

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

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### ADHYATMA YOGA

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

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

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

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### EVENTS FOR THE SUMMER TERM 2014

#### Weekday evening meetings at Shanti Sadan

Meditation practice sessions are held every Tuesday evening at 8pm throughout the year.

On Thursday evenings from 8 May to 26 June there will be a series of discourses on the Yoga teachings with spiritual practices.

#### Afternoon Course

The afternoon course will be held on Sunday 8 June, 2pm - 5pm, at the Columbia Hotel, Lancaster Gate, London W2. (See inside back cover).

## SELF-KNOWLEDGE

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### BEHIND THE PICTURE

Every great artist is also a craftsman, endowed with the skill needed to create the picture or figure. But art is more than craft. Something that cannot be seen or analysed infuses the creative process. This impetus uses the artist's thought processes, but its source is above and beyond. This is especially true of works of art that give peace and upliftment. At the height of creative intensity, the artist is anonymous, unconscious of a personal self. The signature and price, if any, come later. What is that invisible essence of art and source of creativity? Is it something dormant in all of us, or the gift of a rare few?

During his time in the Far East, Dr Shastri found that he could not fully appreciate the art he viewed in Japanese galleries. He sought guidance. A knowledgeable friend suggested that as one stands in contemplation before one of these pictures, one should forget the lines, forget the colours, forget the figures and subject, forget all that is limited—and what remains is art.

This advice prompts us to calm down and see beyond the multiplicity of detail. Art is more than the collection of qualities that appear. We are invited to attune our mind to the source of inspiration. If, when viewing the outer, we remember and revere the source, our appreciation of the work of art will be comprehensive.

The same principle applies to our personal self-examination. Underlying our human nature, made up, so to say, of the lines and tints of our thoughts and feelings, there is our divine source, the pure and true 'I'. 'Trailing clouds of glory do we come from God, who is our source,' wrote the poet Wordsworth. And in contemplating our deeper spiritual nature, transcending personal detail, we are communing with that in us which is the seed of all beauty.

The process also involves a forgetting—lifting our attention away from the familiar 'me' and its qualities. Just as the aim of a meditation posture is to allow us to forget, for a time, our physical body, so, by withdrawing to a deeper inner seat, we come to understand our true 'I' as the unchanging awareness that witnesses the thoughts coming and going, and the light that reveals all mental activity. This spiritual Self can never be destroyed or negated, and it is the ultimate source of all beauty, inspiration and higher meaning.

We cannot all be artists, but every man and woman can become a person of illumined understanding, through rising above the limits of the mind and awakening to self-knowledge

## True Knowledge is Self-Knowledge

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'KNOW THYSELF!' Most of us will be familiar with this saying and will know its source, the Delphic oracle. To be precise, 'Know thyself' was one of two sayings carved into the entrance of a holy temple in ancient Greece where people journeyed to consult the priestess—the oracle—who gave advice or prophesy supposedly based on divine inspiration.

No doubt many are puzzled why such a plain, short saying should resonate down the centuries. The saying, as it stands, 'Know thyself', holds apparently no promise, and seems to be turning our attention to something vague and elusive. But is this really the case? We need to understand why we should seek to know ourselves and whether doing so will enable us to enjoy a blissful and illumined understanding or merely leave us face to face with the familiar furnishings of our own mind.

We are all aware that the need to know oneself is central to the therapies that deal with the human mind when it is in distress and disorder. When King Lear said: 'Pray, do not mock me... I fear I am not in my perfect mind' we can sympathize, because most people know what it is like to be inwardly disturbed about something or other. Therapies like psychoanalysis, psychotherapy and other forms of counselling, in their own way try to help us by leading us to a deeper self-knowledge. But in these disciplines, the 'self' to be investigated is chiefly our mind—our mental life. There seems to be no quest to discover any higher Self over and above the human mind with all its limitations. This kind of therapy aims to give us a clearer awareness of our inner life, and therefore greater control, as we get to know the springs of our own behaviour and emotions.

The ideal result of such therapy is mental relief, freedom from tension, the capacity to live with ourselves more comfortably, and, hopefully, to find deeper meaning in life. But even when we do recover from our distress and mental disorder, our so-called normal mental life is bound to have its share of stress and suffering. We may feel a burning need for real fulfilment and an understanding that will free us from fear.

But how can we go that far? The answer is: Know thyself. What this

really means when the inner mists have cleared, is indicated in the *Avadhut Gita*:

Know the Self to be infinite consciousness, self-evident, beyond destruction, enlightening all bodies equally, ever shining.

In truth, even those happy states of mind that ease our path in daily life—peace, contentment, fellow feeling, courage, cheerfulness—have their ultimate source in the bliss and wholeness that is the true nature of the Self. We need to uncover this nature—not create it—by developing a new way of thought, a spiritual way that will lead us beyond the limits of thought into the transcendental wisdom.

So our true nature is far deeper and greater than the mind. The discovery of its presence is not through looking at the contents of the mind but looking behind them, so to say. We find our deeper Self through inner quietude and through turning the power of our attention inwards to our source.

This quietening of the thoughts and turning within, is not a natural skill. Nature has seen to it that our senses are turned outward. As for quietening the thoughts, this seems initially to challenge our intellect, which delights in thinking, and is suspicious, if not fearful, of the prospect of inner stillness and silence.

Yet the deepest secrets of experience—the true glory and ultimate value of our inner life—is reflected in a higher phase of the intellect that only begins to come to light when the mind is quiet and undistracted by outer things. To get the mind into such a condition requires method, practice and the guidance and encouragement of those who have reached the goal and realized their true Self.

There is guidance in the words and example of those who have realized ultimate Truth—the mystics and sages of mankind—and in those scriptures that throw light on the true nature of man. Among these are the Upanishads, which are inspirational writings that focus on the higher self-knowledge.

The spiritual Yoga is also concerned with this knowledge. In the *Katha Upanishad* the true and ultimate Yoga is called the method by which we can learn to turn the mind inwards to its source. This source is called ‘the Self of peace’. It is also the source of all wisdom. This Self

of peace, our higher Self, is ‘greater than the great’, and yet there is no single being in the universe who does not have this peace, wisdom and greatness at their core, as their true Self.

Another verse from the same Upanishad talks about the Lord having created man with senses which are directed outwards. ‘Therefore one sees the outer world and not the inner Self. A rare discriminating man turned his attention within himself and realized immortality.’

The Self to be discovered at the core of our being is immortal. It is never born nor will it ever die. The essence of our being, our true nature, is neither the physical body nor the thought-filled life of the mind. It is transcendent—beyond the realm of time and space. Being immortal and free from all limitations, it is infinite, and one in all, like the thread of a necklace passing through all the pearls and holding them together. As bodies and minds we differ. We may feel we are in conflict with others. But all sense of conflict ends when we see ourselves and others sharing the same underlying spiritual selfhood. In the *Bhagavad Gita* we find this verse: ‘He sees the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self, he whose self [i.e. mind] has been made steadfast by yoga, who everywhere sees the same.’

The way to uncover our deeper Self is through inner quietude and through turning the focus of our attention inwards to our source. This process stimulates a higher and more interior power of our intellect and awakens our sensitivity to the subtle, sublime and supreme spiritual Truth that gives life to the mind and to everything else.

This realization is not years away from us or even seconds away, if the mind is well prepared and knows where to look. In a sense, it is a becoming aware, more deeply, of the here and now reality of the present moment, the eternal now. Our mind is made unsteady, over-full and restless by our thoughts of past and future—reflecting on events that have been and gone or speculating with hope and fear about the future.

Living in the present—in the eternal Now—is easier to preach than to practise, but there is a logic in it that cannot be denied. You may know this short poem by the great Indian classical poet, Kalidas. It is called ‘Salutation to the Dawn’:

Look to this day  
 For it is life, the very life of life.  
 In its brief course  
 Lie all the verities and realities of our existence:  
 The bliss of growth,  
 The glory of action,  
 The splendour of beauty.  
 For yesterday is but a dream  
 And tomorrow only a vision,  
 But today well lived makes every yesterday  
 A dream of happiness  
 And every tomorrow a vision of hope.  
 Look well, therefore to this day!

The poem reminds us of the wonder of being alive and the gift of the moments we might enjoy as they unfold here and now. But we can go further than this. For what really matters at any given moment is where in our being our consciousness is centred: whether we are identified with the passing desires and reactions of our personality, or whether we are established in the peace of the underlying ground of our being, our spiritual self. This ability to take our stand on our higher nature is the result of our patient determination to keep to our course, in spite of life's challenges and distractions.

Life is full of distractions. Even when we want to perform a simple task on our computer, uninvited advertisements flash on the screen, demanding that we stop what we are doing and take the bait they are offering. If we are wise, we swiftly banish them from our sight—these robbers of time and energy—and get on with the job in hand. In Yoga, too, when thoughts arise that take us off track, we also have the power of veto—to say: 'Not wanted. Not relevant. I want Truth, not illusion.' This is called devotion and discrimination—keeping to our main purpose.

In ancient China, the artistically decorated buckle on belt or armour was a status symbol. A certain Duke said to his buckle-maker: 'Your skill is without equal. How did you acquire it?' He replied: 'All my life I have been fascinated by buckles. Each fine buckle I saw seized my attention. In fact, if it isn't a buckle....I don't look too closely!'

This hints at the devotion we need in our quest for wisdom, and the interest that draws us to these teachings about the true nature of the Self. This dedication, not forced but springing from a deep urge within us, is what the *Bhagavad Gita* means when it says: 'He obtains wisdom who is full of faith, who is devoted to it and who has subdued the senses. Having obtained wisdom, before long, he attains to the supreme peace.' [4:39]

Know thyself. The most worthwhile object of our research is to seek to know our true I and discover that divine and peaceful centre—our own immediate and indestructible Self. Our campus for this research is our mind, when it is quietened by practice, faith and the devotion that vetoes distractions.

There is bliss and higher intuition hidden in the deeper phase of our intellect. It comes to light in mature meditation. This principle is expressed in the following meditation text:

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

This self-knowledge is not a myth nor is it remote or distant from us at any time. Closer than our breathing, nearer than our thinking processes, it is our immediate consciousness and being, the inner light that reveals the stream of ideas. In a sense, it is more than known, ever achieved, ever attained, ever ours. We know it unconsciously, because we all have a sense of glory, immortality, greatness, infinity, a sense of unrealized potentialities, an intolerance of all limitations.

The process of Yoga is to pacify the mind and focus its attention inwards. It is then that our urge to transcend limitations leads us into the direct experience of reality. The Self unknown, or unconsciously known, becomes the Self realized. When this happens, the light of truth and bliss replaces the darkness of uncertainty and confusion. Our true nature as infinite knowledge is more than known and we can say with certainty, 'My nature is knowledge and nothing other than knowledge. Truly, the universe is revealed under the light of myself.'

**B.D.**

# Omar Khayyam

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THE POPULARITY gained by Edward FitzGerald's translation of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* since its first publication, is simply phenomenal. These verses make an appeal to the sceptical mind of the Western world. Some of the finest artists in Europe and India have devoted the best of their talent to illustrating the work of the Irish poet, and countless editions of the book have been sold all over the world.

Omar was a Persian who belonged to that elevating school of thought known as Irfan, which has inspired so many great poets. In the middle of last century, Europe knew little of the culture of Persia, and when the verses of FitzGerald brought the perfume of the roses of Naishapur to the West, Europe hailed Omar as an interpreter of the materialistic phase of the Western mind. Those who took life easily and did not want to think for themselves, sang songs in admiration of Omar as the advocate of the unrestricted use of wine and other luxuries of life. What pleasure filled their hearts when they sang the following verses, and thought that they had found the highest truth therein:

Why, all the saints and sages who discussed  
Of the two worlds so learnedly, are thrust  
Like foolish prophets forth; their words to scorn  
Are scattered, and their mouths are stopt with dust.

One whose acquaintance with Persian culture is deep, cannot but feel sorry for this misunderstanding of the philosophy of Omar, and no right-minded man should rest without challenging it, when once he knows of the injustice done to one of the greatest exponents of the philosophy of Persia.

Let us now examine the position of Omar, what kind of life he lived, and whether he actually practised what is imputed to him. Omar was one of the greatest scientists of Asia, and his writings on astronomy, mathematics and rhetoric are very highly spoken of by other Persian scholars. He never married, and never drank a cup of wine in his life, his only pleasure being the pursuit of philosophy, science and literature.

He was a Muslim by faith, and there are traditions in Persia to the effect that he never missed his prayer, and was well versed in the mysteries of the Quran, which he read daily with zeal.

One of his early companions in life rose to a high position in the State under the Shah. He remembered Omar, and in recognition of his literary merit, offered to do anything to make him happy. Omar, at that time did not say:

Ah, my beloved, fill the cup that clears  
Today of past regrets and future fears—  
Tomorrow? Why, tomorrow I may be  
Myself with yesterday's sev'n thousand years.

Neither did he ask his friend to surround him with beautiful dark-eyed Persian maidens, whose presence inebriates youth. His request was that a modest pension be granted him, with permission to live in retirement, in order that he might devote his time to the pursuit of higher knowledge. Gayasuddin, for such was the real name of Omar, was a moralist who preached the virtue of self-effacement.

The following *rubaii*, which is not included in the collection of FitzGerald, clearly indicates Omar's humility.

Walk in such a manner that they may not salute thee,  
Live in such a way that the public may not know and respect thee.  
When thou goest to the Mosque to pray, go in such a way that  
Nobody may notice thee and make thee Imam (leader of prayer).

Having read and re-read the 764 *rubaiyat* in the original (published in Lahore) and having carefully edited them with the help of several Persian scholars, I have come to the conclusion that not a single *rubaii* has been faithfully translated by FitzGerald. FitzGerald has only translated 75 out of the 764 *rubaiyat*, and none of these, strictly speaking, can be said to be a faithful translation of any one of the originals. In many cases he has summarized the sense of several *rubaiyat* in one stanza. I quote below the first *rubaii* in translation, leaving the reader to compare them and judge whether FitzGerald's version can be called a translation at all:

One morning from the Tavern came a mystic cry to me;  
O my mystic unconventional madman, get up, so that I may  
fill thy cup with wine, before the cup of thy life is filled.

*Fitzgerald's Translation:*

Dreaming when dawn's left hand was in the sky,  
I heard a voice within the tavern cry,  
Awake my little ones, and fill the cup  
Before life's liquor in its cup be dry.

The word *nada*, which is translated as a cry by the poet, means, in the Persian language, a mysterious voice like an inspiration, but not a human cry.

It must be admitted that the verse of FitzGerald is much more beautiful than the Persian of Omar, though it can hardly be called a translation of Omar's *rubaii*. But I want to examine the question as to whether Omar was a materialist, advocating a free use of wine to drown the sorrows of the world, with no faith in the immortality of the soul or the existence of a First Cause, a Cosmic Consciousness. It is likely that the reader who is not familiar with Sufi symbology may receive this impression after a superficial study of the *Rubaiyat*. In fact it is not easy to resist the materialistic conception of Omar when one reads the following verse of FitzGerald:

Oh, come with old Khayyam, and leave the wise  
To talk; one thing is certain, that Life flies;  
One thing is certain, and the rest is lies;  
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.

Let us first note the position of Omar in Persian poetry. He came before Hafiz, Jami and Saadi, who are unanimously regarded as the best of the Persian poets. Firdausi, the author of *Shah-namah* and one of the makers of the Persian language, preceded Omar, and so did several others. In the love poetry of Persia, Hafiz stands unsurpassed; for beauty of language and elegance of expression, Saadi is acknowledged the best, while in epic poetry Firdausi is the brightest jewel. Almost all the great

poets of Persia and India have belonged to the Irfan school, which is also called Sufism. Jami, Attar, Nizami and Hafiz also belonged to the same school and they are not very different from Omar.

The Arabs introduced the Irfan into Persia. This system of thought came to Arabia soon after the death of Hazrat Muhammad, and, according to one tradition, it was secretly communicated by the Prophet to Ali, the greatest of his followers. There is also a tradition that its first exponent was a young Arab girl named Rabi'ah, who was filled with the spirit of the Vedanta philosophy of India, and who was a poetess of no mean distinction. Fragments of Irfan are found scattered among the pages of that great book, the *Quran*. There is no doubt that the Prophet of Arabia was familiar with the doctrine of Vedanta and had perhaps heard of the Upanishads.

The Sufi hates hypocrisy and a show of religion, and tries to realize God within by devotion and knowledge. He stands for uncompromising morality and does not care how hardly he lives. His religion is to do good to others, which is the essence of Islam. He is free from fanaticism and is not anxious to make converts. Few of the Sufis ever drink wine. They write of wine and the tavern, but as a matter of fact they are against the use of alcohol. Besides, the Arabian Prophet has forbidden the use of wine, and the Sufi, who loves Muhammad with all his heart, never does what is prohibited by the Prophet. Wine in the Irfan poetry symbolizes divine ecstasy, and the *saqui*, or young girl who serves wine, means the Teacher who has realized God within.

The following *rubaii* of Sarmad, a great *Arif* or gnostic, who was beheaded by Emperor Aurangzeb in Delhi for his advanced views on religion, and who is known as one of the greatest saints of the Mogul period in India, will make my meaning clear:

If you want to be a king, do not be a beggar.  
Care for outward purity,  
Purify your heart by suffering for others,  
Do not be away from the tavern for a minute.

It is a known fact that Sarmad never touched wine in his life. It is quite clear that by the 'tavern' he means 'the place where the Teacher

propagates divine wisdom'. The very first verse in the *Divan* of Hafiz says: 'O *saqui*, come and fill my cup with wine.' In the language of a layman, this means: 'Come, O Teacher of Truth, and fill my heart with divine wisdom.'

Humility, renunciation, boundless tolerance, compassion, poverty and simplicity are the virtues that a Sufi prizes above many prayers, and he cultivates them in order to realize God. Self-effacement is one of the chief aims of a Sufi. Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, a prince among Sufis, renounced his great wealth and high position to become a begging Sufi and to find God in his own soul, and he too makes mention of wine and the tavern in his great work, the *Masnavi*. I am convinced of the fact that Omar, who follows the idiom of the Arabian Sufis, never countenanced wine.

That Omar was not a believer in the materialistic conception of the Universe is clear from many of his *rubaiyat*, none of which have been translated by FitzGerald. I quote a *rubaii* in support of my contention:

O God, Thou art merciful, thrice merciful,  
Why will not a sinner enter heaven?  
If Thy grace goes only to the faithful, it is not proper grace.  
If Thou savest a sinner also, then it is true mercy.

Islam teaches the doctrine of predestination, and Omar was a believer in this. He held that all is God, and consequently good. The following *rubaii* of Omar, translated by myself, makes this clear:

Except the order of God, no one's order has any value.  
Where and what is the existence of that which is beyond His order?  
Everything today is what it should be.  
The should-have-been does not exist at all.

In the introduction to the translation of the *Rubaiyat* of FitzGerald, I find the following: '...his wine is the veritable juice of the grape; his tavern where it was to be had; his *saqui* the flesh and blood that poured it out for him; all of which, and where the roses were in bloom, was all he professed to want of this world, or to expect of Paradise.' I have no

hesitation in declaring that the man who thinks of Omar and his philosophy in these terms, has not understood him at all. That Omar's wine was not 'the veritable juice of the grape' is clear from the following *rubaii*, which is not touched by FitzGerald:

Drink that wine which is eternal life,  
Drink the wine which is the foundation of the joys of youth.

Omar was well versed in science and knew well that alcohol shortened life, and he would never call it 'life eternal'. Undoubtedly, by 'wine' he meant 'divine wisdom'.

Omar's code of morality, which is simple, is summed up by him in the *rubaii* quoted below:

Do not be lazy, do thy duty to God,  
I am responsible for the needs of this world, you fetch wine.  
You must not think of depriving others of their life and property;  
What little you have, share it with others.

The same thought is expressed in the Hindu book, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and Fariduddin Attar, a great Sufi of Persia, has said the same thing in his book called *Pand Nama*. Like other Sufis, Omar sings of the hollowness of worldly desires and outer knowledge for its own sake, and advises abstention from this will-o'-the-wisp. Saadi has said in his *Bustan*: 'You cannot ride two boats at the same time, each sailing in a different direction, and yet enjoy the bliss of true knowledge; if you care for the supreme bliss of divine knowledge, you have to give up the pleasures of the flesh.' The following *rubaii* of Omar, translated by myself, has the same meaning:

Suppose you have gathered the wealth of the whole world  
And have adorned the heart with verdure,  
And you sit like dew for a night on yonder lawn;  
Still with the advent of dawn you will have to depart.

To understand the philosophy of Omar, one must make a thorough study of the *Masnavi* of Maulana Rumi, that monumental work on Irfan,

which contains the essence of Islam and the highest flights of Sufism. To know what Omar really aims at, one must go to the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*, wherein the human mind for the first time rises to its supreme height in this realm. The *Upanishads* were first translated into Persian by Dara Shikoh, although an Arabic translation was made in the reign of Caliph Mamoun Rashid.

Self-surrender to God, which is one of the virtues the Sufi loves and cultivates, is beautifully expressed by FitzGerald in his *rubaii*:

The ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,  
But right or left as strikes the player goes;  
He that tossed thee down into the field,  
He knows about it all—he knows—he knows!

**Hari Prasad Shastri**

#### **Poem of Princess Mira**

If I find my Lord,  
I will set Him in the lotus of my eyes.  
My Lord dwells in my eyes;  
I do not even blink.  
In the dome of my forehead  
Exists a small lattice window  
In the space between the eye-brows.  
Thither I gaze and gaze upon my Lord.  
In the chamber of my vacant heart  
I spread the bed of Divine Union.  
Mira's Lord is that roguish Giridhara (Krishna);  
Again and again I sacrifice my all.

*Trans. A.J.A.*

## **MEDITATION AT SHANTI SADAN**

*A recent session led by the Warden*

Meditation is one of the most effective means we have for helping ourselves. The practice will help us to relax, to calm down, to put things into perspective. But real meditation is much more than this. It leads to profound peace of mind based on the discovery that our true nature is infinite peace and freedom.

Normally our mind is active and outgoing. This is very necessary to deal with life. But we often suffer from mental overload due to our concern with the surface things of life. This can lead to fatigue, confusion, anxiety and even a sense of hopelessness. We cannot predict the way things will go. Often they tend to go in a way that contradicts our personal wishes or desires. This is the way of the world. But if we want something deeper and more satisfying, we need to discover the deeper reality—what is truly reliable—the essential being behind our changing personality.

The one place we can dive deeper and gain true satisfaction is within our own being. Within ourselves there is a spiritual dimension, whose nature is peace, light, freedom and beauty. If we learn to practise spiritual meditation, we will tap this source. There is a spiritual power in everyone that is hidden behind the normal mental processes. This has been called the inner light and we can all learn to live in that light.

Our mind can be compared to a rock-pool revealed by the outgoing tide. If it is windy, or stones are thrown into the pool, the surface gets agitated and we cannot see into the water. All we get are ripples and distorted reflections. But if the pool is protected from the wind, the water will become still. And there will be revealed within it a world full of tranquil beauty: plants, coloured shells, tiny fish, all lit by shafts of sunlight.

In a similar way, if our mind is agitated, it does not reveal its hidden treasures. It does not allow us to experience the peaceful and illumined depths of our own being. But if our mind is calm and focused interiorly, great qualities are revealed that relate to our spiritual consciousness. To draw on this inner treasury, we need a method for stilling the mind and for directing its attention within. This is one of the aims of meditation.



Spiritual meditation has to be approached in stages. There are preparations, both inner and outer. For the moment, let us concentrate on the inner preparation.

The main challenge at the start of a meditation session is to change the current of our thoughts. It is possible for us to sit with closed eyes, apparently meditating, and yet to be completely distracted and absorbed in anything that pops up in our mind. This is quite natural. So we need some gentle but effective means of calming the mind and leading it towards spiritual concentration.

What is most important here is our attitude. Meditation can be done without any quest for deeper self-knowledge as a way of strengthening our will and gaining inner power and positivity. Or it can be done with spiritual meaning, in which case something much higher in our mind will become operative. This is possible if our practice is an approach to communion with a deeper reality—call it truth, the absolute, God, beauty, or the highest good. It is a means of coming into touch with the supreme power, which is the hidden support of all.

Therefore, the first step towards this deeper kind of meditation is to offer a mental salutation to this unseen power, always present. This can be accompanied by a gesture of showing reverence, like joining the palms of the hand or lowering of the head, or anything you think is appropriate. So, let us begin by approaching the meditation with reverence and calmness.

OM Reverence to that which is peace, light and bliss. OM

The first practice is a breathing practice that will help us to calm and focus our mind.

Breathe slowly and deeply, mentally repeating the holy syllable, OM, hearing the sound O on the in-breath and M on the out-breath. (21 times)

The OM is not voiced but ‘heard’ interiorly through associating the natural sound of the in-breath with ‘O’, and the exhalation with ‘M’. The aim is that the thoughts and preoccupations that dominate our mind, gently fall away as they are replaced by OM. In this way, our mind will become calmer, and we will create some inner space in which we can

plant further ideas of spiritual light and peace. Let us do it together for five minutes.

The second practice is a visualization. It draws on the power of imagination that we all possess, and also on our inner strength of will to sustain the visualization in our mind. This skill is matured with practice.

Imagine the morning sun, in all its purity and splendour, as present and radiating within us. The part of the body for this visualization is the heart centre, and this inner sun is to be imagined shining here, sending out rays of peace, plenty and power.

Make the imagination as vivid as possible, and feel the sun’s warmth. One of the greatest symbols of divine power is the sun, the giver of light and life to our world. In a similar way, the spirit in man, our true Self, is like an inner sun. It is the central power that lights up both the inner and outer world. Without this underlying self, there would be no experience.

The philosophical side of Adhyatma Yoga throws more light on the nature of the Self from the point of view of reason. But for the moment, we accept this principle of the inner spiritual sun as the source of our energy and intelligence—pure consciousness—and we affirm it, trust it. Devote five minutes to this visualization.

The last practice is to focus our mind on a text.

OM

I EXIST FOREVER IN THE DIVINE SUN, THE SELF.  
MY MIND REFLECTS ITS LIGHT, PEACE AND TRANQUILLITY.

OM

This points to the underlying reality of our true Self. The ‘reflection’ of the supreme consciousness in the mind is the point of contact that gives life and awareness to the mind. This is our experience here and now. But, as with the rock pool, we need to make this reflection clear, by stilling the mind and making it transparent. Then, the higher

consciousness will open to us, leading to bliss, peace and fulfilment.

During the time of meditation, we affirm the text in trust and acquiescence, and try to enter into it. Meditation techniques differ, but a useful approach is to repeat the words to ourselves inwardly a few times, and then to dwell on the meaning. We can connect, so to say, with one part of the text, or we can calmly and slowly go over the text as a whole in our contemplation of it. When the mind runs away and gets lost in other thoughts, just bring it back gently but firmly, and re-establish the text as the focus for concentration.

This meditation contains a statement that points to our true identity:

I EXIST FOREVER IN THE DIVINE SUN, THE SELF.

It also reveals the bridge to its realization:

MY MIND REFLECTS ITS LIGHT, PEACE AND TRANQUILLITY.

The more peaceful we are, the more perfectly will our mind reflect this light and tranquillity. Let us meditate on the text for about seven minutes.

True meditation is an art involving great sensitivity and a high degree of alertness. There is nothing sleepy or lazy about it. Its ultimate aim is an awakening—the awakening of the mind's great potentiality for spiritual wisdom and enlightenment. The goal of meditation is liberation. To pursue this ideal of liberation is the best service we can do for ourselves and the world.

Let us close our meditation by offering thoughts of peace and light to all living beings.

## A SAILOR IN TIANJIN

In the year 1918, when in China, I travelled to the port of Tianjin in order to collect material for a few articles I was commissioned to write for *Millard's Review*, a noted American weekly published in Shanghai. My name figured on it as a literary editor. I had a room in a hotel run by a European. The ground floor was occupied by a public bar. I had to go to the bar to deposit the key of my room when I went out.

One evening, as I went in to collect the key, I found a young American, a handsome sailor, whose age was not more than twenty. He was already drunk. Six cups of gin were spread before him. He was going to give a demonstration of his drinking power by finishing the contents of the cups one after the other without any intermission. When I saw him, I felt that he was going to kill himself for nothing.

The manager of the hotel, who kept the bar, was there, enjoying the sight and pleased with the money he would gain, regardless of the serious risk to the health of the young sailor. Two or three other men were there, enjoying the feat of drunkenness.

I asked the sailor not to attempt draining these cups of poison. The hotelier said to me indignantly, 'It is not your business to interfere.' Finding that there was no help, by a sweep of my hand I brushed off all the cups of gin, spilling the contents. There was an uproar and I was denounced as a madman. I helped the young man to stagger out. I put him in a rickshaw and paid the rickshaw man in advance, asking him to drive the fellow to his boat in the dock-yard.

The manager was enraged and called me all the filthy names he could. He asked me to leave the room at once. I told him I was a British subject and the bar was in the British concession, and I was going to report the matter to the British Consul, who knew me personally, and to urge him to cancel the licence of the bar. This sobered up the manager.

The following morning I went to the boat and found the young fellow very ill. He was being looked after by the ship's doctor. I reported the matter to the Consul General, who gave a strong warning to the hotelier. After two or three days I met the young sailor in a reading-room. He was grateful to me, and added: 'I have given up drinking now.'

H.P.S.

## The Bliss of Atman

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If bliss were an object to be achieved by effort only, every striving being would be happy, contented and peaceful. Yet though everyone is striving to be happy, misery is universal. Why? Because real joy is experienced only in the effortless mode of contemplation.

Shri Dada of Aligarh

WE WANT undiluted, unlimited, uninterrupted happiness—what the yogis call *ananda*, or bliss. This desire for bliss is not a false hunger for the impossible. It is an expression of the highest truth of our nature and can never be extinguished. But we do not understand our higher nature and therefore we look for bliss in the wrong way and in the wrong place. We look for it as if it were some kind of tangible object in the world around us, but true bliss is spirit, and, as such, our own essence. It is to be found within as the constant spiritual element which forms the basis of our own being.

The bliss of Atman is very near, and it presses itself on our consciousness as a dim sense that there does exist something which is utterly desirable. And so we love, and what we really love is this inner immortal spirit, beneath the personality, which is all bliss and which is the Divinity behind all outer appearances. But we do not realize what it is that we are loving because it is veiled by the outer forms. Our Teacher has said that we are like blind lovers: our eyes are holden so that we do not perceive that the object of our love is the Lover of the whole world, who has brought it forth as if in sport and come to dwell in every particle of it and is calling to each one to come and be reunited with Him.

The veil which hides from us the bliss within is the unenlightened mind. It also distorts our outer vision and makes it appear that bliss lies in the outer perishable forms. And so desire is born in relation to outer objects and we run after them in search of bliss. We cast a shadow of our inner bliss outwards and then vainly try to grasp it. We are like the musk deer who secretes a most fragrant perfume from a gland in the centre of its body. When the wind wafts the perfume towards it, it

becomes intoxicated with the fragrance and runs to find it, but eventually falls exhausted. Only then, when it stays still, does it sense the fragrance which comes from within. All its efforts had served only to turn its attention away from what it sought.

So the teachers tell us that our failure to find bliss is due to the fact that we are trying to find it objects outside our real Self, the spirit. These objects fall into two categories. Some are obvious as objects, and others are not obvious at all because they are so close to us that we think of them as being part of our real being. The obvious objects are the objects of the senses. We run after them in search of bliss as if it were inside them like a kind of syrup, and yet if this were so all people would take delight in the same things, which is not so, as tastes differ radically. Besides, the same object can give us happiness at one time and misery at another, which shows that it is not intrinsically bliss-giving; it all depends on our attitude towards it.

Suppose, says the teacher Swami Vidyaranya, that three men see a jewel at the same time. Two of them are filled with desire and try to get it, while the third admires it but is indifferent towards possessing it. The man who obtains the jewel will be joyous, the one who loses it will be sorrowful, while the indifferent one will be free from inner disturbance.

What causes a person to be indifferent to the jewel? The fact that it was insignificant to him, because he was already in possession of unlimited wealth. So a man who knows that his own Atman is the source of unlimited bliss does not run after objects which can only give temporary joy that is sure to be followed by sorrow.

It was said earlier that there are some objects which are not easily recognised as such because they are so close to our real being: our body and mind. Both are objects to, and known by, the spirit within, our real Self, but they are so close that we feel identified with them. Our primary search for joy is in these objects, which we erroneously think of as ‘myself’. Other objects are only of interest to us because they affect our body and mind favourably. Thus we search for bliss in these finite, perishable shadows of our real Self, the immortal spirit.

All day long we run after objects to satisfy our body and mind, until, fatigued by our efforts, we fall exhausted. And then something wonderful happens. What our efforts have failed to produce is tasted in

deep sleep. We drink deeply and are revived for another day. We withdraw from the outer objects of the senses, throw aside the instruments of body and mind, in order to escape from the fatigue with which they are associated, and for a brief period are refreshed by the bliss of our own spirit.

It is true that our mind is not aware of this felicity, because it is not functioning then, but the bliss of the spirit is beyond the mind and is known in a different way, though not actually recognised before enlightenment, as the shadow of the mental ignorance hangs over it.

Thus in deep sleep we have a unique experience of ignorance and bliss at the same time. We speak of a blissful sleep in which we knew nothing: no aches and pains, joys and sorrows, not even our own ego. It is the experience of the bliss of the spirit through a thin veil and it is very precious to everyone. Our Teacher used to say that if you promised a man that you would make him an emperor or give him all the wealth in the world, on the sole condition that he would never again have a single hour's sleep, he would refuse; he would say 'I cannot live without sleep.'

All worldly joys ultimately produce fatigue, but the spiritual bliss is described in Sanskrit as *vishranta*, fatiguelessness, and we experience a glimpse of it in deep sleep. All cares and worries dissolve like phantoms, as if they did not exist, and in truth they do not exist in our real being, the spirit. 'Anything which tires you', says Shri Dada, 'is not of Atman.' Atman is ananda and *vishranta*—the bliss in which there is no shadow of fatigue.

The experience of deep sleep is valuable not only for the temporary refreshment it gives, but because it also gives us a clue to our real nature, which transcends the body and mind and all the woes of the world we take on by being identified with them. This theme is dealt with frequently in the classics of Yoga, as in Shri Shankara's *Century of Verses*:

67. The individual soul, during the waking state, puts forth innumerable efforts for the attainment of sensual pleasures, and when the entire group of sensory organs is fatigued, it forgets even the pleasure on hand and goes to sleep in order that it may enjoy rest in its own nature. Ultra-sensual bliss is thus extremely easy of attainment and is far

superior to the pleasure derived from the senses, which always produces disgust in the end.

68. The bird, by the motion of its wings, generates a breeze, and by its aid reaches a great height, and there, having attained the vast expanse of the atmosphere, cures itself of its fatigue by spreading its wings. So too this mind, troubled by many evil desires and doubts in respect of objects of pleasure, and fatigued thereby, stretches forth the hands and feet and sleeps long for the sake of rest.

69. The moment that the individual soul is absorbed in the spirit within, it ceases to be conscious of anything external or internal, like a lover embracing his beloved on his return from a foreign land. In that state all his worldly activity, that is the result of merit and demerit, disappears, and nothing is remembered of all these ups and downs, sorrow, confusion and fear.

The reason that there is such bliss in deep sleep is that, in that state, all worldly experience melts into the inner spirit from which it comes forth—in other words, it is all experienced in its true nature, as God, and not in its outer phenomenal forms. But when we wake up again, the ignorance in the mind prevents us from seeing beyond the forms to the bliss within, and so we take them to be real and run after them. But as Shri Shankara says, the sweetness of an orange lies in its juice, not in its outer rind. A man who knows, drinks the juice and throws away the remnant, even if it be highly fragrant.

Now it was said that in deep sleep we do not experience the bliss of the spirit directly, and therefore deep sleep does not constitute enlightenment; we experience it through a veil. Swami Vidyaranya says it is like touching a pitcher full of very cold water; we know from the sensation that water must be inside, though we do not directly experience it. So in deep sleep, the bliss of Atman is sensed through a veil, and this veil is made up of the tranquil mind in which no thought stirs. Our perception of bliss was due to the tranquillity of the mind, and in the same way, whenever in the waking state the mind becomes tranquil, it allows the spirit to shine through and we experience what we call happiness.

We think bliss comes from our contact with outer objects, but it is

not so. If we reflect carefully on our own experience, we will find that it is not our desires and mental excitement which produces happiness. The delight comes when the desire is temporarily stilled through the attainment of some pleasant object, and the mind becomes concentrated and free from agitation. It is then that a few drops of the bliss of the Self, as it were, come to the surface of the mind. Yet sense-based enjoyment lasts only for a short while. It is like the joy of a small child immersed in an ice-cream cornet. He is completely concentrated, not bothering about his hands, his face or his mother. His whole world is ice-cream, and his satisfied mind turns inward and catches a glimpse of the Self. But what happens a few minutes later? He cries for another cornet, and then another. A well-meaning uncle obliges. And then he wakes in the night with tummy-ache.

So all our worldly desires cost energy and have an aftermath which causes sorrow. They give temporary delight when fulfilled, and we want to repeat them. If our desire is frustrated, there is grief and anger, and through the dark veil of the mind, the bliss of Atman is distorted into pain. When desires are freely indulged, greed results. This obscures the discriminating power of the mind, and can turn man into a beast.

It is through the practice of self-control, study of the truth, reflection and meditation, that the binding force of desire is gradually loosened and the mind naturally turns inwards. The closer it comes to the Atman, that is to say, the more refined and subtle the level the mind operates on, the more bliss is experienced.

Sense pleasures give a shadow of bliss. Mental pleasures, such as love of art and poetry, give a more refined delight. An even more subtle delight is obtained from philosophical reflection and association with spiritual people, for those who have the capacity to appreciate them. And the joys which come from devotion to God, contemplation of his nature and self-effacing service of a spiritual teacher, are higher still. All joy comes from Atman, the spirit, and the more interior the consciousness, the more blissful it is.

Thus there are ascending grades of joy in the world, according to the different realms of the mind in which we operate, but beyond them all is the absolute bliss of the spirit. Shri Shankara says: 'If the bliss of a king endowed with all prosperity be taken as a unit, the bliss of the next

higher realm is said to be a hundredfold. So too, through the succeeding realms, higher and higher, to the realms of the gods, each bliss is a hundredfold of the one beneath. But completely unique and containing within itself all these grades of bliss is the bliss of Brahman, the inner Self, of which the pleasures of the senses are but an insignificant fraction.'

This bliss is beyond our powers of imagination and has to be experienced. Shri Dada, attempting to indicate the inexpressible, said: 'I can only describe it as a mass of cool light, vibrating peace, infinite, and not the object of any conscious striving.' It is outer objects that we strive after because, through some inscrutable delusion, we become blind to our own inner blissful Atman. Seeds of desire and aversion spring up in our heart and turn our attention outwards, and we rise and fall on the wheel of worldly experience, unaware of the treasure which lies within.

Therefore, the spiritual aspirant must convince himself that Atman is bliss and the highest object of love, by studying the teaching again and again, from a proper source, and reflecting on it in the light of one's own experience of the delusive nature of sense-pleasures. We must also face up to the fact that the body is perishable; one day it will go, and is unworthy of our deep love. As Swami Rama Tirtha says: 'You have no certificate with you guaranteeing you will be able to keep th body.' To overcome one's attachment to the physical body is to be on the verge of illumination.

There is a verse in the Upanishads which says that once a man has realized the Atman, then, come what may, there is nothing in the world that can make him grieve in the wake of the physical body. This is freedom. The real object of love, says Shri Dada, is your own Atman, there is none else. He is the Lord within, and he is also in his higher nature, the Absolute, Brahman. One should learn about him in both these aspects, and then try to discover him, within one's own heart through meditation. It is by his grace as the Lord, that the secret will be revealed that He is our own higher Self, the all-blissful.

**M.A.**

## St Paul on Transforming the Mind

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Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things.

(*Philippians* 1:4)

THESE FAMOUS words written by St Paul contain excellent advice for anyone who has a mind. Implicit in this advice is the idea that it is within our power to direct our minds, that our minds are instruments which can be governed just as our hands or feet. The energies of our inner world contain dark passions of anger, lust and greed, and it is sadly the case that these passions dominate many of us. But indulgence in these passions is unsatisfying and leads to dreadful personal and social consequences.

The human soul can find a wholesome satisfaction in following St Paul's advice, gradually taming the inner beast. Appreciating great art and poetry, reading the scriptures of the world, following the disciplines of science—which is essentially the pursuit of truth—all these things tend to uplift the mind.

Followers of Adhyatma Yoga are universalists, and we eschew any narrowness or fanaticism. There are many religions in the world. If we take a generous view, we can argue that they are broadly collections of true, honest, just, pure and noble examples of how to live, which are celebrated in some way and passed down from one generation to another.

Some might say that these verses in *Philippians* are all very good but impractical and wishy-washy. They are to be compared to the advice of a nurse to a child. But they are not cheap words. Whatever St Paul said cost him dearly. He describes some of the opposition he faced to the delivery of his message of faith, hope and love. (*Corinthians* 2:11:24 f.)

Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one, thrice I was beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils

by the heathen, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watching often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness, beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

We may notice in ourselves an inclination to lament that our life is rather difficult. St Paul's response to his difficulties is otherwise. Jesus taught his disciples to rejoice and be happy when they were persecuted or mistreated, because that was the way the true prophets were treated and, as we know, it was what happened to him. So St Paul, identifying himself with the sufferings of Christ, says 'rejoice in the Lord, pray without ceasing and whatsoever things are true... think on these things'. This directing of the mind is an essential principle of spiritual life—the life of a true yogi. The word 'yoga' comes from the root *yuj*, to join, from which we derive our word yoke. Yoga means union of the soul with the higher Self, the Paramatman, whose nature is pure consciousness.

There is a well-known principle of psychology: whatever you pay attention to, you obtain more of it. Thus, if we have to do with young people and we constantly harp on their faults and failings and criticize them, they realize subconsciously that the way to get attention is to misbehave. Conversely, if we look beyond their failings to the good growing within, the good is enhanced.

So it is with our mind. Our mind may become very disordered and unwholesome at times. But there is no point becoming vexed with its wandering away from the true, beautiful or good thoughts which we put before it. They say that you can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink. In point of fact, all living beings need water. If you keep the horse in front of the water, sooner or later it will become thirsty. Our souls need contact with these high qualities of truth, justice, sincerity, compassion, decency, wisdom, reality, just as our bodies need bread and water. Man does not live by bread alone.

The mind of St Paul himself was once full of hatred and animosity. At that time he was named Saul, after the first King of Israel. As is well known, Jesus was crucified by the Romans at the instigation of the then Jews for largely political reasons. However, his followers did not disappear but rather began to flourish and spread his message, which

was not the intention of those who had put him to death. Saul was a member of the sect of Pharisees, which was losing members to the group of Jesus' followers. He harassed and threatened them in every way he could. He went at one point to the High Priest in Jerusalem and obtained letters to the governor of Damascus, which would have given him permission to capture and bind the Christians there and bring them back to Jerusalem for execution.

However, he had a vision of light on the road to Damascus and heard a voice saying: 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' This was his introduction to Jesus and it transformed his mind and life completely. He was blinded by his vision and had to be taken to Damascus, where he lay trying to recover. A certain Christian called Ananias, who lived in Damascus, had a vision of Jesus and was told to go to the house where Saul was and lay hands on him. This must have required courage, because the Christians were terrified of him. But very many early followers had such inspirations and visions in those days, and they felt obliged to carry out any instructions they received. So Ananias went to the house, found out that Saul was indeed there and laid hands on him. 'The scales fell' from Saul's eyes and he was able to see again.

Soon he was going into the synagogues and other assemblies of the Jews and telling them that Jesus was indeed the Son of God, the Christ, and proving it from the words of the Old Testament. Much to the astonishment of the Christians, the tremendous energy he had shown in persecuting them was now deployed in the opposite direction. He was baptised and given a new name: Paul. As his esteem among the followers of Jesus grew, so his star among the Pharisees and the other Jews waned. We can see this from the forty stripes save one, five times, which he endured.

When Paul had his vision on the 'road to Damascus', he joined a large number of the followers of Jesus who had had a vision or experience of him after the crucifixion. From a rational point of view, it would seem impossible to determine what happened to the body of Jesus, or even whether his body was actually dead when it was taken down from the cross. Two points might be made. Firstly, there are more things in heaven and earth than any philosophy or indeed modern science is aware of. Secondly, it is very common for us to have dreams

or visions of those to whom we are close, after they pass away. These visions often relieve those who experience them of all grief and pain of loss. So while we may just have to accept not knowing what happened to the body of Jesus, we can well understand that his appearances were transformative for those who had them. St Paul gives a list which leaves out Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene in the garden, but includes an appearance to five hundred brethren at once, which the four gospels do not tell us about.

The early followers of Jesus came from all walks of life, and were united in the common object of their love. St Paul reminds us that God is no respecter of persons. Saintliness has nothing to do with the clothes we happen to wear, the food we eat, whether we are married with a family or single, whether we are a monk or nun or not, it has nothing to do with the language we speak or the culture or religion we may happen to belong to. These outer things mean nothing to God. St Paul happily stood up to Roman governors, magistrates and kings and even faced down St Peter on one occasion when one might have expected a certain deference. This behaviour is characteristic of those who have direct and not second-hand experience of spiritual truth.

Jesus taught the love of God as the Father of all things and the love of one's neighbour as oneself. There is a theological word, coinherence, which expresses the living unity between God the Father, Jesus, the Spirit and the disciples in whom He lives. So Jesus taught: inasmuch as you look after, care for, minister to the least of my disciples, you look after Me. St John has Jesus saying this: 'By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that ye love one another.' So we can imagine that the early disciples took great care of each other. Indeed we are told that in Jerusalem in the very early days, they held all things in common. When St Paul wrote his letter to the Christians in Rome in preparation for a visit, the sixteenth chapter is taken up entirely with greetings:

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus, who have for my life laid down their necks.... Greet Mary who bestowed much labour upon us, greet Amplius my beloved in the Lord... salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord and his mother and mine, Timothy my workfellow and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsman salute you...

and then a new voice is heard: 'I Tertius, who wrote this epistle salute you...' We are all familiar with the feeling of not wishing to be left out! Then the words of St Paul continue: 'Gaius my host salutes you...'

No doubt it was common in the ancient world, when one heard that someone was writing a letter, to ask them to convey one's greetings, but there is an enthusiasm and abundance of salutations in the chapter which suggests warm affection.

The ancient world was a somewhat bleak place. No doubt there were the ordinary consolations of family and friends and the rhythm of community life with its festivals, but death hung over it all, as it does us. There were clubs you could join which ensured you a decent funeral in return for your subscription, and the members of the club would meet together now and again for a feast. The motto in some clubs was 'Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die.'

But St Paul's idea was quite different. After his original and many subsequent spiritual experiences he writes this:

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (*Romans* 8:38,39)

With these words we are coming close to the heart of Christianity. St Paul and all the other apostles had an intuition that they could not be cut off from this *agape* or divine love. Love is a slippery word and people use it to refer to a sugary sentimental feeling. Or people say they are falling in love when what they should say is they are falling in lust. But St Paul's *agape* is not in the least sentimental. Would weak sentimentality have kept him afloat as he spent a day and a night in the deep? People talk about tough love, but St Paul's intuition of the love of God tells us that it is invincible.

The philosophy which underlies Adhyatma Yoga is called *Advaita*, which means non-duality or non-separation. The intuition which lies at its heart can be stated in many ways. There are four great statements culled from the Upanishads called the *mahavakyas*, one of which is *Ayam Atma Brahma*—This Self is Brahman (the Absolute). The heart of this philosophy is not difficult to understand in words: This Self, which we take to be a body having a certain characteristics, a lifespan,

a family, speaking a particular language and belonging to some nation, is in reality infinite consciousness, knowledge and bliss. In this blissful consciousness there is no duality, no separation. In the classic analogy, differences are observed between waves, breaking waves, huge swells and a calm sea, but it is all just water. Similarly, all is the one Self. All is one consciousness. I may say I realize it or do not realize it, but all such assertions belong to the realm of duality. From the strict point of view of Advaita, there is no one else to realize it.

The philosophy of Advaita is logical and has been worked out in fine detail. In order to realize it, our whole being, our minds, our hearts and our behaviour, have to be brought into conformity with the central fact that consciousness, Self, is one and the same in all. A person who knows this truth does no harm, because to him all harm is self-harm. Those who wish to understand the truth of mutual unity do no harm on principle, for harmlessness aids their growth in understanding.

If you happen to be a Christian, you may remember that Jesus said, 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also must I bring.' The catholic (which means 'universal') position is therefore that many people down the centuries have found their way to God whether they have heard of Jesus of Nazareth or not. So Self-knowledge does not mean knowing your IQ, your height, your weight, your tendencies, your virtues and vices; it means knowing your true infinite Self of bliss.

St Paul's teaching implies a process of growth towards a spiritual consummation in the life of a Christian. There were synagogues in every city in the Roman Empire, where the law of Moses was taught. The Old Testament had been translated from Hebrew into Greek in Alexandria in the third and second centuries BCE, and many non-Jewish people—gentiles—were attracted to the ethical monotheism of the ancient religion. The physical mark of being a Jew was circumcision. Those gentiles or Greek men who wished to join the synagogues had to be circumcised, at least in many synagogues. The question of the necessity of circumcision continued to be asked in the early Church and it was decided at the first council of the Church that Christians, who were not ethnic Jews, did not need to be circumcised. In this the council agreed with St Paul, whose congregation in Galatia had been confused by some Jewish Christians who had visited them and told them they



needed to be circumcised. St Paul had vigorously disagreed as the faith he taught was not dependent on any outer sign. He taught the 'circumcision of the heart'. However, we can see from this incident that many in the very early church saw themselves as fully observant Jews.

When St Paul stood up in these scattered synagogues to tell the story of Jesus' death and resurrection, and to prove the necessity of it from the Old Testament, some believed him and some did not. Some of the Jewish people and Greeks believed, and others did not. In the end, such was the opposition to St Paul that he gave up on the Jews and turned to the Gentiles.

Those who believed his message and wished to join his little communities were initiated by baptism. He says that he himself was not sent to baptise but to preach the good news. He gave the meaning of baptism: when you go under the water you are dying to your old life, and when you come up out of the water, you are rising to a new spiritual life in the community, 'in Christ'. As Christ died, so you die, and as he rose again, so do you. It is a passage from darkness to light. In rising again, you enter into the same relationship with God as Jesus had, and begin to pray to him as your Father. You receive a new spirit which leads you inwardly closer to God. St Paul passes on a baptismal formula which was used at a climax of the ceremony: 'Awake, O sleeper and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.'

For the first three centuries, the Church was subject to great suspicion from the outside world, and the time came when to admit to being a Christian before the magistrate was to sign your own order for execution. To join this secret society was a dangerous step, but it would have taken you out of a world which was without any great hope, into a world of great integrity, love and affection.

From St Paul's letters, we can see that not all those who were baptised immediately awoke spiritually as desired. To give one example out of many, St Paul learned that two members of the congregation in Corinth had fallen out with each other and had taken their case to a Roman Magistrate. These two were brothers in Christ who had been taught at length that they should love one another. 'Why', Paul says, 'don't you just suffer wrong and allow yourself to be defrauded?' Every week they were being presented with the example of someone who had

accepted injustice and put up no resistance. The trouble with words on a page is that one does not know the tone of voice which belongs to them. Paul asks them a question: 'Why don't you go to the member of the Church who is least esteemed?' to settle your differences—someone who does the washing up, someone like our friend Tertius whom no-one has ever heard of. Perhaps we can hear here the tone of an exasperated parent. He goes on to direct them to the elders.

But suppose these two had gone sheepishly to Tertius and asked him to help, we can imagine him saying, 'Look, I have been here a while, I just put letters on a page with my pen for Paul sometimes; I don't understand everything he says. Who does? But there was something last week: 'If you don't forgive your brother from your heart, God will not forgive you.' And they would say, 'O thank you, we forgot that!' and legal proceedings would end.

When a candidate joined the Church he was deemed by St Paul to be 'in Christ'. St Paul uses the words Christ and Christ Jesus and Jesus Christ frequently. When he speaks of all the things he has done, he says, 'It was not I, but Christ in me.' He speaks of Christ in me, the hope of glory; he calls the Church the body of Christ.

He says, 'In Christ, there is neither Greek nor Jew, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female.' The distinctions which are imposed by nature, race, culture or law are insignificant from the spiritual point of view. What he did not say was, 'In Christ there is no difference between the selfish and depraved, and people of good conduct.' Immoral conduct was rebuked in love. The community was a place for the transformation of the dark side of human nature into light.

There are many sides to his teaching as we have it recorded. To those who were in his churches, he persistently presented a moral, ethical and spiritual challenge. In the letters to the Romans, he offers his diagnosis of the human condition, which is that man falls when he begins to worship that which is created, in the form of images and idols, rather than the true invisible God.

This is the standard teaching of the Old Testament. The people of Israel were given the law by Moses, and the second of the commandments prohibits the worship of images. The Law shows up the evil in men's hearts, and it is the evil within us which leads to all the evils in

the world. None of us therefore are in a position to judge others, because we all fall short of the glory of God. St Paul issues a challenge: 'Do those who teach that adultery is wrong, themselves commit adultery? Do you who believe and teach that stealing is wrong, do you steal?' All his hearers were called to an intense self-examination. They were asked to look in themselves, and not just to be content to follow the letter of the law, but to ensure that they followed the spirit of the Law, which may be summed up as loving wholeheartedly the invisible uncreated God, from whom all things come, and loving one's neighbour as oneself.

This self-examination is recommended in Adhyatma Yoga as well, as a means of transformation. We know that many of our actions are prompted by unconscious forces, but this self-examination is a way of bringing light to bear on the inner world. Light, said St Paul, is that which makes manifest. If you make a habit of checking on your own sincerity, good nature and integrity, you will find that hidden things come to your inner light—which is your sense of goodness, your wisdom.

And when he urges his hearers to examine themselves, teach themselves, have rejoicing in themselves, to judge themselves, keep watch over themselves, he also asks them, 'Do ye not know yourselves, that Christ is in you?'

So he continually drew their attention to Christ, not known any longer as a being of flesh and blood, but as the animating and living spirit in the Church, as a mirror of all that is just, noble, lovely and good. Self-examination may possibly lead those with a bad conscience to despair, but as we mentioned before, he says: 'There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus... For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (*Romans* 8:38,39)

To those who co-operated with the whole process and allowed themselves to be transformed, he writes: 'The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open faces, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed from

glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord.'

'Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things. (*Philippians* 1.4)

The mirror of all these good qualities was for them the life of Christ, which in all its incidents displayed them. This image of the mirror is used by St James in his letter, where he says, if you only hear the teaching and do not put it into practice, you are like a man beholding his natural face in a mirror, who sees himself and then goes away and forgets what sort of a person he is. St Paul told his hearers to imitate him as he, in his life, imitated Jesus. He claimed, though not of himself, to be exhibiting the *agape*, the divine love, the perfect law of freedom.

It is strange to think of a man writing two thousand years ago whose words still hold such power over the human heart that they still solace the souls of those who have just lost those they loved most. Chapter 13 of the first letter to the Corinthians is often read at funerals and there is the passage where he tells us that if you have all knowledge and can solve all mysteries, if you have such faith that you can move mountains, if you give all your wealth to feed the poor or even give your body to be burned, and do not have a certain divine quality, it is all nothing, it is meaningless.

Then he praises this *agape*, this charity which never fails whereas prophecies will fail, tongues will cease and knowledge will vanish away. 'For we know in part and we prophesy in part'. All our knowledge of things belongs to multiplicity, and when we speak, we speak of multiplicity. But God is One.

'But when that which is complete and entire is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see in a glass, darkly....' That is, we look in the mirror and cannot work out who is there; it is an enigma, a riddle. 'But then, face to face.' That is, it will become clear who is the man in the mirror. 'Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known.' It is a strange mirror indeed, because the living person you see in it knows who you are, but until realization, you lack this awareness.

When we read the Acts of the apostles, the Gospels or the Letters of St Paul, we are aware of a great energy, a great spirit, a kind of triumph over the human condition. At the same time, we see that the world-view of the authors was narrow compared to ours. They did not know much of India or China, let alone the Americas or the Arctic or Antarctic. They lived in a world of gods and spirits, sorcerers and astrologers, and their knowledge of medicine was not like ours. There have been many ancient cultures. We hear of Noah and his ark in the Book of Genesis, but the Greeks had a Noah by the name of Deucalion, the Babylonians had one called Utnapishtim. The Babylonians had a Moses called Hammurabi, and those who are equipped to study these things tell us that the laws of Moses owe much to him. The Indian Noah was called Manu, and he was also a law-giver as the Laws of Manu have defined the structure of Hindu society for millennia. So why should we privilege one culture over another? Why should we take any particular interest in St Paul?

Well, for one, if our sympathies are enlarged, if we have a broad mind, we can see him as a fellow human being, and, as universalists, we value all expressions of spirituality. But again let us look closely at this list of bad qualities (*Galatians* 6): Adultery, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness—a fairly comprehensive list of the bad side of human nature. And then, by contrast, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Against such, he says, there is no law. There are laws against the actions in the first list, because of all the mischief and distress which they cause.

It has been the task of all civilisations and cultures to promote the qualities in the second list and restrain the actions in the first list. As we know from the sorry saga of human history, this is not easy. People, that is, us, have a terrible attraction to the dark energies which promise immediate satisfaction and pleasure. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, we find a shorter list covering these energies: *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*—pleasure-desire, anger, greed. In the sixteenth chapter, the dark and light side of our nature are called the *asuri-sampat* and the *daivi-sampat* (the demoniac and the divine attributes). Anyone who compares these two

lists of qualities in these sources will be impressed by the overlap.

In his letter to the Ephesians (5:13) St Paul gives a definition of light. Light is that which makes manifest. Clearly we cannot see when there is no light. Creatures of the night hide from the light when the dawn comes. There is an inner light which reveals our motives to ourselves, which we call the *sakshi* or witness. The qualities of darkness do not come to the light, they do not wish to be scrutinised by our consciences or reasoned about; they cannot endure the light of calm consciousness. We find in prison that very few convicted people will admit their guilt. Darkness must keep up its pretence.

Where was light to be found for St Paul? In the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ, which he had seen himself on the road to Damascus, and wished everyone else to see. St Paul was indeed a changed man after his experience and found in himself something, or rather someone, whose presence could never be denied. He acquired something which is rare among us. In the Gita, we find Shri Krishna describes a necessary quality for a yogi as *anirvinna chetasa*, a heart which refuses to be depressed.

St Paul was given on occasion to a special kind of boasting, to which he was driven by those who would diminish his significance among his congregations for their own purposes. Yet when he describes the persistent opposition he faced to the delivery of his message of faith, hope and love, he does so without feeling sorry for himself—on the contrary, rejoicing in the Lord all the time. He had a heart which refused to be depressed. He was a man transformed, a man with a mission, a man who had taken his stand in the battle between the flesh and the spirit, to use his own words. He saw his sufferings as the price to be paid for sharing in the resurrection of Christ and having the opportunity to communicate His message to others. Even today, so many years later, when we encounter him through his writings, we feel it no easy task to measure up to the sincerity, the conviction, the wisdom, the power and the divine love which radiate from this great saint.

**A.S-B.**

# The Eternal Wisdom

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

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THE MOON was high in the heavens and the wind was cool and fragrant. There was peace everywhere. The sage Yajnavalkya sat silent and a deep stillness fell over the assembly. Then in a chorus all present said: 'Jai to thee.' He addressed them, saying:

'My children, know that all is maya—that is, it is the manifestation of the Absolute through an illusory medium which seems to break up the rays of existence, consciousness and bliss (sat-chit-ananda) into all the colours of the prism. These are known as the twenty-four categories in the Sankhya philosophy of the sage Kapila. We cannot call this maya either real or unreal. If it were entirely unreal it would not appear; surely, no-one has ever greeted the son of a barren woman, or woven sky-flowers into a garland! We see the manifest universe (sansara), therefore it cannot be called entirely unreal. On the other hand, the manifest is not real because everything here is passing, passing, passing.

'Perhaps some of you may say: "We see the objects of a dream but they are unreal." Yes, my beloved ones, it is true; but realize that the objects seen in a dream appear real only as long as the dream lasts; when the dream is ended you know them to be unreal. Similarly the world, though unreal, appears to be real as long as ignorance and the cognition of ignorance lasts. When you have realized the Absolute, you will understand this. The world ceases to exist to the enlightened, even as a dream to a dreamer when he awakes.

'This is not the maya of the individualized consciousness of man; it is the divine maya of the ever-awakened and omniscient Lord. This maya is ruled by the cosmic laws decreed by the Lord Himself. The soul of man (jiva) has to obey these eternal decrees of the Lord, called His maya. Some of these laws are only apparent to a mahatma. The law of the evolution of the soul is the same as the law governing the evolution of creation, that is, from the manifest to the unmanifest, or from illusion to Truth. Truth is the supreme law.

'Know, my children, that a bird sitting on a tree in a Himalayan valley can only have a view of that valley, not of the surrounding beauties and the distant peaks of the holy Himalayas. If that bird wants to have a real view of the mountains, it must leave the branch of the tree and fly aloft into the azure sky. Similarly, the soul must withdraw itself from all its attachments to personalities, property, attributes and so forth, and then contemplate the highest truth in its tranquil hours of samadhi. Thus will it have a view of the real world and of the laws which govern the invisible aspects of the divine maya of the Lord.

'One day, my children, I hope to place before you, as before King Janaka, the truth of maya. I warn you, blessed ones, not to call my philosophy "illusion theory" (maya-vada). If it can be called by any name at all, it is the philosophy of non-duality (Advaita).

'To know about three things is to be wise. These three things are: the will, desire and action. As a man acts, so he attains the objects to which his mind is attached. After leaving the body, man enjoys the full benefits or merits of his actions; he then comes back from that other world to this realm, the realm of action.

'You may ask: "What draws the soul, liberated by death from the body, to fresh imprisonment in a body?" My sons, it is man's actions (karma) which attract the soul to renewed corporeality. This is the law of karma. The soul that has confined itself to the realm of the senses and to desires of a social nature, having neither refined the mind by doing selfless acts of benevolence to others without distinctions of sex or creed, nor purified itself by devotion to Guru, Truth and God, unaware of the beauty in nature and in the conduct of an uplifted intellect—that soul is brought back into a body, prompted by the law of karma, for this karma operates under the direction of the Lord Himself.

'My children, the soul at death passes into a state of complete forgetfulness, and in that state it dreams the dream of all that it has been while here. When it has enjoyed or suffered in the dream world the fruits of its actions (karma), it awakens in the course of time from the death slumber and is then again impelled, by its tendency to rebirth, to return to the world. Thus it is, my children. Even as an official or an equerry or a governor await their king who is returning, so do all the elements (pranas) await that soul's return.

‘Now, blessed ones, let me tell you something of the destiny of a good man. He is a good man who, being above all desires for sons or wealth or worlds, and having no desire other than his own Self (Atman), is beyond the operation of the law of karma. Consequently, such a soul, having cast off all its adjuncts, is indeed Brahman and is absorbed into the infinite bliss of Brahman-consciousness. Know, my sons, that the true immortality of the soul has nothing to do with corporeality or with individuality.’

The discourse ended and the holy Guru, lifting his right hand, gave his blessings to his disciples and to the whole earth. Then, closing his eyes and passing into a high state of consciousness in which all impressions of time and space were erased, the sage felt at one with all that lives on any plane of being. His face shone like the rising sun as he softly chanted:

OM. May all know the peace of the divine consciousness.  
May all treat others as their brethren.  
May all hearts be filled with a love of truth and righteousness.  
May all conquer their senses.  
May the rains come when they are needed.  
May the kings and their ministers make universal truth  
their fixed policy.  
May the harvests be rich and plentiful.  
May there be no diseases, pestilences or famines.  
May the brahmanas pursue their study of the Vedas.  
May the medicines have their desired effect.  
May God be the guiding principle of all,  
The universal, the resplendent, the eternal bliss.

*to be continued*

## Spiritual Pointers in Japanese Poetry

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JAPANESE CULTURE is steeped in love of poetry. From its obscure beginnings in the early centuries AD, several styles emerged, not least a skill in composing very short poems, culminating in the three-line *haiku* perfected by Basho in the seventeenth century. Because of this brevity, it takes a tuned ear to catch the poetry in them. But they often throw as much light on human life as the longer poems and odes of the Western tradition. Here is one by the monk Saigyō (1118-1190):

People pass away  
and the truth of this passing world  
impresses me now and then.  
But, alas, my dull mind  
lets this truth, too, pass away.

This does reflect our human condition, and the fact that we know and do not know that we are passing guests in this inn of the world, and not permanent residents.

The Buddhist religion places great emphasis on the transient nature of our experience, that all is passing. But the human heart needs something more than this negativity. This need of the soul is hinted at in a much later poem by Issa (1762-1827), a master of haiku. Issa was a poor man. He lived the life of struggle. Children generally died when they were still toddlers, and he too knew this loss. His Buddhist friends might say to him in a well meaning, superior way, ‘Everything in the world is passing, passing, passing, and the death of a child is no exception. The world is like drops of dew, which evaporate on the rising of the sun.’ Issa wrote:

This dewdrop world  
May be a dewdrop world—  
and yet...

Years ago, a follower of this spiritual Yoga told the founder of Shanti Sadan, Dr Shastri, about her sister. She said: ‘She lost a son in the war. He was a pilot and his plane crashed soon after takeoff. She has never got over it.’ Dr Shastri turned to this seeker and said: ‘When you

lose a son and when I lose a son—then we can talk.’ It makes the same point as Issa:

This dewdrop world  
May be a dewdrop world—  
and yet...

The human mind needs something more, something warmer, than just the perception of transience and the response of cool detachment—which is always easier to feel in the case of other people’s problems than our own. Our mind wants to be anchored in something real, something that is fulfilling. This too is hinted at in many poems.

Japanese poetry, particularly of a spiritual turn, was very much influenced and coloured by the Chinese poetic tradition, where we also find short aphoristic verses. Here is a Chinese verse which reminds us that amid the transiency of our lives, and of our minds, there is something rich and permanent. The poet Han Shan writes:

Though face and form alter with the years,  
I hold fast to the pearl of the mind.

The pearl of the mind is our latent faculty for spiritual illumination, for wisdom. It is present in all of us in seed, or in embryo, waiting to be nurtured. An Indian text says: ‘All men are endowed with the supreme knowledge from birth.’

We need to uncover in ourselves this faculty of supreme wisdom. The chief means, the indispensable means, is through cultivating the practice of meditation, not just at odd periods, but to make our mind habitually meditative. Our mind may be called meditative when, in our spare moments, in our free time, we willingly and happily resort to the inward practices of inner communion with the deeper spiritual reality that is our source.

There is a vein of gold that runs through both the Chinese and Japanese poetic traditions. It is reverence for, and adoration of, tranquillity. Its equivalent is hardly found in the West, except in occasional lines from poets with insight, such as when Tennyson writes, ‘There is no joy but calm’, or when Keats tells us, ‘Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter.’ Sublime tranquillity, which arrests and enraptures our attention, is reflected in another poem by

Saigyō:

So taken with the faultless face  
and radiance of the moon,  
The mind goes farther, farther,  
Reaching remote regions of the sky.

This is an image of expansion to infinity. It begins with contemplation. He looks calmly at the moon, and then beyond—then within himself. For within us is a level of experience that has no horizon.

Saigyō is probably alone in some hilly landscape. The moon itself is a symbol of purity and detachment. The moon is also an object of beauty. But these forms or symbols always point to something beyond themselves—something formless and unlimited in our own being. Here is another poem on this theme:

Limitations gone:  
since my mind fixed on the moon,  
clarity and serenity  
make something for which  
there is no end in sight.

Saigyō was a great seeker of truth. Truth, for him, meant discovering the Buddha nature in his own being. He recognises that our quest is shallow at first, because our attention is scattered. But if we give more of our minds to the spiritual teachings, our inner quality will improve. Our insight will deepen and our concentration will be strong and penetrating. Saigyō writes:

The mind for truth  
begins like a stream,  
shallow at first,  
but then adds more and more depth  
while gaining greater clarity.

Saigyō himself spent much time in meditation and contemplation on Mount Yoshino, in southern Japan, near Osaka. In spring this region becomes a wonderland of blossoms and he loved to penetrate deep into the hills. He felt this absorption in nature mirrored the inner pilgrimage to the realm of beauty in his own soul.

Yoshino mountains  
The one who will get to know you inside-out  
is I,  
For I have become used to  
Going into your depths for blossoms.

If we too become used to going into our own depths in meditation, then we shall gain complete knowledge of spiritual truth.

In this way of life, the meditation habit is indispensable. It leads to what the Japanese call satori, the Indians samadhi—that is, the illumined understanding where mental activity is silenced and our consciousness is dominated by the intuitive awareness of our true nature as the one, infinite all-embracing reality. Saigyo writes:

Today's satori:  
such a change of mind  
would not exist  
without my lifelong habit  
of having my mind immersed in blossoms.

We referred to 'the pearl of the mind', the latent faculty of spiritual intuition which all of us are endowed with from the very beginning. Our higher destiny in life is to make this latent faculty patent, to lift the veils that hide this faculty of divine vision and intuition from our inner sight. And then we will know that there is something higher than the mind itself—something in us that is transcendent, untouched by thought, unsoiled by the material world, free from birth and death.

This need to transcend the world of ordinary experience and commune with a deeper reality, was well understood by the greatest of Japanese haiku poets, Matsuo Basho (1644-1694). Basho was deeply influenced by Saigyo, and spent much of his later life travelling through Japan in the spirit of a pilgrim. His philosophy of life is signified in some words of advice to would-be poets:

What is important is to keep our mind high in the world of true understanding, and returning to the world of daily experience, to seek therein the truth of beauty. No matter what we may be doing at a given moment, we must not forget that it has a bearing on our everlasting self, which is poetry.

This brings to mind some words of Shri Dada of Aligarh:

My children, make your life a long poem. Breathe melody, live in harmony with all, create a rhythm, rising from beauty to higher beauty until at last you contact samadhi. Let your thoughts and actions be sweet and attractive, and remember that all beauty and all sweetness have their root in Atman, your true Self.

One of the greatest insights transmitted to us by the poet Basho, is the need to forget the ego—to be able to set aside our obsession with 'me', 'I like', 'I don't like', 'I am this kind of person', 'I have been here and there'. There is sublime reality hidden behind our ego: the infinite and formless I. The best haiku poems do not spring from the active mind. They emerge spontaneously from a quiescent mind, a mind totally forgetful of its individuality. In that peaceful self-forgetting condition, our being becomes one with the being of nature itself. Then we find that in the little scenes and objects of nature, there is as much life and vividness as in our own seemingly much larger human life. Here is a poem by Basho about an insect—and silence.

In the utter silence of a temple  
A cicada's voice alone  
Penetrates the rocks.

We only hear and see when our own thoughts have died down, when, in Basho's words, we leave our subjective preoccupation with our self.

Your poetry issues of its own accord when you and the object have become one, when you have plunged deep enough into the object to see something like a hidden glimmering there.

This transcendence of self may be discerned in many poems of Basho.

While sweeping the garden  
it forgets about the snow—  
the broom.

It seems a strange poem: a garden being cleared of snow, a broom, but where is the sweeper, the person, the mind? A person means a mind, a mind means thoughts and the colouring of personality, and often the hangup of what is nowadays called an 'attitude'. Here all that is gone.

Basho has many poems which spring from a mood of self-forgetfulness in the face of the commonplace and the small. This same absence of self applies to his appreciation of the sublime.

Gathering the rains of summer  
Swiftly flows  
The Mogami River.

It is a poem without ego, suggestive, perhaps, of a fundamental communion between the earth and heaven, waterway and sky, a great river and all the rains of the Far Eastern monsoon. And again:

Rough sea  
extending towards Sado Isle—  
the Milky Way.

Here there is no particular 'I think' or 'I feel'. The life of the sea, the sky, the island somewhere in the distance, the stars, space: it is all one life, penetrating all.

Finally, one more poem of Basho that hints at the freedom and glory of our true nature. He was in a street. It was an autumn evening, though probably still a little humid. There would have been food vendors, incense stalls, many different odours—the impact of sense experience all too apparent and a little stifling. Then he looked above and saw a beautiful moon. He wrote a simple verse

Above the town  
filled with the odours of things—  
the autumn moon.

We may, if we like, see a profound symbolism in the verse. Part of our being is steeped in the world. But our higher nature—our buddha nature—has a moon-like freedom, where anything and everything that happens 'down here' in the mind, casts no shadow at all on our true being. The autumn moon is a symbol of our true divine self. It transcends the world and the mind. If we learn to lift our inner sight, so to say, we will find that this pure, perfect and self-luminous awareness is the being of our being.

A.H.C.

## THE TRIPLE ASPECT OF LIFE

In deep sleep, when our faculties return to their cause; in that stillness and vacuity, there is something which rests in its own bliss, which is beyond the trio of the cognizer, the cognized and the cognizing. It is not a non-existence, nor an existence. It is cognition without objects; it is the seed in which is hidden the great banyan tree of the waking and dreaming states.

Life, with its triple aspects, goes into a state of hibernation, to be revived afresh. The three aspects are: 1. Intellectual 2. Emotional 3. Physical. It is the one stream split into three channels, and its purpose is its identification with the three aspects of Reality or God. Through intellect, we know Him as the immutable Truth. Through emotions, we know Him as the unfading Beauty. Through senses, we know Him as the beloved Lord or Master, whom the senses serve in all living beings.

These three faculties must be kept, by right exercise, in an efficient condition. If one of them is atrophied, the other two decay. Intellect, through the exercise of reason, must be directed to find the ultimate cause of all. The emotions, through the exercise of the faculty of the appreciation of beauty, called Love, must find the beauty that never fades. The senses must be dedicated to the service of all living beings, serving the One in the many. Life thus guided must every day minimise the demands and importance of the local self. We are apt to prostitute Divine Life for perishable ends, and are thus forced to reincarnate again and again in the same circumstances.

Intellectual life is more potent and a greater instrument of service than mere service expressed through the senses. The hedonist and the epicurean can lay claim to no lasting edifice of comfort and joy to humanity. While Aristotle has introduced an ever-widening ray of light into the darkness of the Dark Ages, the lover makes a yet greater contribution. The crystal palace of Aristotle and the Alexandrian scientists could not endure without the contribution of the arch-lover of all ages, holy Christ. The contribution of a lover is immeasurable: his glory is infinite; intellect is his interpreter, and the senses his executive department.

There is one more function of life above the three. It is the



culmination of the three. It is the mystic sense, which presses the steed of love and enquiry beyond the fields of intellect and love, and, tearing off veil after veil from the face of Isis, transforms the puny mind into divine Light. St Catherine of Sienna reached that state despite her modest attainments.

Everyone is endowed with a mystical sense. The mystical way crosses the Alps of intellect, bridges the river of emotion, jumps over the valley of sensuous life, and discovers the realm of immutable values. This is the holy Path of Yoga. It is the supreme triumph of human personality. The holy Teacher, Shankaracharya, describes it as 'the real empire which has no end'.

**H.P.S.**

### **A Prayer to Departing Breath**

Hold on a little longer, O sweet Breath!  
O current of life, O best companion, O friend invisible, O Breath!  
Keep on a little longer, just a little longer.

In passion and in peace, in dream or in dreamless sleep,  
In infancy and in tempestuous youth,  
You animated my frame and kept company with me.

The sun is set; the sky is dark; the pines are invisible;  
The snakes are crawling to meet their mates and food.  
I see the moon rising in the form of the brow of my love.

Let me have one more look at the moon, the friend of the lilies.  
She is the orb my love plays with.  
He flings it into space and calls it back.

In His toy I see the Player, in Prakriti is Purusha\* immanent.  
I see it and salute it, and do perchance kiss its rays on me.  
O Breath, hold on a little longer, just a little longer.

**H.P.S.**

\* Prakriti is matter, or nature; Purusha is Spirit.

### **SHANTI SADAN NEWS**

The Tuesday evening meditation sessions remain very popular, attracting regular participants as well as newcomers. The presentation includes a yogic breathing practice, a visualization and meditation on a spiritual text; and the set of practices is changed approximately every four weeks. Visitors are welcome to stay for some simple refreshment, when they have an opportunity to discuss any points arising from the practices. For those unable to attend, an audio recording of a recent meeting is regularly available on the Internet from our website [www.shantisadan.org](http://www.shantisadan.org)

The lectures at Shanti Sadan in the spring term included *Self-Knowledge in the Bhagavad Gita*, *Educating the Emotions* and *The Practical Philosophy of Shankara*. *The Inner Flowering—Insights from a Christian Mystic*, compared some of the short, aphoristic poems of Johann Scheffler (known as Angelus Silesius), with the wisdom of Vedanta. The lecture on *Spiritual Pointers in Japanese Poetry* is reproduced in this issue.

The afternoon course held at the Columbia Hotel, Lancaster Gate on 2 March 2014 attracted many visitors, who paid great attention to the teachings and practices offered. The first talk, *The Opening to Inner Freedom*, considered the true meaning of freedom, which is freedom from rather than for the ego. *Using the Mind to Transcend the Mind* pointed out the importance, not only of using our intelligence and emotional energy to the best effect, but also of learning to silence the mind and focus attention on the deepest part of our being. The final talk, *Awakening to Self-knowledge*, stressed the crucial role of faith in our higher nature and higher potentialities, and the need to be voluntarily introvertive, approaching the supreme Truth, itself beyond word or image, through symbols that indicate our spiritual source and attune our mind with it.

### **Summer 2014 Special Course**

Sunday 8 June 2014 2-5pm

Columbia Hotel, 95 Lancaster Gate, London W2 3NS

Talk 1 *Intellectual Knowledge and Spiritual Wisdom*

First Meditation Practice

Talk 2 *From Stress to Serenity*

Second Meditation Practice

Talk 3 *The Complete Life*