our consciousness—is the divine consciousness. But this eternal connectedness, which is in fact, *identity*, is covered by a kind of not-knowing. We imagine that this ever-changing world is the only reality, and this conviction leads to fear and tension, sadness and confusion.

The Gita reaches out to us in our state of tension and uncertainty, in our condition of not-knowing. Just as Jesus said: 'Come unto Me all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' the Lord in the Gita, Shri Krishna, says: 'Take refuge in Me with all thy being. I will liberate you from all bondage. Grieve not.' It is the same Lord, and is in fact the voice of our higher Self. But while we are in the darkness of not-knowing, we need a helping hand, to guide us to the light, so to say.

We connect consciously with the Force behind all forces, through our attention, concentration and memory. Like Jesus, the Gita says, in effect: 'Come and see. The Way is open to you. Remember Me with love and you will assuredly establish a direct link with my inner being.'

This word 'Me' has great beauty and meaning in the Gita. In the early part of this classic, the teachings are more impersonal. As in the Upanishads, God is spoken of as that which is really beyond the power of words to express, so he is called 'That'.

With their consciousness in That, intent on That, with That for their supreme Goal, their Self being That, they go never again to return, their sins shaken off by means of wisdom.

He is revealed as the true Self, that in us which was not born when our body was born, and will not die when the body goes. Man's true Self is ever 'perfect in God' and is the only reality in our experience.

But we need a bridge to this insight, and that bridge is our connection with the Lord dressed in some qualities that we can imagine. Such qualities are supreme beauty, grandeur, mercy, wisdom, infinite being and consciousness—or in the physical form of one of his incarnations, like Rama, Krishna or Christ.

It is easier to connect in this way, because such an entity can be conceived in our mind, whereas the Lord in his ultimate nature is transcendent. In other words, we need a focus. When we hold such a focus in our mind, its supreme purity will slowly transfuse our inner life, and we will know that the source of this focus is our own true Self.

Therefore, to lead us along this bridge out of darkness into light, Krishna constantly speaks of Me. But this 'Me', in the context of the Gita, is meant to be the supreme Lord, above form, even above the special form of a divine incarnation. This 'Me' is the 'Me', so to speak, of the Universal Spirit. Krishna indicates this when he tells Arjuna:

Fools disregard Me, clad in human form, not knowing My higher being as the great Lord of beings.

The words of Krishna are meant to be taken as the expression of the Absolute itself.

Another point that lies behind this teaching is that we too, who are clad in human form, disregard our own higher being, which is one with the Lord. In the *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus, referring to the supreme truth that is at the core of our fragile and transient human life, speaks of 'this great wealth dwelling in this poverty'. The great wealth is the spirit of

man. The poverty is the mortal frame and the mercurial mind that we inhabit. But the wealth is there, and it is our true Self. In awakening to the true nature of Krishna or of Jesus, we are verily awakening to the true nature of our Self.

In the ninth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* we find a teaching that is bound to stretch our powers of understanding, because it gets to the root of the entire world experience, and its relationship to the divine. This chapter is known as the Sovereign Wisdom and Secret. It has been said that no great work of art, still less a holy text, has its meaning written on its forehead. There is always a depth that can only be fathomed, if at all, through our faculty of contemplation, of deep meditation. Three verses unfold this sovereign wisdom:

By Me all this world is pervaded, my form unmanifested. All beings dwell in Me, and I do not dwell in them.

Nor do those beings dwell in Me. Behold my Divine Yoga! Sustaining all the beings but not dwelling in them, is my Self, the cause of beings.

As the mighty wind, moving everywhere, rests ever in the akasha (space), you should know that all beings rest in Me.

The Lord Krishna makes a declaration of the divinity behind the universe which seems at first paradoxical. We are told that the universe is pervaded by the divine presence. 'By Me all this world is pervaded.' The world is filled with the glory of God, so to say. He is the essence of all things, the inner ruler of all, the soul of the universe.

But then the Lord describes his form as unmanifested: 'my form unmanifested', which means that it is not perceivable by our senses. We cannot know it as an object in the normal way. And yet the universe depends on this invisible force. So what is visible and tangible depends on that which is invisible and intangible. What is manifest depends on that which is apparently hidden.

Now if the world is interpenetrated by the divine presence, if it is in some sense, charged with the grandeur of God, filled with divinity, will not the divine presence be tainted by its contact with the world? Will not this divine force be the cause, not only of the beauty and harmony of the universe, but also of the imperfections and sufferings that we see all around us—of man's inhumanity to man?

The answer is: the spiritual power is not at all tainted by the imperfections and sufferings of life. As the Lord says: 'All beings dwell in Me, and I do not dwell in them.' The Lord in his true nature is transcendent. This is because Brahman is the basic reality of the universe, what truly *is*, and the worldly objects, including our body and mind, are within an ever-changing stream of experience which is not absolutely real. It is the product of what is called the Divine Maya, the magical power of the Lord. It is a web of names and forms, ever in motion, and manifesting as if on a cosmic scale. But there is no means through which these appearances, these beings, can dwell in the Lord in any real sense, any more than a mirage river can wet the desert sand. And so the Lord says: 'Nor do these beings dwell in Me.'

It seems a strange situation, but something of the process occurs in our own psychology every day when we enter the state called dreaming. Every night do you not project a dream universe? In your dream, all the landscapes you visit, the cities, the people, dwell in you and nowhere else. You even project a body and mind in the dream and you use it in your dream adventures.

Now if you had transcendental insight within the dream, you also would have the right to declare: 'By me all this dream world is pervaded...' And when we say 'by me' as the supporter and creator of the entire dream, including our dream personality, it is our 'me', our Self, in a different sense. It is a wider and subtler 'me'—in the sense of our consciousness and our existence, that provide the ground and apparent reality of the dream. It is an invisible 'me'. So we can say: 'By me all this (dream) world is pervaded, my form unmanifested.' This is what supports the dream while it lasts.

The universe you project and pervade in your dream cannot be called real. It changes every moment and vanishes on awakening. It does not really dwell in you, except as a kind of appearance. It is in you, and yet it is not in you. And you are not really involved in the dream experiences, because that whole realm dissolves as an unreality when you wake up.

There is a similar situation being revealed in the Gita verses. The world is a kind of magical display, seemingly real while we are identified with it, like the seeming reality of the dream. But when we wake up, where has it fled? What always remains is our true being and consciousness.

The Lord pervades the world, as our consciousness pervades the

dream. But the world is ultimately illusory, and no illusion can really touch the reality. So the world doesn't really dwell in the Lord, nor does he dwell in the world.

If there is no divine Lord, there would be no world, for He is its cause. 'Sustaining all the beings but not dwelling in them, is my Self, the cause of beings.' Even if the world appearance vanishes, the being of the Lord, as existence and consciousness, remains untainted, eternal, the only reality and That you are.

This same teaching about God and the world is signified in these lines by the Sufi master, Rumi:

If anything appears to you other than God,
it is the effect of His illusion;
If all other than God vanish from sight,
it is the effect of His awakening you to the Reality.

This same Lord, the reality underlying all our experience, is the true nature of the innermost Self, and the *Avadhut Gita* speaks of it as the Self:

How can it be said that the Self is manifest? How can it be said that the Self is limited? I alone am existence; all this objective world am I. More subtle than space itself am I.

When the Lord says: 'Behold my divine Yoga!', he is telling us that the world appearance is an illusion that springs from the divine source. We have to learn to view the world with the eye of spiritual understanding. That is, don't take this world revealed to your senses, and registering on your mind, as the final fact. Nor will the world yield the fruit of lasting happiness, because everything here is passing.

Yet within this world illusion there are laws. The source of those laws is the Lord, who is the support of the illusion. The most important law is that of spiritual progress. If we understand this law, then the world itself becomes a bridge leading to God-consciousness.

There is a saying attributed to Jesus: 'The world is a bridge, so pass over it and do not inhabit it.' One meaning is that all our experiences in life, if understood rightly, are stages of growth, and like all growth, we are meant to move from stage to stage until we awaken to the truth of the identity of our innermost Self with that divine Lord by whom this whole phenomenal world is pervaded.

In a poem, Hari Prasad Shastri reminds us of this law:

Do not halt, my soul,
 Go on and on till the One is seen,
 Till the many are swallowed up in it,
 Till home, neighbours and people
 Are the mirrors reflecting the One....
 Do not halt, my soul, transcend all loves,
 Abjure all hates, all doubts;
 Befriend those who increase your capacity
 To understand the Truth 'All is Brahman'.
 Others, however charming, are a mere burden on the soul.

Each stage of growth has its attractions, and for a time, holds us in its spell, so that the idea of outgrowing it through expansion of consciousness, is overlooked. While we are engaged with such things as the pursuit of wealth, or power, or fame, or sensation, we tend to become identified with our pursuits, and hardly see them as stages in some greater destiny. The same applies to such worthy undertakings as the acquisition of secular knowledge, the engagement in good works, and establishing ourselves in some particular role in the community. We all too easily get identified with these situations or offices, and endow them with ultimate meaning.

It is only the slow transformation of our inner experience that alters our view. If we are alert, we become aware of the contrast between promised joys and unanticipated disappointments. When we detect this pattern, our sense of identification with any finite interest will inevitably begin to loosen. Sooner or later, a stirring from the depth of our soul will make itself felt, prompting us to search for something more fulfilling. This is bound to happen because our inner being has its root in the infinite, the eternal, the perfect— what a poet has called 'the pure central point of everlasting light'.

This divine force within us will not let us rest satisfied in any stage before self-realization. By virtue of this inner spiritual pull, we know deep down that a greater satisfaction does exist, and this is the secret standard which underlies all our hopes. You may recall the teaching of Meister Eckhart, where a certain nun says to her confessor: 'Show me the way to eternal happiness, my Father.' 'Any creature will tell you that', said he. 'With one accord, they all exclaim, "Pass on, we are not God." It is direction enough, my Daughter.'

Once we realize the inherent inability of anything in the world to bring us lasting joy, we are ready to pass on to the final stage of our

evolution and enter the path to God-realization.

Where shall we turn for the permanent fulfilment and completeness that will crown our endeavours? The answer is: Enquire into yourself. Realize that in your true being you are that ultimate principle of Truth and Infinity that is the driving force behind all your endeavours, though misunderstood. If we want inner light, the place to find it is clearly indicated in the *Yoga Vasishtha*:

True worship consists in inward meditation alone, and in no outer form of worship; therefore, apply your mind to the adoration of the universal Spirit by meditating within yourself.

He is the form of the intellect, the source of all light, and glorious as millions of suns! He is the inner light of the mind.

He encompasses within Himself all the worlds.

He is in the midst of all things, and is the sole giver of strength and energy to all. *Tat Twam Asi!* 'That thou art!'

O, adore Him in yourself! He requires no illumination or burning of incense.

By constantly talking of this holy subject and continually returning to the enquiry when it has been broken off, one becomes fully conscious of the Self.

The offering of a purified heart, freed from desire and aversion, is more delectable to Him than fine jewels and the most fragrant flowers.

For lasting joy and fulfilment, let us turn our attention and our aspiration to that deeper Reality revealed in these teachings.

The one thought that will dissipate the mist of not-knowing is that of our intrinsic identity with the divine. This God-thought, when held in the mind, will melt the illusory chains that persuade us we are finite and mortal, and reveal to us the infinite freedom of the Self. The Gita causes God to be known as the Self, and the Self to be known as God. For in the highest realization there is no difference. This is the Truth of non-duality.

The path to self-realization is accessible to everyone. What matters is our willingness to look deeper into our own nature. As seekers of truth, we need to identify our aspirations, our desires and our interests, with this highest quest, and not let our other interests become obstacles or diversions from our path.

Such is the approach. What about the response? Shri Shankara

compares the influence of the teachings on enlightenment to that of a fire which we draw near to on a cold day. Those people who draw near to the fire will stay warm, while those who keep their distance will remain cold. In the same way, those who turn to the Lord with God-thought, and what the Gita calls 'intentness on Me, the Lord', those who nourish this consciousness, automatically open themselves to the divine power and its emanations of peace, light and bliss. This contact is inevitable and is a divine law.

This awareness of the divine presence is called the dawn of spiritual knowledge, and it leads to that final stage of the spiritual path described in the Gita as devotion to knowledge—knowledge here meaning the inner light of higher understanding. The consummation of this path is indicated in the following verse from chapter 18:

By devotion he knows Me in truth, what and who I am. Then, knowing Me in truth, he immediately enters into Me.

This is a way of saying that the apparent gulf between man's innermost Self and the supreme Reality has not only been bridged through spiritual realization, but is known never to have existed in Truth.

B.D.

THE SWEET SPEECH OF SHRI DADA

*Some reflections by Hari Prasad Shastri on his Guru,
Shri Dada of Aligarh.*

The mother tongue of Shri Dada was Braj-bhasha. It means the language of holy Braj, the region associated with Shri Krishna. It was the oldest form of Hindi, which had been the medium of the great poets like Surdas during the past 600 years. He spoke distinctly, quietly and with no affectation whatsoever. The expressions he used were full of affection and contained poetic beauty. When he spoke, it appeared as if sprays of winter jasmine fell from his lips.

Having been born in an aristocratic family, he spoke the Court language of India. It was mixed with Persian and Arabic expressions. He also used a few Sanskrit words. But in his ordinary conversation he spoke the Hindi of Surdas.

When he came to Hapur, he fell ill. He was taken to the clinic of an Ayurvedic doctor called Pundit Bhagawat Prasad. The doctor was a man of great influence, most compassionate and held a high honorary post on the city council. Shri Dada was introduced to him as the new telegraph master of Hapur (this was his form of livelihood). He gave his attention to Shri Dada, who related his physical complaints to him in a few words. After prescribing, he got up and bowing his head low to Shri Dada, said: 'Punditji, if you want my services, I will come and see you. Please do not take the trouble of walking to my clinic.'

Afterwards he remarked to a friend of his: 'This Pundit is a most praiseworthy soul. His expressions are so sincere, and there is no affectation in him whatsoever.' Ever after, the Vaidya remained a devoted friend of the Saint Universal and attended on him without charging any fee. Such was the influence of the speech of Shri Dada on others.

Every man of his own age he called 'Bhayya', dear brother; every elderly man 'Bawa', grandfather; every woman, whether young or old, was addressed by him as 'Mai', mother. He made no distinction between a Brahmin and a non-Brahmin. He always withdrew his feet if anyone tried to touch them in reverence.

When he spoke in order to preach dharma and morality, he quoted freely from Tulsidas and Surdas. He used just as many words in his speech as necessary.

When he went for shopping, he did not bargain; he paid the price of an article which the shopkeeper asked. Sometimes they told him that he had been overcharged. He quietly remarked: 'I am sorry for the man; perhaps he is driven by his poverty to adopt such means.'

The songs he sang were mostly by Surdas and Tulsidas. Whenever a metaphysical question was put to him by his disciples, he answered saying: 'My holy Guru has taught me thus'

Shri Dada was very fond of little children. He called every child 'my Gopal', little Krishna. When he went out, Sahaja, a devoted disciple, always put a packet of sweets in his pocket. Every child who came to Shri Dada received a parting gift, a sweet and a silent blessing. With patience he listened to the stories of the children in the street. He was never seen agitated or disturbed.

It often happened that a stranger who talked to him became his pupil. Such was the way of the speech of the holy Saint Universal.

The Confessions of St Augustine

THE *CONFESSIONS* of St Augustine is agreed to be one of the greatest books ever written. Whether we consider it merely as a literary masterpiece, as a classical example of a certain type of rhetorical excellence; or whether we approach it as a psychological study of mysticism, an account of how the soul can awaken from the instinctive reactions of infancy, and gradually expand through all the possible phases of intellectual experience culminating in a knowledge of God as infinite Spirit and Truth; or whether we turn to it for a powerful intellectual statement of certain fundamental tenets of idealist philosophy; or whether, again, we look for a cry coming up from the depths of the heart to express the true relationship between man and his Maker, in each case what we find is unique; and yet the value of the *Confessions* far transcends any such catalogue of its merits.

The present essay is an attempt to provide a simple introduction to the autobiographical narrative of the first nine books. A brief summary of Augustine's life will be given, with a few words to explain his intellectual development, followed by an account of the role of the *Confessions* as an illustration of the Augustinian theory of grace.

What, then, do the early books recount? Writing in about 397, eleven years after the last of the events he is recording, St Augustine sketches the conditions of his birth in 354 and education in a little village in Algeria, and his departure for Carthage at the age of sixteen, where he stayed thirteen years as a teacher of rhetoric. Here his intellectual development was considerable. However, he never entirely forgot the primitive Christianity taught to him by his unlettered mother, and it was because they were Christians as well as rationalists that the young intellectual was attracted to the Manichaeans, a religious community of which he was a member for nine years.

This extraordinary sect believed that they had a monopoly of the real Christian teachings, and that their Persian founder, Mani (215-277) was the promised Paraclete, or incarnation of the Holy Ghost. They had a curious, partly Zoroastrian cosmology, which they held was alone capable of explaining the presence of evil in a universe whose God was good. They held that the universe was the product of interaction between two independent material forces, one of goodness and light,

and the other of darkness and evil. Dark matter was wholly evil, but fragments of light had become imprisoned within it, and these were the divine elements in the individual souls, whose aim was to escape rebirth in subjection to dark matter by a life of extreme asceticism and harmlessness. They believed that the New Testament, understood in the light of the writings of Mani, was a revelation of truth, but that all other pretended religious revelations, and especially the Old Testament, were the work of demons, intended to deflect men from the true path.

St Augustine never practised the Manichaean moral code in its full rigour, and the chief value to him of Manichaeism, in his own opinion, was to force him to ask, 'If God is good, how do we explain the evil and suffering there is in the world?' It was a problem which he later believed that Christianity and Platonism solved, but which other pagan philosophies did not even face.

Carthage brought other formative experiences. For one thing, he read parts of the works of Cicero. Cicero's writings were in that age the great vehicle through which men became acquainted with the heritage of Greek and Roman philosophy. His *Hortensius*, a book now lost, inflamed Augustine with a desire to reach the truth about things through the exercise and development of his intellectual powers. He deepened his study of the Roman authors, but never acquired a working knowledge of Greek. He studied aesthetics, and evolved a materialistic philosophy of beauty, which he expressed in his *De Pulchro et Apto*, a book which does not survive. Later, he took up for a time with the astrologers, who taught a crude and rigid fatalism, not uncommon in that age, in which the stars were held to be eternal and god-like in their operations, and to govern with perfect precision the mutable affairs of the world. This cosmology, with its pretence at mathematical exactitude, weakened his faith in the fanciful and frankly poetic mythology of the Manichaeans.

But Augustine's emotional experiences in Carthage were even more important in his journey towards Christianity than his intellectual ones. Of a naturally ardent temperament, he was cast loose into a great city for the first time, and he tried to enjoy life in all its aspects. What God had created as means, he tells us, he tried to enjoy as ends in themselves. Thus approached, objects yielded bitter fruit. The culmination of his sorrows was the death of one of his closest friends. 'And my country became a prison to me, and my father's house a source of wondrous grief ... All things were hateful to me, yea, even light

itself.' Experiences such as these were gradually bringing home to him the truth that 'Wheresoever the soul of man turns, it becomes enmeshed in grief, everywhere except in Thee; yea, even if it dwells on beautiful objects, if they are exterior to itself and to Thee; for these rise and inevitably pass away, and have their existence only in Thee.'

In 383, at the age of 29, Augustine crossed to Rome, still as a teacher of rhetoric. Here he soon lost all faith in Manichaeism under the influence of the doubting, sceptical tradition of Carneades and Cicero. Yet the name of Christ, which he had imbibed with his mother's milk, continued to haunt his imagination and to suggest itself as the solution to his intellectual problems.

After a year at Rome, he was sent to Milan to teach rhetoric and secular philosophy. Here he remained two years and was joined by his mother. He listened to St Ambrose's preaching with curiosity, not with a view to learn any truths, because he still considered Christianity childish from the philosophical point of view, but to take note of the famous orator's style. Listening to the style, he became interested in the matter. St Ambrose was explaining the Old Testament allegorically in the tradition of Philo of Alexandria. Viewed in this new light, its contradictions and immoralities, on which the Manichaeans had poured such ridicule, began to disappear, or at least to appear capable of a symbolic interpretation.

He also became impressed with the noble personality of the bishop, and with the mutual respect between him and his mother. Under the combined influence of these two, Augustine returned to the fold of the Catholic Church as a catechumen, but several circumstances, moral and intellectual, still stood between him and full membership through baptism. Though desiring to dedicate himself entirely to God, he could not give up certain worldly enjoyments; while in the intellectual sphere, he could not yet understand how God, being good, could create or permit evil.

At this point he found himself in possession of some translations of the works of Plotinus. These expressed a beautiful but somewhat obscure philosophy, which may be approximately summarized as follows. God is unity, pure existence and universal fullness. Strictly speaking, He is beyond all our conceptions, beyond even Being, without qualities or parts or capacity for action. In a sense, however, He can know Himself, and this knowing, considered in itself, is a being somehow distinct from Him, yet capable of union with Him through

contemplation. This knowing is the Divine Intelligence or *Nous*, eternal and immobile, but capable of thought. The thoughts of this Intelligence are the archetypes of eternal realities of which the objects of the earth are faulty and perishable copies. The Divine Intelligence cannot act or create, but there emanates from Him the World-Soul, which, looking upwards to Him can understand and reproduce His ideas, and looking downwards into chaos or non-being, becomes identified with it and animates it with a partial degree of form and reality.

Thus, God is beyond Being; the Divine Intelligence is pure Being; and chaos is pure non-being. The world of matter is neither being nor non-being, but 'becoming', an eternal process of coming-to-be and passing-away. It is chaos in process of resisting the attempts of the World-Soul to impose on it the eternal ideas of the Divine Intelligence. The human soul, by withdrawing its gaze from matter and turning inward, may identify itself first with the World-Soul and then with the Divine Intelligence.

By this philosophy, Augustine's two greatest intellectual difficulties were solved. In the first place, by emphasizing God's essential transcendence and 'otherness', Plotinus enabled him for the first time to conceive God as a spirit, beyond all our powers of representation, and quite uncontaminated by any of the limitations of the world. And secondly, by positing chaos as non-being, Plotinus enabled him to imagine all the creative works of God to have been good, and evil to be nothing positive, but simply the negative element latent in creation from nothing.

From Plotinus, therefore, Augustine learned that there exists a Divine Intelligence that has created the archetypes of all things by the power of its thought. In a passage of intense interest, he describes how he discovered this Divine Intelligence, immanent within his own soul. By retiring into himself, by silencing the senses, by withdrawing away from the stream of images that crowded into his mind, he shook himself for a moment completely free from the world of becoming, and beheld in a single flash pure Being, 'that which is', the Divine Intelligence, that eternal unchanging light shining above the mind, 'knowing which one has known eternity'.

By the time he came to write the *Confessions* he had come to believe that this *Nous* or Divine Intelligence of Plotinus was practically equivalent to the *Logos* or creative Word of St John, the second Person of the Christian Trinity. It was equivalent, in that it was the light of

Truth shining into the human intellect from above, the one stable element in our experiences, the solid reality to which the shifting flow of images must always be referred if the concept of truth is to have meaning. It was less than equivalent, in that it was not held to have been made flesh and to have granted to humble and faithful souls grace and the permanent power to live according to their purest resolutions.

In retrospect, Augustine believed that it was because he did not know this that he fell away from the mystical knowledge of God attained in the highest moments of contemplation, still 'sweetly overlaid with the baggage of this present world'. But afterwards, under the influence of St Paul, with long weeping and bitter contrition, he cast himself on the ground in a garden, crying, 'How long, how long, O Lord? Wilt Thou be angry with me for ever?'

With his pride thus humbled, he felt a sudden infusion of light into his heart that dispelled his doubts for ever. Sustained by an influx of grace, he was now able to make those tremendous decisions in his personal life before which his will had hesitated so long, and which amounted to a total dedication of his life to God. The narrative closes with a brief description of his semi-monastic community at Cassiciacum, his baptism, the famous ecstatic experience with his mother at Ostia, and an account of her death and character.

In our brief introduction to the *Confessions* narrative, one important point remains. The *Confessions* were not merely an autobiography, but also a practical illustration of Augustine's theory of grace and must certainly be approached as such if we are to do justice to the author's intention.

What was this theory of grace, and how was it illustrated in the *Confessions*? Augustine believed, partly as a result of his experiences recorded in the *Confessions*, and partly as a result of his study of Genesis and of St Paul, that God created the world perfectly good and happy, without sin or death or the corruption of physical substances, but that these things were introduced at the time of the Fall by the disobedience of Adam and Eve. It is a famous theory, which Pelagius attacked and which Catholic theologians themselves have not entirely accepted. All humanity is by nature 'one mass of sin' (the phrase is St Augustine's), because the original sin of Adam and Eve is transmitted to their descendants, who are thereby compelled to err and sin as inevitably as to grow old and die. Sin is so intimate and essential a part of our terrestrial life that to raise one's self up from it by one's own

efforts is out of the question. It follows that wherever sainthood exists, it is due to the special aid or grace of God, granted either directly or mediately through Christ.

Now the *Confessions* are in one sense simply an illustration of the mode in which this grace is held to operate. The initiative towards a holy life never comes from the individual part of the mass of corruption, but always from God. 'It is Thou who excitest man to take delight in Thy praises,' he says in his famous opening, 'for Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it find rest in Thee.' Prayers, love of God and of our neighbour, holy living and so forth are necessary indeed, but the original impulse towards them is always the free gift of God.

Not that St Augustine was a psychological determinist in the modern sense, for, except while under the influence of the Manichaeans and the astrologers, he regarded the existence of freedom of choice as axiomatic. Nevertheless, he believed that of ourselves we are without power to help ourselves, and that God as Providence manages the puppet-show of earthly life, and brings to sainthood those whom He has predestined.

Thus it was God who built the temple in the heart of his mother, St Monica, not she who erected it to Him. It was He who watched over her in her youth, and foreseeing from afar her future role as saint and mother of a saint, protected her from wine-bibbing. It was He who sent an extraordinary experience to Alypius, to prepare him for the long distant day when, as bishop, he was to be a judge of civil causes. It was He who sent Augustine a whole series of experiences, seemingly trivial or accidental, which relentlessly pushed on his intellectual and moral development to the point of his conversion. Such were his unhappy experiences at Carthage, which began to teach him the vanity of sense-pleasures; his meeting with the Manichaeans who taught him to search among the philosophies for a solution to the problem of evil; his association with the astrologers, with Faustus, with St Ambrose, Firminus, Simplicianus and Ponticianus. Each of these episodes, and many more, viewed in retrospect, formed a link in a continuous chain of experiences designed by Providence to complete his spiritual education.

Examined in this light, almost every detail recorded by St Augustine in the *Confessions* is seen to have been included as evidence of the providential power of God to elevate those whom He has predestined

to a life of holiness; and the narrative as a whole to be a wonderful drama, exhibiting the power and wisdom of God operating within a definite historical scheme of creation, sin and redemption through grace.

A.J.A.

A POEM BY NAZIR

translated from the Urdu by Hari Prasad Shastri

Lift up your mirror in your hand
And again and again look into it.
In your form see the handicraft of the Creator.
Notice the black moles and the delicate lines of your face,
Your flowing locks and your hair
Full of the fragrance of ambergris. Look at it.
Every moment see the beauty of your own eyes, O rose!
Do not be indifferent to the spring of your own beauty.

The looking-glass is your purified and steadied heart;
The moles are the spots of sorrow caused by love.
Your long flowing locks are your imagination,
Which is united with the supreme secret.
In diverse sorrows note carefully
The finger of the Creator.
Every moment see the beauty of your own eyes, O rose!
Do not be indifferent to the spring of your own beauty.

If it is your desire to have a look at the full-blown daisy,
Then look at your own form
And the sun which is hidden in you.
Both the fragrant rose-water
And the petals of the rose abide in you.
Your cheeks are the rose,
The drops of perspiration are the rose-water.

Every moment see the beauty of your own eyes, O rose!
Do not be indifferent to the spring of your own beauty.

Do not think that you are the narcissus.
Do not become enamoured of the cypress.
Imagine it to be your own.
Do not meditate on anybody
Except your own Self.
Everything in the world, beautiful and attractive,
Has a centre in you.
Every moment see the beauty of your own eyes, O rose!
Do not be indifferent to the spring of your own beauty.

Look into your heart.
Hear the music of the nightingale and the doves.
Your own lips are the doves
And your tongue the nightingale.
You are the garden and you the keeper of the garden.
Know the secret of all the flower-gardens;
They are all located in your essence.
Every moment see the beauty of your own eyes, O rose!
Do not be indifferent to the spring of your own beauty.

Do not be imprisoned in the beauty
Of the birds and blossoms of this garden.
Do not be attracted by the cooing of the doves
Or by the refrain of the nightingale.
Just know yourself, O Nazir.
In the letters of knowledge
Is hidden the meaning of wisdom,
And it is your own Self.
Every moment see the beauty of your own eyes, O rose!
Do not be indifferent to the spring of your own beauty.

OM

The Eternal Wisdom

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

IT IS THE month of Shravan, which corresponds with August in the Western calendar. The rains have ceased and the Himalayan valleys are clad in a shining emerald colour. Snow-white jets of foam come from the tumbling waterfalls, and their spray, carried by the wind, feeds the herbage around the streams. Grasses of every hue cover the surface of the valleys. Cool breezes are sweeping over them. It is indeed a paradise.

Today is another special day in the hermitage of Shri Yajnavalkya. A number of his brahmacharis, who have finished their studies with the holy Guru, have gathered to pay their homage to him before going back to their homes to embrace the life of householders. Mats, and a few antelope skins, have been spread out in a corner of the valley called Shanti (spiritual peace).

About twenty youthful figures, in the simplest loose robes, are there. On one of the mats they have spread with reverence their traditional gifts (dakshina) for their holy Teacher. Among these are manuscripts, cotton and woollen blankets, sandals, flutes, grain, large bowls of butter, pots of honey, little boxes made of wood, brass vessels and trays filled with gold and silver; also some robes for the two holy mothers, Maitreyi and Katyayani.

Their course of study in the rituals, hymnology and metaphysics has been completed. They have lived with their beloved Guru as his own children. Both Maitreyi and Katyayani have given them their affectionate attention, nursing them through illness, supplying them with milk, oil for their lamps, warmth during the cold weather, and other necessities of life.

The gift or privilege of a traditional Teacher is one beyond price; even the gift of a kingdom does not make a suitable return for it. What indeed can a blind man give to the physician who restores his sight? What can a madman offer in return for the mental stability granted to him?

At last from the east comes the sound of gongs and sacred conch-shells. A procession, led by the divine figure of the great rishi, Yajnavalkya, is slowly making its way towards them. Maitreyi and

Katyayani are also following in the footsteps of the holy sage, about whose neck hang many garlands; even his staff is decorated with flowers. Those in the procession are singing a Sanskrit chant:

Om Tat Sat!*
O sun, softly shed thy purifying rays
over the body of our holy Guru!
O winds, blow soft and cool!
Sing ye, O waterfalls and birds!
O green grass, kiss his holy feet!
O creation, see thy Lord in the form of the maharishi!
Ye orbs of heaven, bend low,
Proclaim his glory!
Om Tat Sat! Om Tat Sat! Om Tat Sat!

As the great Yajnavalkya arrives, all the brahmacharis stand with joined palms and salute him as he takes his seat. Brahmadatta, selected as their spokesman by the brahmacharis, steps forward, bends low three times before the Guru, and says:

‘O knower of Brahman, O lord of wisdom, O cloud of compassion! We find no words to thank you, holy one, for the great benevolence and attention you have bestowed upon us during the years of our discipleship with you. We now dedicate our lives to you. Though our physical bodies return to our homes, our souls we leave behind to worship you invisibly morning and evening in this sacred valley.

‘We are to be householders. We will exalt righteousness (dharma). We will bring into the world fresh souls to make virtue illustrious, and to be new recruits for a spiritual warfare against poverty, aggression, disease and ignorance. We are especially grateful to the holy mothers for their care, realizing they have treated us better than we could have expected even from our own mothers.

‘Jai to thee, Shri Yajnavalkya! Jai to thee, O monarch of the spiritual realm! Jai to the blessed Maitreyi and Katyayani!’

Then a chorus of ‘Jai!’ fills the valley, and baskets of flowers are showered on the holy sage and his consorts. Brahmadatta bows low before the Guru and asks him to accept their traditional gifts. In reply Shri Yajnavalkya says:

* Words denoting the supreme reality. ‘Tat’ means ‘That’, and ‘Sat’, existence

or truth.

‘My children, we are not parting. You have become my own Self (Atman). As the extension of my own thoughts, you are going forth to illumine the world with wisdom, through your pure lives, selfless service and compassion. When you marry, then I pray you may have suitable companions in your lives and may promote in each other peace and tranquillity of the heart.

‘Do not forget the teachings of the knowledge of Brahman (Brahmavidya). Let this holy science be as a cow to you, yielding you milk to enrich your souls and to make them fruitful in wisdom and peace.

‘My sons, visit me when you can. This ashrama will always remain your home. Come with your wives and stay here for a few weeks every year. I wish you to cultivate the following virtues: discipline (tapas), liberality or charity, straightforwardness, simple living, truthfulness and compassion.

‘May Brahman protect you, my children, and may you live for dharma. May sense-delights, or power-desires and aspirations towards fame, never influence your hearts. May every being be your friend and may you be a friend to every being.’

The holy sage then gives them his blessings. Brahmadatta walks seven times round the great Guru, performing the traditional arti ceremony. There are tears in his eyes. Shri Yajnavalkya then departs to his hermitage, followed by his remaining brahmacharis, carrying the traditional gifts to his home.

To be continued

Teachings of a Sufi Master*

JALALUDDIN RUMI (1207-1273) was an enlightened master. His teachings, like those of Adhyatma Yoga, aim to awaken us to our divine nature. He told his disciples:

You are more precious than heaven and earth.
You know not your own worth.
Sell not yourself at little price,
being so precious in God’s eyes.

In his outer life, Rumi was a householder, a family man, a learned Moslem professor with many pupils, an organiser of a spiritual community. In his inner life he was a Mahatma, a knower of Truth, whose being was merged in the universal divine life. He writes:

There is another state (of consciousness), which is rare: do not thou disbelieve, for God is very mighty.

Wine became intoxicated with us, not we with it.

As a man of the world, eventually settling in the Turkish city of Konya, he had his share of the ups and downs of life. He compared our living in the world to a boat floating on water. The boat is always in touch with the water and pushed around by it, but we make sure the water is kept under the boat and not inside it. In a similar way, through spiritual living, we have to learn not to give the world more mind-space than it needs, and, if possible, to keep the main space in our mind for God.

This is not to say that he did not admire those great Sufis, his predecessors, who broke with the world. He speaks of an early king of the Arabs, who woke in the night with such a spiritual urge that he ran from his palace there and then to lead a wanderer’s life, going from country to country ‘in search of Him who transcends all countries’. Another king found him, welcomed him, and with arguments pleaded with him to stay. He said nothing. Then he whispered something in his ear, and that second king too ‘immediately became a crazy wanderer like himself’. Rumi writes: ‘Not once, but many times, has divine love committed this crime.’

* This article is based chiefly on sayings and stories from Rumi’s *Mathnawi*, translated by R.A. Nicholson.

But in general, Rumi favoured living in the world, where the mind can learn many important lessons that would prepare it for God-realization. Some of these simple moral lessons are conveyed through animal fables. For instance, the need for patience and contentment with our situation.

There was a man with an old donkey crushed by work and under-nourishment. They passed the luxurious royal stables. The stable-man knew the donkey-owner and said: 'Let him stay here for a time. We'll make him fit and strong.' The donkey was duly given a space and some oats. Meanwhile, he stared about him and saw the royal horses—huge, strong, spotlessly clean and glossy, getting choice fodder at regular intervals. The donkey prayed: 'O God, why them and not me?'

Suddenly the call came for war. The horses were saddled for action. And a few hours later they returned, pierced by arrows, limping until they collapsed. Rumi writes: 'The ass saw all that, and was saying, "O God, I am satisfied with poverty and health. I have no taste for that plentiful food and those hideous wounds."'

Again and again Rumi teaches us: Have patience, for patience is the key to joy. A similar story concerns a cow who lived alone on a beautiful green island. Each day she would feed on the plants and sweet herbs until she grew 'as fat as a mountain crag'. But at night she would start to worry about what she would eat the next day. Through that worry she would become 'as thin as a hair'. This happened every day, even though the island was sufficiently fertile to produce ample greenery and had never let her down. She never thinks, says Rumi: 'All these years I have been eating from this meadow and this pasture; my provender has never failed even for a day.' The idea here is: be thankful and don't worry!

The greatest lessons we can learn in the world concern friendship, especially friendship on a spiritual level. We tend to see our friends as predictable entities whom we know all too well. But spiritual friendship goes deeper than this. It appreciates our higher potentialities. It reminds us that we are all at stages that we shall outgrow. Spiritual insight recognizes that behind our limited personality—the man or woman outlined on the c.v., or defined by various labels, such as cleaner, banker, refugee—there is something truly precious, dynamic and transcendent. Real friendship helps us to uncover our hidden divinity, the reality that underlies our feeling of 'I'.

Rumi himself found such a friend in the mystic, Shams i' Tabriz,

who suddenly appeared in his life when Rumi was in his late thirties and who dominated his attention for the next two or three years. Rumi regarded Shams as a Guru, as well as a soul companion. Shams was like a fire in which the individuality of Rumi was melted. Thereafter, he became truly mystical and poetical, a great and reckless lover of higher truth.

One of the lessons Shams taught Rumi is that one's individuality is meant to be transcended if ultimate truth is to be realized. A story tells how a man knocked at the door of his spiritual friend. 'Who is it?' came the call. 'It is I'. 'Then go away. It is too soon. At my table there is no place for the raw.'

It is said that the man went away and underwent many experiences that shaved away his spirit of self-assertion. He then reappeared at his friend's door. 'Who is it?', called the host. This time he answered: 'It is you, O charmer of hearts. It is you.' 'Then, do come in, for you and I are one. There isn't room in here for two 'I's. Only the single thread will pass the needle.'

The story has a deep meaning and application. It teaches, in a forthright way, that egoism is a hindrance to spiritual communion. Perhaps, too, it is a hint that the deeper Self we hope to enter into in meditation will only receive and absorb us, so to say, when our spirit of asserting our little self has been brought to a minimum.

On reflection, we realize that our feeling about our self depends on our thoughts. As a mystic, Rumi teaches how the overfilled mind hides the interior light, while an emptied and peaceful mind reveals that light. Two of his sayings are: 'Thought is gone, and they have gained light' and 'Thought is of the past and future; when you are freed from these two, the difficulty is solved.' In one of the yoga classics, the *Yoga Vasishtha*, the same point is made.

The way to be rid of this delusion of the mind is to fix your attention upon the present moment, and not to employ your thoughts on past or future events.

The true Sufi is called 'the son of the present' because he tries to live in this way.

No one would claim it is easy to stop our minds from floating back to the past or worrying about the future, as did the cow on the green island. But one sure aid is to hold in the mind some spiritually dynamic thought or idea, gleaned from our reading of inspired texts. Such ideas

have no personal associations and belong to the eternal now. Our meditations will improve and our mind become manageable, if we take the opportunity to meditate, pray or study something spiritual, whenever we reasonably can.

Related to this point—of savouring the time spent in meditation—there is the story about a town governor, an amir, who wanted to go to the hot bath-house early one morning. He set off with his servant, Sunqur, who carried the towel and basin. They happened to pass the mosque at the time of the call to prayer. Sunqur, being a religious man, said: ‘O master, do let me go in and say my prayers. Be patient for a while.’ The amir acquiesced, but he was in for a long wait. For Sunqur stayed on while everyone else slipped away. After an hour or so, the amir shouted out: ‘O Sunqur, please come.’ Sunqur replied: ‘That clever one won’t let me come.’ The Amir called out: ‘But there is no one in the mosque. Who is detaining you?’ Sunqur answered: ‘He who won’t let me out is the same one who won’t let you in!’ And Rumi writes: ‘The sea does not let the fish out; the sea does not let the creatures of earth in.’

Whatever else this story denotes, it hints that our meditation will improve as time goes on and we will want to give more time to it. As we mature our inner communion, we will feel we are at last in our real element, as a fish is at home in the sea.

Implicit in Rumi’s teaching about thoughts is the idea that there is a higher use of the mind than thinking, and a knowledge far greater than intellectual knowledge. As if divulging a secret, he tells us that when we become aware of something superior to thought in our own being, we are, he says, relieved of the need to think.

In that quarter the trouble of thinking is not incumbent on the brain, for there the brain and intellect spontaneously produce fields and orchards of spiritual knowledge.

This somewhat revolutionary teaching—about finding something in ourselves greater than ordinary thought—is at the heart of all mysticism. He goes on:

The lifeless doll is as dear as life to the child until he has grown up to manhood

This imagination and fancy are like the doll: so long as you are spiritually a child, you have need of them;

But when the spirit has escaped from childishness, it is in union with

God; it is done with sense-perception and imagination and fancy.

But on this matter, he adds:

There is no one familiar with this mystery, that I should speak without reserve.

I will keep silence, and God best knoweth the (true) accord

Like the yogis, Rumi makes it clear that in our quest for that higher knowledge that transcends thought, we are seeking realization of our innermost Self, which is one with God. He writes: ‘Thou art an inmost ground of consciousness revealing our inmost thoughts.’ Signifying the momentous spiritual power underlying human nature, he adds: ‘Thou art a bursting Force that causes our dammed-up rivers to burst forth.’ That supreme Force is the true ‘I’. ‘How should this I be revealed by thinking? That I is revealed only after passing away from self.’

As regards thoughts, the one who has realized the true nature of I, and its absoluteness, is not disturbed by the continued appearance of thoughts. Rumi compares the knower of ultimate truth to the owner of a guest house, and the thoughts are his passing guests. He is not related to them, and is therefore not disturbed by them. ‘The gnostic, acquiescing in those thoughts of sorrow or joy, resembles a hospitable person who treats strangers with kindness.’ He knows it is all a play within the world of appearances.

Again, like the teachers of Vedanta, Rumi knows that a certain kind of ‘effortless effort’ is needed for the deeper self-knowledge. Hard thinking tends to generate more thoughts, and anything it produces is not the self.

One hint is given in his story about the man firing arrows. In this parable, a man prays to God for help, and is directed to a treasure scroll which tells him to take up a bow and arrow at a certain place, and where the arrow falls the treasure will be found. He fires his shot with all his strength, digs a hole and finds nothing. He tries again and again, firing arrows with all his might and digging holes. Then in despair he prays to God, and a voice answers:

The Divine intimation told you to put an arrow to the bow, but when were you told to pull the bowstring hard?

It did not tell you to draw the bow hard: it bade you put the arrow to the bow, not shoot with your full strength.

Put the arrow to the bow and do not seek to draw to the full extent of your power.

When the arrow falls, dig up the spot and search: abandon trust in strength...

That which is real is nearer than the neck-artery; you have shot the arrow of thought far afield.

The farther one shoots, the farther away and more separated is he from a treasure like this.

The philosopher exhausted himself with thinking: let him run on in vain, for his back is turned towards the treasure.

Let him run on: the more he runs, the more remote does he become from the object of his heart's desire.

So a kind of effortless effort is needed to discover that divine principle in our own being which is nearer than the nearest. The process is to quieten the mind and then let go, that is, to release ourselves from the tension implicit in the human will. And in that deeper quiescence and surrender of the ego, signs of the inner treasure will show. In terms of the parable, let the arrow fall softly so that it falls very near.

This poem was written in love of Shams i'Tabriz:

Always at night returns the Beloved.

Do not eat opium tonight.

Close your mouth against food,

That you may taste the sweetness of the mouth.

We may see in these lines a reference to meditation, when, as at night, the doors of the senses are closed, and we abstain from the opium of idle imaginings. Then, with reverent attention to the 'return of the Beloved', we find the joy that is implicit in our own deeper Self.

A.H.C.

COMMENTARY ON THE FIRST VERSE OF THE RIG VEDA

The holy Rig Veda, the oldest book in the world, begins with the following verse:

O Agni, I adore thee!

Thou art the benefactor of all.

The chief priest, a repository of gems.

Thinkers in search of a universal law governing human conduct, explore the avenues of nature, delve into the psychic mysteries of man and exercise their imaginative faculty to the full. Idealists, like Marx and Engels, founders of social institutions, religious prophets, wise sages and psychic humbugs all predict that an Eldorado will be created as a consequence of the practice of their ideology.

The common factor in all their ideals is universal benevolence, which means a society in which man lives peacefully with his brother man, untroubled by the thorns of enmity and disharmony. The Chinese sages Yao and Shun do not advocate revolution as a means to this end, but according to them the Eldorado may be achieved through the practice of virtue. Sincerity, loyalty, benevolence, courage and filial piety constitute the way to human happiness, says Confucius.

Let us examine briefly the creed and programme of revolutionists. A revolution is planned for the well-being and success of a minority, if necessary at the sacrifice, ruthless and cruel, of millions. The instigators of a revolution are neither humanists nor universalists. Take the case of a man who is ill. A quack doctor advises the amputation of both arms and the slashing off of the nose and ears to cure him. The doctor is merely a rude theorist. He has never practised his method on anybody. If it happens that the patient is cured, he is as good as dead. If he is not cured, then he is many times worse off than before. Such is revolution, where vast numbers are eliminated and it does not matter if innocent men are punished.

According to the Vedic dictum, the whole of humanity is an organic being called Virat. You cannot do any good to humanity unless it is universal good. A wise doctor treats the constitution of the patient, and not a particular organ. There is a beautiful hymn in the holy Rig Veda in which humanity is treated as one mighty soul (purusha).

That humanity is governed by a benevolent Ruler is suggested in this

verse from the Rig Veda. Agni is often translated as ‘the fire deity’, but to understand the true import of the holy and most ancient verse, one has to go to the seers of the Aryan days. The Acharyas translate Agni as the shining, ever-luminous Atman or the Universal Self. ‘We adore the Self-luminous One.’

By reverence, love and service of the indwelling Lord in all beings we comprehend the Truth, and in no other way. Romain Rolland has rightly remarked that to know a person you have to make a loving approach to him. Paramahansa Rama Tirtha says that it is the key of intellectual love and active benevolence to a person, that opens the chamber of the integral beauties of that person.

The Supreme Spirit is said to be benevolent. Though not wholly correct, the Hegelian idea that the Absolute is realizing Himself in the relative has some beauty in it. In the highest state of spiritual unfoldment, nobody remains a stranger. As the rivers, with their variegated deposits falling into the sea, all become the sea, so all beings, who through reverence, love and benevolence understand the secret of nature, become identified with the substratum.

Thus adored, the Lord opens His treasury of gems to human beings. These are not physical gems. They are the complete liberation from all illusions, the state called ‘Shanti’ (Peace) and the ever-bubbling fountain of moral and intellectual love for all that exists.

Those who have noticed the first warblings of the birds at early dawn, will have found that the song is begun by an individual bird, followed by a chorus of thousands. Similarly a few emancipated beings pave the way for the emancipation of millions. Jesus preached to a few fishermen, and today His followers are preaching His gospel throughout the world. This is the way to universal good set forth in this holy verse. Know for certain that every sankalpa (idea) of a man who has drowned his separative identity in universal consciousness will gather momentum as it travels and create aspirants to Godhead.

H.P.S.

Yoga and Modern Science

THE AIMS of Yoga and modern science are similar. Both have their own tools and methods which are used in the search for truth. Dr Shastri often talked about the ‘Science of Yoga’, implying that it was a science in its own right, because it was supported by a thorough, detailed and logically thought-out philosophy.

The main differences between Yoga and science lie in where their search for truth is applied, and in the type of truth they are trying to establish. Science and its methods are applied in the realm of perception and conception—what we might call the outer world, or *Maya*, in yogic parlance—to search out relative truth, while the yogic search is carried out in the spiritual realm, and its search is for absolute truth rather than relative truth.

Their similarities also extend to the methods used to establish truth. The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes the scientific method like this:

[The scientific process is] a method or procedure that has characterized natural science since the seventeenth century, consisting in systematic observation, measurement and experiment, and the formulation, testing, and modification of hypotheses.

In practice, this means that the researcher in science proposes a hypothesis as an explanation of something observed in the outer world, and then tests that idea with experiments which should give predicted results in line with the hypothesis. These steps must be repeatable by others, to guard against mistakes, confusion and preconceptions made by any individual experimenter.

In Yoga, the underlying philosophy describes the nature of man and his relationship to the rest of creation. These ideas are the yogic equivalent of the hypotheses of science, and they need to be tested in a similar way by conducting experiments on them. The ‘experiments’ to confirm or deny these ideas come in the form of the traditional yogic practices for controlling the mind and the methods of meditation described in these ancient texts. Using the practices, the mind is calmed, brought under our conscious control and steered towards a more harmonious lifestyle. This process, which is called purifying the mind, helps the practitioner to deal with the ups and downs of life more effectively, reveals an inner sense of peace, and forms the start of a

process which eventually brings the innermost nature of the individual into full focus.

The ultimate aim of Yoga is to reveal the truth about the nature of the innermost Self of man and show that it is the real source of inner peace and happiness. Further, the yogic philosophy states that when the real Self of man is uncovered, it is found to be identical with God, and that once this discovery is made, the awareness of it, called liberation, is never again lost. Dr Shastri made this point about it:

One thing to be remembered in the spiritual philosophy is that the state of liberation, which is the culmination of the path, is the natural state of the individual and is not something in any way unnatural to him.

There are two pitfalls which need to be avoided by students of both disciplines. One is accepting what we are told without checking it using logical reasoning, and the second is modifying the meaning of what we learn so that it doesn't challenge our own existing beliefs. There is a skill in this Yoga which we are encouraged to develop, and which helps in the avoidance of both these traps. The technique is called *vairagya*, which translates roughly as detachment or non-attachment.

While remaining detached from the outcome, new ideas and information should be subject to deep analysis and logical verification, rather than our accepting it on the say-so of someone else—even an expert. In addition, the same skill can be applied to help us keep an open mind when we hear something which challenges our current beliefs; otherwise there is a danger of steering or interpreting the information in accordance with our preconceived ideas.

What is the reason that seekers after truth on the paths of Yoga and science fall into one of these traps? It is due to the influence of their own personal wants and desires. Where life is saying to us in a very reasonable way, 'the best course of action for everyone concerned is this', we let our own personal wants and desires overrule our better judgement. The yogi learns to choose what is good over what is pleasant, and this is made easier through the practice of *vairagya* or detachment.

This does not mean that everything that is good for us is unpleasant, or that everything which is pleasant is bad for us, but we can only learn to make the right choice when we have some control over our own mind, and this is one of the reasons that techniques for controlling the mind form an integral part of the yogic practices.

People who try the yoga practices in a spirit of sincerity admit to an improvement in the areas of calmness and control over their mind. However, these advantages are not the main reason for doing the practices; they are what we might call 'side effects' as we come to recognize the nature of our own innermost Self. The real Self within is different from the ego-self which most people think themselves to be, and the ultimate aim of this Yoga is to dispel egocentricity, leaving each with a direct perception and a sense of identification with the real Self. This is a state known by various names such as liberation, Self-realization, God-realization and enlightenment.

For a rare few well-prepared individuals, a direct intuitive perception of the real Self can happen quite quickly when the practices are started, but for most of us, it requires continuity of effort over a much longer period of time and will only happen if we really want it. To prepare ourselves through the yogic practices takes time and patience, and requires guidance from those who have realized the Truth. Only a few will have the necessary perseverance, even though they notice a gradual and growing awareness of this unique goal.

This is similar to the case of those researching new areas of science. Only a determined few will follow through to a definite conclusion. For the yogi, this discovery of the innermost Self through a direct intuitive perception, or identity with it, is the end point of this Yoga. It reveals the underlying unity of all things in creation when the state of liberation is finally reached.

While both scientific and yogic experiments can be verified by anyone to their own satisfaction, the results of a scientific experiment can be seen by an onlooker while the results of the yogic practices are only directly visible to the person carrying them out, because they manifest as an inner experience. An onlooker may observe changes in a yogi, such as an improvement in their behaviour, or a calmer disposition in difficult situations, but from a scientific point of view, these changes could be dismissed as purely conjecture or play-acting, because the onlooker does not have the same experience.

It is this inability to demonstrate the progress brought about by the Yoga practices to an outside observer, that leads to claims by some scientists that the changes are imagined or that the same results could be produced by other means. For this reason, they maintain that there is no scientific proof of there being such a thing as the spiritual plane or liberation.

In addition, it is known that all the discoveries made through science are only approximate descriptions of things as they really are, and that every theory and scientific law will one day be replaced by a new or modified law, so the conclusion is that absolute truth cannot exist. Many view Einstein's theory of relativity as the only scientific law that has stood the test of time and which forms the bedrock of modern physics. Yet the front cover of a recent copy of *New Scientist* bears the headline: 'Sacrificing Einstein: Why we must let go of a foundation of relativity.' This is an example of the shifting view of science.

It is unfortunate that some scientists are keen to crush the idea that there is any such thing as the spiritual plane, and that they are proactively pushing the ideology of atheism. They argue that there can be no such thing as absolute Truth, because experience shows that the laws of science are constantly being modified or replaced by new ones. We would not disagree on this point of the changing scientific laws, because they only produce relative or incomplete truth about anything. As stated earlier, there is no scientific law which gives an absolutely correct answer to the problem it is supposed to cover. It is a fact that such laws only give answers under limited circumstances and that they are eventually replaced by more accurate ones or those based on new theories.

However, as to the contention: 'There is no such thing as absolute Truth', we might ask if that statement itself is an absolute truth, because, if so, it creates a logical paradox. The idea that things can only be proved through logic and experimental demonstration is a fallacy which is easily shown to have limitations.

The questions: 'Do you exist?' and 'Do you have consciousness?' are two cases in point. They cannot be subject to proof in the scientific sense, but we are aware of them through direct experience, and no amount of experimentation or logic would ever convince us that we do not exist! We can try to imagine our own non-existence as a mind-experiment, but when we seem to have eliminated our imagined self in our mind's eye, we are always left with an imagining entity trying to imagine its own non-existence. And this paradox about the nature of existence and consciousness has been unexplained and appears inexplicable through scientific means.

How do the teachings of Yoga deal with such a paradox? They give us texts to meditate on which contain a hidden truth about the nature of

our own real Self. The following text, for example, is offered to us for deep reflection:

OM TAKE UP THE MIRROR OF THY STILLED HEART
AND LOOK AT THE REFLECTION OF INFINITY IN IT.
THIS IS WISDOM, THIS IS BLISS. OM

By focusing on this idea in the laboratory of our tranquillized mind, we open ourselves to intimations of the higher spiritual knowledge.

The fact that we are directly aware of our own existence and consciousness is a theme developed in the ancient philosophical teachings of Yoga. In simple terms, it is explained that both existence and consciousness denote the nature of the real Self and are not properties of the physical body and mind. The teachings also refer to a third aspect of our innermost Self, which appears as the wisdom or bliss mentioned in the meditation text.

We might ask what it is that obscures the view of our innermost Self in its entirety. It is the ego-self which we have created by thinking that we are nothing more than the body and the mind and that our character is defined by the things we learn and do. This idea develops naturally as we grow up and all our attention is focused on the outer world. It is then strengthened by ideas in modern science which have been created by those of similar upbringing. Once we believe that we are nothing more than the body and the mind, it seems logical that our consciousness is no more than the chemical reactions which take place within them.

But it is this limited vision that leaves the human soul feeling restless, discontented, and with a sense that we are something much more. The more we try to free ourselves from this sense of limitation by expanding our worldly skills and capabilities, the more it seems to visit us, because it is like papering over cracks in the wall by superimposing more and more wallpaper over them. Dr Shastri related this anecdote which illustrates how we superimpose our limited ideas on everything with which we come into contact.

An Arab was carrying a cat in his arms. A friend met him and asked: 'Where did you find this bundle of mischief?' Another remarked: 'Why are you carrying this fickle, unreliable and unfaithful animal?' A third man said: 'What a pet—a dear creature, loved by our prophet and such a useful being!' Now the cat is one, but each of the three men has woven his own world around it.

We do the same thing with ourselves when we paste a picture of our limited ego-self onto the real Self within. Through the yogic practices we learn how to remove the false covering of the ego-self so that the 'reflection' of the infinity of our real Self becomes more and more evident to our enhanced mental faculties. Ultimately, if we follow through on the practices, it is no surprise to uncover this treasure within our own being, for we have always been able to detect the presence of our real Self as a shadowy background, because that is what we always were, and always will be.

Like science, the yogic teachings tell us that the physical world is not at all as it appears to be. We only see what we superimpose on it as a result of our desires and wants. In the ancient texts it is described as *Maya*—a magic show projected by the Creator, who is Existence, Consciousness and Bliss Absolute. The philosophy explains that nothing but the Creator exists and that what man experiences is wholly conditioned by the desires and wants he superimposes on it, much like a painting on a blank canvas.

This philosophy is called the non-dual view of creation, for ultimately, nothing but the Creator exists as Existence Absolute. Neither the world, nor anything in it, including you and I, have any separate existence apart from the Creator, and it is He that is the real Self in each and every member of mankind, and in all other sentient beings. There is none high and none low, for we are part of the Lord's creation which proceeds directly from Him and is never separate from Him.

Modern science also demonstrates the shadowy and elusive nature of the universe through an analysis of the matter from which it is made. Solid matter, it seems, is a bit like a series of Russian dolls, with particles made up from smaller particles which in turn are made up of even smaller particles. In the final analysis (perhaps not yet final!) the particles themselves turn out to be nothing but waves of energy. What could be more nebulous than a universe made up of nothing but waves of energy?

Based purely on this scientific view of creation, it seems impossible to explain how our sense of existence and consciousness could arise from such a hazy source. If they are only due to the interaction of chemicals, then how could free will ever evolve? Would we be able to steer the chemical reactions towards a decision we thought might be right, or would we be at the mercy of blind reactions? If the conclusion

is that the individual is able to steer the reactions, then who or what is doing the steering? This suggests what we might call an 'outside agency'—an observer who is different from the chemical processes. In Yoga, this agency is called the 'witness consciousness' which is another name for the real Self within each of us. And it is this divine, non-dual principle that we aim to uncover as a direct experience through the practices of this Yoga.

On a lighter note, when Archimedes discovered the principle for measuring the volume of any shaped object by immersing it in water, he was almost certainly in a state of deep meditation. He had spent months pondering how to do the measurement, so his mind was deeply focused on the problem. Then, when he climbed into his bath, we can speculate that he relaxed and let go of the problem. It would be in this state of relaxed meditation that the solution appeared to him in a flash of inspiration. His famous response, 'Eureka' (I have it!), and his joy at gaining the insight, came not through logical reasoning but through a direct experience of the solution. In other words, he attained deep concentration in that stillness of mind, which yogis hope for when they meditate. Our faculty of intuition opens up as the fruit of our absorbed interest in, and need for, the spiritual wisdom. It is then that we get a glimpse of the real Self which is normally hidden behind the activity of the mind, and experience its blissfulness.

S.B.

[Science] gives a lot of factual information, puts all our experience in a magnificently consistent order, but it is ghastly silent about all and sundry that is really near to our heart and really matters to us. It cannot tell us a word about red and blue, bitter and sweet, physical pain and physical delight; it knows nothing of beautiful and ugly, good or bad, God and eternity. Science sometimes pretends to answer questions in these domains, but the answers are often so silly that we are not inclined to take them seriously.

Erwin Schrödinger, quoted in Shanti Sadan's publication,
The Spiritual Awakening of Science.

Causation Takes a Holiday

ONCE, CAUSATION took a holiday. He was tired of the monotony of life and could not bear the tedium any longer. As he made his exit from nature, the Mind and the Intellect met face to face for the first time. Mind recognized the Intellect and said: 'O Intellect, I will not stand you ordering me about any longer. You have no right to try to govern me. We are both children of the same mother—primary matter—and I do not see why you should claim superiority over me.'

Intellect looked puzzled and said: 'O Mind, my brother dear, you are not just to me. I neither want to dictate to you nor do I claim superiority over you. My relationship with you is based on love.'

Mind could not tolerate this speech by Intellect, and burst out angrily: 'Enough, enough of this patronising. I know your subtle ways well, I was not born yesterday, O cold Reason. Look! I am much older than you are. My experience extends over millions of years. I have lived in rocks, in plants, in lower animals, and the range of my experience is world-wide. You are an upstart, a mere child in comparison! Besides, you only indulge in abstractions, but the world is not an abstraction, it is concrete. You are a luxury to man and not in the least a necessity. Whenever I want to enjoy sound, taste, touch and sight, you intervene and try to advise me. Because you are cold, rigid and unfeeling you are always interfering in my amusement and inflicting what you call 'wisdom' upon me, which, as I see it, is nothing but austerity, starvation, and a deliberate attempt to mutilate life! I love to live and express myself freely like the wind and the rain, but you try to put the fetters of reasoning on me. You talk to me of a future life, of the good of society, of righteousness; these are empty words coined by you. Today I am going to destroy you.'

Intellect smiled, came closer and said: 'How ignorant you are of my intentions! I love you, and want to guide you to the real purpose, the true goal of your existence. You have appetite but you do not see. You move about but you do not know the way. I admit that you are older than I am, but that does not mean that you can dispense with my guidance. O brother! The oldest is not always the best. I do not prevent you from enjoying sight and taste, but I want to regulate your appetite so that you may not overdo things and suffer in consequence. It is my feeling of love for you that makes me try to mitigate your excesses, and

in order to add to your welfare and longevity, I show you the light. O dear friend! Do you know who animates you with life and its urges? Look around and tell me whether the force which is helping the growth of the plant-world, and which guides the course of the planets, is not the same force which makes the human heart beat. Both you and I are meant to be servants of that same great Force, which has created the Universe, and is guiding it towards a definite fixed purpose. I know you are very fond of pleasure! My dear brother, I also delight in joy, but my joys are more enduring, more refined and more satisfying than yours. In pursuit of excitement and sensation you go from object to object, but always remain discontented and grumbling. Try my way and see whether you feel any permanent satisfaction.'

The Mind became excited and cried: 'Enough, enough! This is mere sermonising! Who cares for your conclusions! Look at the lions of the forest, the eagles of the mountains, the sharks of the sea! Are they not free and happy without your interference and so-called guidance? I still do not see that I need you. You cannot prevent man from suffering from diseases, accidents, old age and death, neither can you add to his capacity for enjoyment of the senses. Who cares for a future life? Have you any proof of it? Better make ready, for I am going to square my old account with you now.'

Intellect said: 'Alas, alas! You are blind, my companion! Know that both you and I are companions in the service of man. You are with man to serve his soul. In some respects you are certainly a wonderful servant. You can entertain, amuse and yet serve the ends of life; but you have to realize that you are not the only occupant of the personality of man. I am there also, and although younger than you are, yet I am surely a more potent and better guide to him. I will admit that I am cold, that I lack fervour, but you can supply these, and if you and I co-operate, you keeping within your bounds, and I not exceeding my own limit of ratiocination, we can make the soul of man happy, and can guide it to the goal of life. You say: 'Pleasure, pleasure, pleasure.' I say: 'Yes, pleasure, but not the temporary, fleeting pleasure; not mere sensuous stimulation and excitement, not these thrills and spontaneous reactions to life. They do not become you now, because you are in the mansion of the soul of man, which is endowed with infinite potentialities.'

Here Mind intervened and said: 'No sermonising please! I am talking to a colleague, and not to a parson. I am not a sick man, so you

need not speak to me as a nurse speaks to a patient! I have my own life to live! You have admitted that you are cold. Yes! You are like a Greek statue of a nymph, well-moulded, well-shaped, well-chiselled, but cold, cold, cold, and unable to satisfy even the sense of sight for more than a few minutes. You threaten me with death! Well, I know I have to die, but I will die like the cherry-blossom, smiling, waving on the air, and beautifying my surroundings, without depending on anyone for help, much less the help of a sermonising companion like you! O icy friend, it is better that you should be guided by me. Why should I accept your dictatorship? Have I not the right to live? Was I created to be your slave?"

Intellect said: 'If I am cold, you, my friend, are burning hot. Your heat is as intolerable as you imagine my coldness to be. You are shallow, you just live on the surface. Yes, you like enjoyment, but what follows in the wake of your enjoyment? Premature old age, agonies, despair, tortures, dependence on others. Do you like these things? Can you avoid them? I appeal to your experience! What have you got so far? When you were with foxes, dogs, pigs, horses and tigers, you were what you are now. The species are said to transform themselves and evolve. The unicellular organisms, in the course of time grow multicellular, but what improvement have you made during these millions of years? You have no social instincts; you have no power of organisation; you live in moments. I ask you to pause in your mad career and think of your own good. You mutilate yourself in your self-enjoyment, and you blame me for being cold! Are you really competent as a self-preserving agent? O votary of pleasure! O slave of enjoyment! O selfish one, come to me and be instructed.'

The Mind paused. He was silent for a while, and then looked down and stood firm. This tranquillity, though momentary, gave him a deeper insight into his being. He began to realize the truth of what Intellect had said, and remarked: 'Dear comrade, I see that I cannot do without you, but I also see that you cannot do without me. I am the force, and you are the guide; I am the word and you are the prompter; I am the horse and you are the rider. Let us work harmoniously; we depend on each other. This much I can say, we can co-operate, but...'

Just at this point, Causation returned from his holiday, and Intellect fled to his cells in the head, while Mind hurried back into the heart. Thus ended their interview.

Hari Prasad Shastri

MEDITATION AT SHANTI SADAN

The transcript of a recent meeting led by the Warden of Shanti Sadan

We meet not just to calm ourselves and forget the concerns of the day, but more importantly, to remind ourselves of our connectedness with the deeper reality which is the eternal truth at the centre of life. Our true nature transcends time and space, and is the home of peace and fulfilment.

In order to help us open ourselves to this higher influence, let us chant the holy syllable OM, a word and a sound which carries vibrations of spiritual peace, and which symbolizes the deeper reality in our own being. [OM was chanted 27 times.]

What is the secret of life? From the spiritual standpoint, it is to discover the divine centre in oneself and to live in and from that centre, so that even in the outer life, living fully, our inspiration and dependence are based on that inner union with the divine. Meditation is a means and a help in enabling us to turn the mind inwards in order to discover the deeper spiritual consciousness at its source.

This deeper spiritual consciousness is worth discovering, because its discovery confers on us peace, happiness, freedom and an understanding that makes us feel: 'At long last I know Truth. My quest for knowledge is fulfilled.'

Of course meditation gives us help and relief from the ordinary stresses and troubles of life, by lifting our mind out of them for a time. But the real aim of meditation—its supreme value—is to prepare the mind to discover the deeper spiritual consciousness at its source and find a tranquil joy that needs nothing outer to promote it, because it springs from the depths of our own being.

Our inner being—the divine centre—is the most precious thing in the whole of experience. It is undiscovered because we may not have been told about it or how to seek for it. This is because our attention is often monopolised by the outer concerns. We may never pause and reflect on whether there might be something deeper in life than this realm of action, enjoying and suffering.

But when we do start to raise such questions, we are on the threshold of the path that leads to our divine centre. We have become spiritual enquirers—seekers after divine truth. And this direction, this new path, if we persevere, leads us into the light of conscious immortality.

To turn our thoughts and feelings to this deeper level of our being, we need a peaceful mind and one that is alert and receptive. To prepare ourselves, we approach our meditation in an attitude of reverence and calmness. Reverence makes us open minded—open to higher values and guidance. The higher spiritual principle is the underlying reality, our own deeper Self, so we bow before it in reverence and humility. Let us do this for a minute or so.

Now the breathing practice. Here it is important to free the central channel of our being from all tension and tightness and open it up to the light and bliss of higher knowledge. Our method is to replace any tightness and tension with spiritual power and peace. We will use the word OM. When we breathe in, we breathe in the O (as it were) and we take M on the out-breath.

There is no room for tension, tightness and worry, because all is replaced with pure light, peace and security through the word OM. So let us do this now for 4 minutes.

We really begin to live when we learn consciously to examine and accept or reject *wisely* the thoughts and suggestions that arise in our mind. We can learn to live in good thoughts and good feelings, and, with a little training, turn aside any thoughts that threaten to depress us, or make us agitated. The practice is:

Give free scope to your mind to think, but whatever idea the mind brings before you, say: 'It is an illusion. I do not want it.'

Thoughts do arise, sometimes unexpectedly, based on the impressions we have been exposed to during the day. But we need not be drawn into these thoughts if they are not helpful to us. They have no real power over us. It is our choice how we respond. We have the power, from our will, and also from the power that springs from the highest in us—our spiritual nature, the inspirer of our will.

So we observe and supervise the thoughts. We accept them or veto them. We address our thoughts with this authority—and you will find that with practice any thought can be cleared from the mind, or, if we like, postponed. And so:

When the first thought comes before you, say: 'It is illusory.' When the next thought comes, 'It is illusory' and so on...

Let us also note that, philosophically, the thoughts in themselves manifest as transient appearances, and in this sense, do behave like

passing illusions. But what is real is what is called the Witnessing Consciousness, and this is constant and eternal—the clue to our divine nature.

So, with calmness and authority, enter this practice. Allow the thoughts to arise. Be awake. Be alert. From your inner vantage point as the Witness, see what's happening 'out there' on the mind stage, and when 'Mr Thought' appears, however he is dressed or whatever he is telling you, say: 'It is an illusion. I do not want it.' In this way you become master of starting and stopping your mind—a skill you will find invaluable for meditation and for life.

This is not a mechanical rejection of thoughts. It is a conscious observing and dismissing. Let us do this now for five minutes.

This last practice, where we dismiss thoughts, is crucial for our spiritual illumination. This is because the mind, with its unending activity, forms a kind of veil that prevents the light of truth shining through. The 'not wanted' practice thins that veil.

The mind, thick with thought, is rather like a pond covered in weeds which block the reflection of the sun. Clear the weeds and the pond once again takes the reflection of sun and sky—of light and infinity. This is what happens in the mind when the veil of thoughts is thinned and removed. The deeper truth reflects itself in our intellect.

What is this deeper truth? This is indicated in the meditation text.

OM TAKE UP THE MIRROR OF THY STILLED HEART
AND LOOK AT THE REFLECTION OF INFINITY IN IT.
THIS IS WISDOM, THIS IS BLISS. OM

There is the knowledge that is added to us. There is also the knowledge that is enshrined in the depth of our being. There is the knowledge we gain through stretching and filling our intellect, and there is that knowledge which comes to light in inner stillness.

Our mind, when stilled, becomes a reflector of the infinitude within. Note that the meditation text assumes our mind has been stilled: 'Take up the mirror of thy stilled heart,' and that infinity is mirrored in it right now. This is the true spirit of meditation: to feel, 'It is so—Yes, it is so right now.'

So again, we apply our authority. We take up the meditation text, affirm it, savour it, enjoy it. It is based on truth, not illusion. It is Truth.

OM TAKE UP THE MIRROR OF THY STILLED HEART
AND LOOK AT THE REFLECTION OF INFINITY IN IT.
THIS IS WISDOM, THIS IS BLISS. OM

Our efforts to pacify and uplift our mind do have effects which go beyond our personal consciousness, just as a little light, though apparently localised, spreads all around. This principle is well stated by Confucius:

When there is peace in the heart,
there is peace in the home.
When there is peace in the home,
there is peace in the neighbourhood.
When there is peace in the neighbourhood,
there is peace in the city.
When there is peace in the city,
there is peace in the nation.
When there is peace in the nation,
there is peace in the world.

Such is the effect of peace in the heart. Let us share our peace of heart, by sending out thoughts of peace and spiritual upliftment to all, and also open ourselves to receive such thoughts from others.



Trust thyself; every breast vibrates to that iron string.

Emerson

In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.

Isaiah 30:15

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE—A DIALOGUE

ENQUIRER: I am in this world, brought here by an unknown force and I cannot imagine the purpose for which I am kept here, if indeed there is a purpose at all. Please tell me why I should go on living.

TEACHER: Life is indestructible. It changes its form but it is not destroyed. You know about physical science. Tell me, can heat, gravitation or electricity ever be destroyed? How is it possible to imagine, then, that by dying you will put an end to your life? It may change in form but it will continue. By destroying a flute, you do not destroy the wind which blows through it. No force outside yourself brought you here. You are a conditioned aspect of the universal force which is expressing itself through you.

ENQUIRER: I am not sure what 'conditioned aspect' means. Could you please explain more fully about this universal force?

TEACHER: The universal force has evolved the unit of force that you are, and it is expressing itself through you. The force that moves the planets in their courses, that regulates the rotation of the earth on its axis, that issues as light from the distant stars—that same force is breathing in your lungs, thinking in your brain, beating in your heart and sparkling in your eyes. This force is Consciousness. In its self-conditioned aspect, it is the Lord Omniscient and Omnipotent. Its great characteristic is love or compassion. Live as a part ought to live, in co-operation with the whole. Live in harmony with the universal force. Expand in knowledge and in love and acquire a deeper insight.

ENQUIRER: Will this deeper insight help me to understand the purpose of life? What you have said has made things much clearer but I am still rather puzzled. As I understand it, since life is indestructible, I have to go on living in some form, whatever happens, but is there any sense or purpose in this?

TEACHER: Do not try to know what you cannot know at this stage. More and more light will be given to you if you try to live a good life and persevere. A son is born to a King. He is to be the King's successor and will one day rule the kingdom of his father. The child does not understand the purpose of his life when he is one, two or five years old.

So you also are yet a babe in spirituality and you must grow up before you can understand the purpose of life.

ENQUIRER: This seems to be rather vague. I can appreciate that if there is a purpose, I cannot expect to understand it yet, but I still do not honestly feel convinced that there is any evidence to prove that there must be a purpose in life.

TEACHER: Think more and still more; there is no conscious action without a purpose. It is surely logical to infer from the complex machinery of the human body, its physiological functions, its emotional urges, its rational trend, that it cannot be purposeless. You wish to enquire into the causes of things around you. You love objects of beauty, you are uplifted by the vision of nature, by poetry, music and deeds of benevolence and self-sacrifice. There must be a purpose behind all these urges and impulses; they cannot be meaningless. I tell you that the whole of life points to one purpose: its universalization through greater harmony and expansion of the personality, and through transcending existing conditions of environment. You, as a conscious agent, must direct your being to that end.

ENQUIRER: What you say seems reasonable, but tell me has anybody achieved that purpose in life, or is it only an Utopia set on the horizon like a mirage?

TEACHER: I have known many who have achieved this purpose. Among them are Shri Dadaji, Swami Mangalnathji, Swami Rama Tirtha, So Hum Swami, the late Tashi Lama, Swami Sat Chit Anandaji and Pundit Baijnath.

H.P.S.

SHANTI SADAN NEWS

During the Spring term at Shanti Sadan there was a series of presentations combining meditation practices with talks on a wide range of topics. The first in the series on *The Path of Light* considered the ultimate identity of the consciousness of the spiritual seeker and the universal consciousness that is the basis and goal of all life. This was followed a talk on *Yoga and Modern Science* of which an edited version can be read in this issue of *Self-Knowledge*. A talk on *Deeper Truths from Mystical Poetry* showed how Dr Shastri used the poetic medium to convey important teachings, and *Revelations of Happiness* brought out how the traditional oriental teachings look beyond ideas of sin and darkness towards the true and lasting happiness intrinsic to the deeper Self within. Keen interest was shown in a talk on the subject of *Spiritual Yoga - a Shield against Worries*. The series closed with a talk on *Our Highest Potential* which was based on the 'ox-herding' pictures from the Zen tradition. The story and the talk began with the first intimations that a higher potential within and beyond the mind is to be found. It continued with the essential stages of locating these possibilities and of training the mind, illustrated by the analogy of keeping the ox on a short rein. A later picture provided the basis for a commentary on the disappearance of the man and his ox as distinct entities in the higher realization. And comments on the last picture illumined the subtle point of how an illumined sage can appear to re-enter the world of appearances and offer guidance.

The meditation practices held on Tuesday evenings continued to prove a most appealing format in which the traditional teachings can be presented. In evidence at these meetings has been a degree of stillness and concentration in marked contrast to the prevailing conditions of the world, and of profound value to all who are touched by them.

Summer 2013 Special Course

Sunday 2 June 2013 2-5pm

Columbia Hotel, 95 Lancaster Gate, London W2 3NS

Talk 1: *Yoga is Skilful Living*

First Meditation Practice

Talk 2 *Going Beyond Fear*

Second Meditation Practice

Talk 3 *Self is Infinite Consciousness*