

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

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ADHYATMA YOGA

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

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

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

EVENTS FOR THE AUTUMN TERM 2014

Weekday evening meetings at Shanti Sadan

Meetings will be held every Tuesday and Thursday evening at 8pm from 7 October to 27 November 2014. The Tuesday evenings will be guided meditation sessions. On Thursday evenings there will be a series of discourses on the Yoga teachings with spiritual practices.

Afternoon Course

The afternoon course will be held on Sunday 19 October 2014, 2pm - 5pm, at the Columbia Hotel, Lancaster Gate, London W2.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

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WHO IS MINDFUL?

The practice of mindfulness is a central feature of many systems of meditation. Essentially it means to be more keenly aware, or mindful, of ourselves—our body, mind, senses and breathing. We may be invited, for example, to sit quiet for a few minutes with our attention focused on our breathing, or alternatively, to watch our thoughts come and go, without intervention or judgement, and also without clinging to any of the passing thought-forms.

Such self-observation is held to have a liberating effect, because it enables us to stand back from functions and activities we are normally identified with; and, standing back, we realize a deeper level of awareness, and also recover the wonder and 'present-moment' richness of the activities themselves. Otherwise, lost in thinking, we forget the glory of being.

Mindfulness has a long history. It was taught by the Buddha as part of his eightfold discipline for self-purification leading to enlightenment. It is implicit in earlier teachings current in ancient India, which draw a distinction between awareness and thought, self and mind.

At first it seems that mindfulness can do little more for us than to intensify our self-consciousness—a dubious blessing! We are reminded of the centipede, who, when asked how he could possibly move all hundred legs at once, thought it over and was paralysed. Do we not function more effectively in unreflective spontaneity? But this self-conscious phase of mindfulness is outgrown and is followed by the great advantage of living consciously or mindfully. For we learn to look on thought, bodily action and sense functioning as our tools and instruments, and not the whole of us. Not least, mindfulness teaches us to be more keenly aware of the present moment, the eternal Now. It is the opposite of ‘thinking, thinking, thinking—yet no trace of wisdom’.

On the other hand, spiritual man cannot get the light and peace he needs from mindfulness alone. We need to ask ‘Who or what is mindful?’ ‘What is it in me that is more inward than breath, sense and thought, and which is always conscious?’ These questions, posed in the Upanishads, form the core of the ultimate enquiry into self-knowledge. ‘By whose power does the mind go towards its object?’ ‘Who is the knower of knowing?’ ‘To whom do these thoughts appear?’

Implicit in mindfulness is the transcendental nature of That which is mindful. In the words of the Zen master, Mumon:

This moment’s thought sees through eternal time;
Eternal time is just this moment.
If you see through this moment’s thought,
You see through the man who sees through the moment.

The Light is in You

In those who have cognised the Self, illusion is dispelled and the light of pure consciousness shines through them. Their distress is at an end and they live in bliss.
Ashtavakra Gita

THE LIGHT is in you. More correctly, one might say that you, me, every living being and everything that appears, has the one light as its common source. This is a theme that is central to all the spiritual traditions, and is basic if we want to grasp the deeper teachings on self-knowledge.

This spiritual light, the light of pure consciousness, can never be seen by the eye because it is that ultimate source of illumination through which the eye itself sees, and it is innermost. Yet this limitless light can be realized as one’s true Self through following the spiritual Yoga. This is the ultimate purpose of life and of Yoga: to know the truth and be free.

Those of us who are acquainted with spiritual thought will not find this idea of inner light surprising. Illumination, enlightenment—such words are used to indicate our spiritual goal. This illumination implies finality: ultimate fulfilment, lasting peace, the end of all doubt, fear and sorrow. For those who have realized the truth, ‘their distress is at an end and they live in bliss’.

What then is this light which is central to the spiritual quest, and is it present in experience now? This is a verse from the *Bhagavad Gita*:

The light even of lights, That is said to be beyond darkness.
Knowledge, the knowable, the goal of knowledge, it is implanted in the heart of everyone. [13:17]

Here the light is revealed as something great and ultimate: the light of lights. The verse answers our question: ‘Is this light present right now in our experience?’ Yes. This ultimate light is the source of the light of knowledge in man.

The objects of our knowledge—the things we know about—are always changing, expanding, revealing new dimensions, leading to new applications. But this light of knowledge is something permanent and

complete. The beginning of self-discovery is to know the difference between what is passing and what is eternal, and to set our heart on the eternal.

This eternal light of knowledge has its source in the heart of everyone. It is present at the very centre of our being, the essence of what we really are. Our normal knowledge of everything, within us or outside us, is ultimately lit and revealed by this fundamental spiritual light, the light of lights. There is a radical difference between what is lit and revealed objectively—the physical and mental world of changing appearances—and the great light that does the revealing. Without itself ever changing, this ultimate light gives life and light to the mind. Our perceptions and anything else generated by our mental faculties, make their appearance within the true and ultimate light and that light knows no limit.

This same revelation of a fundamental light behind all our experience is found in the Bible. *St John's Gospel* speaks of 'the true light that enlightens every man'. By saying 'every man' the Gospel is in perfect accord with the *Bhagavad Gita's* doctrine that the light of higher knowledge is 'implanted in the heart of everyone'.

This light, in its fullness, seems to be hidden from us. But as it is the ultimate illuminator, through which anything we know is known, such a light cannot be entirely unknown to us. Actually, it is more than known, did we but realize it! It is veiled through its very constancy and immediacy.

In normal experience, we respond to that which changes, but this permanent illumination behind experience never changes. Also, we notice things that are set apart from us—where there is some distance between the observer and what is noticed. But, being identical, there is no distance between our innermost awareness and this ultimate light. It is immediate and direct. Everything else, everything that appears, including our thoughts and feelings, is at a distance from us, even if that distance is minute. But this light never appears because it can never be distanced from us. It is what we truly are.

In a sense, our problem is that we know, and yet we 'know not that we know'. Every human being is an abode of the supreme light, but fails to realize its significance, and is in the position indicated by the

Taoist master, Lao Tzu, when he advised: 'He who knows, and knows not that he knows, is asleep—awaken him!' Hence enlightenment is spoken of as a spiritual awakening, not an acquisition. It is the realization of the true nature of our consciousness. And this consciousness can never be other than our own immediate experience, present in every thought as its illuminator.

Why is this light of consciousness not realized by us in its fullness, if it is our very nature? One reason is that our attention is normally dominated by our personal involvement in the world. To function in the world wisely, safely and harmoniously, we have to give it careful attention. Coping with life is an ongoing challenge, and the spiritual teachers do not make light of our need to meet our responsibilities in this world. It is not surprising if these outer concerns monopolise our attention and leave the mind restless, tense and preoccupied, while the true and liberating nature of the inner light of our own consciousness remains unrevealed.

And yet the enquiry into this conscious and illuminating principle within us, and the endeavour to determine its true nature, is the key to solving the riddle of life. This spiritual knowledge of the inner light is the real knowledge, the basis of knowledge—and any other knowledge we gain will leave us incomplete, troubled by the awareness that there is more to be known, and that the liberating insight still eludes our grasp.

Let us go more deeply into the question: 'Where is the light to be found?' More precisely, since we know the light is within, where *in us* is the light to be found and realized?

This is not a complicated matter. The light of lights is the light of our true Self. It is the fully revealed nature of our 'I'. This is the ground of our being, that on which all else depends. This spiritual 'I' transcends the individual 'I' and is universal. As pure, changeless awareness, it reveals all experience, as well as the apparently individualized experiencer that we feel is 'me'. But the pure light itself never appears in the mind among its thoughts, because it is not a thought; it is the light under which thought is known.

So the light of consciousness is not an appearance. It will never 'appear', nor does it need to appear for its existence to be validated. It

is the reality behind all appearances, in which those appearances manifest for a time and then dissolve. In it, as St Paul said, we live and move and have our being. (*Acts I*, 17:28)

Because this light of consciousness, of Self, is infinite and knows no limit, it is free from suffering and is therefore joy absolute. As the *Chandogya Upanishad* declares: 'There is bliss only in the Infinite' and our true Self is that Infinite.

There are many texts on these lines, and such texts of truth are regularly used as affirmations that are learned and repeated by students of the higher Yoga. Such holy statements appeal directly to the light of divinity within us. They have the power to lift our sense of identity from the mind and the world to the original source, the Self within. Here are two such statements.

OM The innermost of man is the infinite bliss without a second, and the infinite bliss without a second is none other than the innermost consciousness of man. OM (*Vakya Vritti*, verse 39)

OM I am Light. I am the Light of lights. I am Truth. OM

Many of these affirmations are short, simple in expression and easily memorized. Their crucial content—their active ingredient, so to say—is that they point us to the true nature of our spiritual Self.

This is the value of the traditional affirmations found in the literature of Adhyatma Yoga, or of parallel statements found in other great spiritual traditions. These affirmations have a purifying and clarifying effect on the mind, and all serious students of Yoga are encouraged to make use of them from the very beginning.

At first affirmations like 'I am the supreme light' or 'Bliss am I', are inevitably mixed up with the mental processes. But they point to something deeper, and play an indispensable role in awakening the higher consciousness.

At this stage let us look at a practical problem that confronts every seeker. This is the fact that when we turn within in introspection, we find, not a clear intimation of the infinite and ever serene light of truth, but what appears to be its opposite. We encounter a stream of thoughts, usually spurred on by certain feelings, and it is a stream which appears to be beginningless and endless.

This suggests that our inner world, the world within the mind, is a field of unavoidable motion, change, even turmoil, and that our safest course is not to probe it too deeply. Even if we are fortunate enough to find within ourselves a mild and agreeable mental climate, there is usually at least a sense of a dense background formed of our past experiences, waiting to be stimulated through association, with perhaps unpredictable consequences for our inner peace.

However interesting our inner traffic may be, we have to admit that this is a very finite world of dubious stability, and a psychological zone which, as yet, gives no hint of the divine light at our source. We are not the first to come to this conclusion. The eighteenth century Scottish philosopher, David Hume, turned within in introspection, and confessed that however hard he looked, he could discover no principle of permanence or continuity that he could justifiably call himself. All he could discern were transient mental phenomena. Hume allowed for the possibility that other enquirers might be more successful in their quest to discover within themselves an enduring principle worthy to be called 'the self', but, he said, 'I am certain there is no such principle in me.'

This conclusion is fair enough from the point of view of the active, probing intellect that keenly observes and classifies everything that comes within its range. But it leaves unexplored the nature of the ultimate experiencer and witness of the inner life. The philosophy of Yoga and Vedanta gives weight to such questions as: 'What is that awareness under whose light these changing thoughts are observed?' 'To whom or to what do these passing thoughts appear?' 'What is this continuous inner illumination through which are known and observed all mental pictures and internal conversations with ourselves, and which also witnesses our sharp reasoning and our thirst for philosophical insight?'

The conscious and constant principle is the light that is spoken of by the self-realized sages. Their advice is: 'Look beyond what appears in the mind—and disappears. Look for the basis of experience, the Self, which is the illuminating ground on which appearances manifest. Realize your own Self as that Light.' This is the only true self-knowledge, the knowledge that liberates.

How can we awaken to the inner light and peace? Our scope for

inner freedom depends on the emotional and intellectual disposition of our mind—where we are ‘coming from’. If, like the philosopher Hume, we are coming from a mind that insists on its own competence either to solve or dismiss fundamental problems, we will face a wall that hides the higher self-knowledge. For this light, though interior, is beyond the range of the mind. At best, we can reach the point that the philosopher Wittgenstein vividly described when, as a young man, he wrote in his diary:

Once again no clarity of vision. Yet I am obviously on the point of solving the most profound problems, so much so that the solution is practically under my nose! The thing is, my mind is simply blind to it just at this moment. I feel that I am at the very gate, but cannot see it clearly enough to be able to open it.

Fortunately, there is another approach to reality which is available to everybody. It is subtle and profound, but basically simple and intelligible. This also hinges on ‘where we are coming from’, mentally or spiritually, when we engage with these teachings on the light that is within us.

There is the active, reasoning mind. But there is also the peaceful mind, the still mind—the mind which can be rendered pure and transparent. The spiritual principle is that when the mind is brought to a state of quietude, equanimity and inner peace, then the spiritual teachings about our deeper nature will become radiantly meaningful. And experience has shown that the mind will only lose its restlessness and agitation when it is steeped in the spirit of harmlessness and goodwill to all, irrespective of creed or background. A peaceful mind discerns more. A serene mind is a revealing mind. This is the key spiritual principle, expressed in the biblical statement: ‘Be still and know that I am God.’

Why is a quiet mind such an asset to someone who wants a deeper understanding? Only a calm mind is able to reflect clearly the inner light of truth, that is, to receive light from the divine sun at its own source. This teaching is based on the knowledge of those who have discovered this peace within themselves.

Every thought that stirs in our mind is lit by the spiritual conscious-

ness and has its being in that consciousness. This consciousness is beyond the mind; it is transcendental, and, being inviolate, is ever pure, perfect and complete. This is so whether we have the mind of a saint or a swindler.

The consciousness that *is* involved in the mind, and seems to be part of the mental processes, is the same as the original consciousness, for consciousness is one alone, and does not divide or multiply. And yet, it is philosophically impossible to establish a *real* relationship, or even connection, between consciousness and the mind.

This assertion makes sense when we consider the radical difference between the two principles. Consciousness is that which reveals; the mental life and the world are what is revealed. Hence consciousness is the ultimate subject; the mind is an object that appears before it. Consciousness is unchanging and has no parts; the mind is changeful and made up of many parts. Consciousness is non-material; the mind is a subtle material inseparable from the material of the world it experiences. Consciousness is Self, and the mind is not-Self. According to Shri Shankara, the difference between the conscious Self and the observed mind is such that it resembles the difference between light and darkness.

The Vedanta philosophy points out that this fusion of consciousness with the mind, of Self and not-Self, is apparent and not real; and this illusoriness applies to the whole range of empirical experience that emerges from this apparent coupling of the conscious Self with the non-conscious mind. With the aim of freeing us from this false identification, the knowers of ultimate truth suggest *a kind of relationship* between consciousness and the mind, which is to be accepted as practically useful while we are seekers, but which is ultimately to be transcended in the light of non-duality.

This explanation, which is valuable for the time being, speaks of a *reflection* of the original consciousness being cast on the mind, and serving as the source of its knowledge and animation. Thus the pure consciousness retains its transcendence; only a ‘reflection’ of it is involved in the world.

It is like the case of sunlight playing on the water, and which is a reflection of the real sun. The sun has nothing to do with the water or

with the flickering reflections of its light in the water. When the water is disturbed by winds and currents, the reflection of the sun is not seen for what it is. The light is shattered and appears like sparks flashing momentarily before our eyes, making it impossible to see the sun in its characteristic form as a bright orb in the sky. But if the wind dies down, the weather calms and the water becomes still, the reflection of the sun becomes clearer and clearer.

It is similar with the mind and its link with the spiritual sun within. Insight into the true nature of our consciousness will dawn in the inner stillness; and even in the early stages of meditation, we can contemplate the wonderful fact that the ‘consciousness reflected in our mind’ has its source in the transcendental consciousness which is the supreme reality.

What is the prescription for us? Practise the spiritual Yoga, value peace and goodwill, and, above all, enquire into ‘What am I?’ In the words of *The Imitation of Christ*:

The more a man is united within himself, and becomes inwardly simple and pure, so much the more and higher things does he understand without labour; for he receives intellectual light from above.

(Book 1, chapter 3, section 3)

‘From above’ means from the higher region within our own being, not something exterior. This light from our own spirit will be reflected in our mind with ever-increasing peace, richness and clarity. This is the natural development when the mind is made peaceful, because our underlying nature is peace absolute, and is to be revealed, not created.

This capacity of the human mind to reflect the spiritual light is referred to in this meditation text:

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

This principle of the reflected light is charmingly illustrated in the story of the little child Krishna and the moon. It is said that the infant Krishna saw the moon and wanted to possess it. At first his mother tried to explain that this was not possible, but Krishna would have none of it. ‘I want the moon. Bring me the moon, O mother.’ In the end, his mother

brought a bucket of water, placed it on the ground, and pointing to the moon’s reflection, said: ‘Look, my darling, there is the moon. It is all yours.’

But there is a sequel to this story. The little boy kept placing his hands in the water to take out the moon, and the very act of disturbing the surface of the water made the beautiful reflection of the moon disappear, shattered into a myriad quivering and distorted images.

The story suggests that the calmer we can render our mind, the clearer will be the reflection of the divine in it. And as we progress in Yoga, our strategy is to protect the mind, as far as possible, from unnecessary disturbing influences, and to saturate it in the peaceful and enlightening atmosphere of spiritual thought. Such spiritual thoughts have the grace and power to melt any lingering obstacles to our illumined understanding, and, having served their purpose, as it were, themselves dissolve in the infinite light of our true nature.

It might be asked: ‘Do we all have our own individual personal spiritual light, so that there are countless little lights, each representing a human being?’

This inner light is the light of our true Self. It is the light of knowledge, the ultimate knower within us. It has first to be sought and fathomed within our own being. But it is the very nature of this light that it transcends what is mortal and limited. It is infinite, without differences or divisions, and consciousness absolute.

So it may be said that this light of lights is both personal and intimate, and also transcendental and universal. It is personal and intimate because it is to be discovered at our inmost centre and nowhere else. It is transcendental and universal because this great realization contains no limitations or boundaries whatever. Transcending time and space, it is the substratum of all that appears in time and space—the only substantial reality.

Yoga is the path that leads to the realization of our identity with that original light, the highest Self. Our ‘I’, that is, our true Self, in reality needs no knowledge or enlightenment. It is self-illumined and the essence of knowledge. What is needed is to withdraw our sense of identity from anything that is finite, including the body, the mind and the world; and then, with the aid of our spiritual affirmations, awaken to

what we really are. The identification of Self and supreme knowledge is expressed in this verse from the *Ashtavakra Gita*:

OM My nature is knowledge and nothing other than knowledge.
The universe appears under the light of my Self. OM

B.D.

A VEDANTA STORY

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the pupil, Arjuna, is led beyond sorrow and confusion, to spiritual enlightenment. He declares to his teacher, Krishna: ‘My delusion is gone and I have gained recognition through thy grace.’

Spiritual awakening is often compared to being freed from a delusion which grips our mind until the power of true knowledge dispels it. The knowledge comes as a realization or recognition of something obvious, but overlooked, like searching for a hat that is already on one’s head.

The Vedanta story, referred to in several texts, concerns ten villagers who forded a swift-flowing river. When they reached the other bank, their leader counted his companions and found there were only nine. Reflecting on the turbulent waters and jutting rocks, he concluded that the tenth had been swept away by the current.

A passing traveller noted his perplexity and realized that he was counting everyone except himself. He told him: ‘You yourself are the tenth!’ With a surprise followed by immense relief, the leader realized this was indeed the case.

The illumined sages invite us to reflect on this story. Our normal outward-looking mental activity is grounded in the subject-object relationship, and we feel rooted in human frailty and mortality. Then a competent authority—the Teacher—tells us: ‘That innermost, limitless Self, seemingly eclipsed by thoughts, is your true nature. That thou art!’ Our situation resembles the villager’s insistence on ‘nine’, dispelled by the realization, ‘I am the tenth’. An error is cancelled, and nothing new is imparted.

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

Pleasures and sufferings recur in life, but pleasure and its memories pass away like the summer evenings, while sorrow endures like the winter cold. What is the meaning of this? They say that experience teaches us to live better, but what is better living? Which is better, to rear a large family, making a livelihood by being enslaved to a selfish and crafty employer, or to live as a hermit? Who knows? Desires die unfulfilled, ambitions are killed in the cradle, age brings darker shadows. What is the meaning of it all? Neither science nor philosophy seems to inform us convincingly on the meaning of life. People say that it is all evolution; yet we see but little improvement in humanity since Aristotle.

Is it abnormal to be reflective, or is it normal to live like the Indian oilman’s bull, which revolves round his machine, blind-folded, from morning to evening without making any progress? This is unsatisfactory. Suicide is not sanity. Sometimes we turn against fate and blame the whole scheme of things. People say: ‘Be good; help; give service to others.’ Millions were killed in the Napoleonic wars, and yet the French emperor said that it was all for the good of Europe. Orphanages, free schools, and other charitable institutions claim to do good; but do they stop others from suffering? I wonder whether they remove the cause of suffering. Alas, what shall we do?

To all who are in this dilemma, the sage Shri Dada of Aligarh steps in and gives the following message:

‘I am not a theorist. It is not given to me to be a scientist, a philosopher or a philanthropist, but I assure you that I have acquired unbroken peace. This peace can be communicated. Do not be too inquisitive, but begin to live. Give a trial to the traditional remedy of all the ills of life.

‘Change your mode of living. Neither be an optimist nor a pessimist, but be an enquirer. Be a candidate for Infinite Peace. As a wandering eye misleads a careless heart, so a restless heart creates stone walls for itself. Peace will not fall into your mouth like a ripe fruit from a tree. It is to be earned by perseverance.

‘Listen! Exercise the greatest faculty of your soul: faith, *shraddha*. Your intellect can help in the world, but not in the spiritual life. Faith

means turning your back on all doubts and suspicions, and continuing to believe and act in the prescribed way. Take as your articles of faith:

1. You are a ray of the Divine Sun, separated from Him apparently but not really, on account of your devotion to the objects of the senses.
2. Detach your affection and attention from the objects of the senses. Apply it to: meditation; study of the nature of the Self; practice of general compassion and benevolence; active devotion to your chosen Deity and Guru, if you have one; steadfast thought that Eternal Bliss is realizable and that you will realize it.

‘Let your faith grow daily, and by the above-mentioned practices the veil of nescience which hides spiritual illumination from you will go. Make your mind such that only the yogic impressions are registered on it, and those of sansara (the world) do not touch it. It does not take long to have that illumination. Believe that you are already illumined.

‘Now, one word about doing good. I encourage all philanthropy, but its motive must be free from self-seeking. For those who are neither wealthy, nor very intellectual, nor physically strong, I recommend filling the heart with devotion to God and love to all His creatures, and serving them with humility.

‘The best book to study is the book of your heart. Read the pages of your thoughts and desires. Roll a good cigarette of the picture-book of sansara, light it with the flame of ‘This is all maya (illusory)’ and smoke it in peace, watching the fumes as they go curling upward.

‘Eat enough to maintain your life. Do not talk uselessly, and think of the good of all.’

This is a complete programme of life. This is a remedy that has never failed. By the application of this wisdom, the egoist becomes an altruist, the misanthrope a philanthropist. Sovereignty over the world of one’s personality is open to each and all. It is a kingdom which is easily acquired, and nobody can rob one of it.

H.P.S.

Schopenhauer and the Indian Wisdom

OF ALL THE philosophers of rank who have turned up in the Western world, Schopenhauer has been the only one, so far, to have claimed that his philosophy was the same as the philosophy of Vedanta. There have been scientists like Schrödinger who have in a certain sense adopted the philosophy of yoga, also literary men like Aldous Huxley. But—with one exception to be mentioned later—Schopenhauer has been the only professional philosopher to say that the philosophy of yoga was his own.

Arthur Schopenhauer was born in Danzig in 1788 on the eve of the French Revolution, and he died in Frankfurt in 1860, aged 71. His father, whose memory he greatly treasured, was a rich businessman of Dutch extraction, in whom multinational ideas were already blooming. Instead of sending his son to school in the ordinary way, he parked him off at an early age with a French business family of his acquaintance, to make sure he knew French. Later, he took his son on a continental tour and parked him for a time at a school in Wimbledon, where Schopenhauer imbibed the English language and a lifelong dislike of English parsons. Then they began the long journey back through France, more or less as if the Napoleonic Wars were not going on. At Toulouse, he saw the camp of thousands of convicts condemned as galley-slaves, and the sight had a profound effect. He said that then, at the age of fifteen, and like the Buddha, he realized that life was all suffering, through and through.

Although he was fond of comparing himself to the Buddha, Schopenhauer was very far from being a sage. His gloomy view of life was only partly due to deep reflection and philosophic insight; it was also very considerably due to a deep strain of paranoia, transmitted to him from his parents and ancestors on both sides. The father committed suicide when Schopenhauer was 17, and Schopenhauer felt obliged to carry on with training at his firm to learn how to carry on the business. He remained a sound, not to say pernickety, businessman all his life, but he chafed at working in an office because it thwarted an enormous desire he had to study and reflect over life and present his thoughts to the public in philosophical form.

The firm had moved to Hamburg, due to the exigencies of the Napoleonic Wars, but Schopenhauer's mother took her portion of the cash after her husband's death and decamped to Weimar, where she struck up a friendship with the poet Goethe, then in his sixties, who used to attend a salon in her house twice a week. Through the influence of Goethe, she got Arthur free from his commercial post in Hamburg, and enabled him to take up the life of a scholar. He picked up the classical languages as easily as he had picked up the modern ones, and at university he studied first the biological sciences and eventually philosophy, specializing in Plato and, above all, Kant.

Schopenhauer is virtually a man of one book—the famous book called *The World as Will and Idea*, which he wrote as a young man in Dresden. The rest of his life he spent deeply engrossed in study, but it was only to improve, rewrite, expand, reformulate the ideas of this one book. His youth was turbulent and profoundly unhappy, and the same could be said about his middle-age and old-age. His habits were regular, but he could not control his feelings of self-superiority, suspicion and anger that continually overwhelmed his mind. He was happy only with his books, in the solitary contemplation of nature, in the companionless study of art in museums and journals, in playing the flute, in visiting the opera and the theatre and in that sort of society where he could pontificate unchallenged before a group of satellites.

In his later works, he gave the soundest practical advice on how to live, but he made little attempt to follow it himself. His attitude seemed to be that in ethical matters, he was a kind of Field Marshal in charge and you could hardly expect him to learn how to handle a musket. As a social human being, you could call him almost a complete failure, taking refuge in solitude and solitary walks with his dog, a large white poodle called Atma, in honour of the Upanishads, and said to be rather grubby in appearance. He was a classical example of the professional philosopher pilloried by Kierkegaard as a person who constructs a magnificent palace and himself lives outside it in a little hovel.

In the second half of his life, he settled as a confirmed bachelor in Frankfurt, and led a regular disciplined life with a daily swim in the cold river, except in winter. But he was intolerable socially, and the only friends he had were the younger men who believed his doctrine to

be true and wanted to help him propagate it. He bullied them mercilessly. A number of literary schemes came to nought because of the shabby way he dealt with publishers. He would propose a reasonable scheme and then make demand after demand till the publisher would give up in desperation. He wrote to a Scottish publishing firm proposing to translate Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* into English, saying, one would imagine truthfully, that you would not find so much English and so much Kant united in one head as in his. But, for the great philosopher of pessimism to accept that a bunch of impecunious Scottish publishers were going to put up with all his whims, was really a foray into the wildest optimism.

It is well known that Schopenhauer got his initial introduction to the Upanishads, shortly before he wrote his own masterpiece, through a Latin translation of them, made by a Frenchman called Anquetil Duperron, Duperron himself having worked from Prince Dara Shikoh's seventeenth century Persian translation. I would like to mention, however, another source of Indian ideas for Schopenhauer, whose presence in Schopenhauer's ambit appears to have been only recently discovered. Karl Christian Friedrich Krause, a minor post-Kantian philosopher, who usually rates a few lines or paragraphs in the textbooks, was in company with Schopenhauer in Dresden. He is the exception to the rule mentioned above that no western philosopher, except Schopenhauer, has identified himself with the philosophy of yoga. Krause had already learned to read Sanskrit before he met Schopenhauer, made translations for him and, what is more remarkable still, tried to initiate him into meditative practices. But Schopenhauer said he refused to sit 'dead-stupid' (stumpf-sinnig) staring at a wall!

But when Schopenhauer was only asked to read and ponder over a book, his response was warmer. Towards the end of his life he wrote a famous passage in praise of Duperron's Latin translation of the Upanishads. 'How Duperron's translation', he wrote, 'breathes the Spirit of the Veda through-and-through. How one is gripped inwardly if one becomes familiar with the Persian-style Latin of this incomparable book, through studying it with real care. How packed every line is with solid, precise and thoroughly congenial meaning. On every page we meet with sublime and noble conceptions, while the work as a

whole has a lofty moral tone. Everything breathes the atmosphere of India, vivid and close to nature.’

Schopenhauer greatly admired the Indian wisdom as an anticipation of his own system, but fundamentally misunderstood it because, to use the Sanskrit terms, he took Maya for Brahman. The Indians taught that in our ordinary life, we are under a delusion (maya). In truth, reality (Brahman) is one, of the nature of existence, consciousness and bliss. But we are not normally awake to its true nature, and when a thing is not known in its true nature, it is misconceived.

In our unregenerate state, we misconceive reality, imagining it to constitute a world of plurality, of which our body is a part. We identify ourselves with our individual body and mind, undergo sufferings of various kinds, appear to undergo death with the death of the body, yet the stream of appearances continues. We will appear to ourselves to be reborn again and again in the world of multiplicity, until we learn to lose our attachment for it, and then eventually it will be possible through spiritual discipline to shed this appearance of identification with the body and mind, and then we will realize our true nature as the one infinite Spirit, pervading all. Once a person has done that, he no longer believes himself to be an individual, no longer acts for selfish, individualistic motives, no longer suffers in the same way as before, is no longer involved in the helpless process of death and rebirth in individual bodies and is able—and is the only one truly able—to give assistance to others on the spiritual path.

Schopenhauer found this doctrine in the Upanishads and lauded it, but because he made no attempt to undergo the practical discipline prescribed, he did not fully understand it, and partly misrepresented it. Like the Upanishadic sages, Schopenhauer held that reality is one and that we are conditioned by our ignorance to apprehend it falsely as a world of multiplicity, falsely spread out in space and time and consisting of objects linked by causality. Like the sages of the Upanishads, Schopenhauer taught that, if you want to know your own true nature, you have to look within. But he did not have the traditional discipline, and therefore when he looked within, he did not find the one motionless universal Spirit, spoken of in the Upanishads. What he found was something he called ‘Will’.

Here is a passage in which Schopenhauer compares life to a dream. After quoting Prospero from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*: ‘We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep’, he goes on to soliloquize on how our waking life may be compared to a dream on account of its very brevity. Our teacher did not encourage us to think that Vedanta taught that life was a dream, first because the classical Vedanta teachers made a sharp physiological distinction between the two states, taking the active presence of the sense-faculties of the waking body at their post and looking out on the external world in that state as the criterion of waking, while experiences encountered in the absence of all perception of the waking world were accounted as dream.

Secondly, in our teacher’s day the Christian missionaries regarded themselves as able to dispose of Vedanta by saying that it taught the world was a dream and that India’s poverty and degradation was the result—overlooking the fact that Vedanta taught a deeper discipline for waking life than they themselves were usually capable of. However, at other times our teacher did also insist on the illusory and dreamlike character of the world eloquently enough. We find in Gaudapada and the *Yoga Vasishtha* passages of teaching in which waking experience and dream experience are equated, and students of the Gita will remember a passage where Krishna says to Arjuna, in reference to the lives of the warriors he may have to kill if he fights, ‘Beings are unmanifest at first, then briefly manifest and finally, unmanifest. What occasion is there for lament?’ This argument, as it were, for stoicism in face of the brevity of life, suggests its dream-like character. Schopenhauer writes:

Waking life and dream are leaves from one single book. Sustained reading of the pages of that book is called ‘real life’. But at the end of the day, when one is about to go to bed, one may continue to turn over the pages of a book idly, opening it at random, with one’s eye sometimes falling on something one has already read, sometimes falling on something new. But in every case, we are reading from the same book. This fragmentary reading is not a part of our regular study of the book. But it is not so different, when one remembers that regular study also starts and stops abruptly. Regular study itself may therefore be regarded

as the same as fragmentary turning over the pages, only sustained for a longer period.

In the same way, our different dreams are different from waking life to the extent that they do not form a part of our continuous daily experience which carries on throughout our life. And it is our waking up that makes us aware of this fact. But if causal connections are taken as the mark of waking experience, each dimension, taken on its own, has its own form of causal connections. If one were to place oneself at a standpoint beyond either waking or dream, one would find that there is no clear mark of distinction between them, and one would have to agree with the poets that life is nothing but a long dream.

Here is another passage in which Schopenhauer points to the ancient Indian wisdom openly (some technical terms have been omitted):

Now, it is true enough that for the eyes of the understanding of an unregenerate individual, an understanding that is subjected to the will which it has to serve, the world does not look the same as it finally comes to look to the philosophical enquirer, who recognizes in it the objectified manifestation of the one unique and indivisible will which he feels himself to be. No—the world hangs out before the unregenerate individual the veil of Maya taught by the Hindus; what he sees, instead of reality, the thing-in-itself, is merely the appearance, conditioned by time, space and causation. And with this limited form of understanding, the individual cannot see the true essence of things; he sees the external appearances and sees them as distinct, divided, innumerable, prodigiously variegated, sometimes even opposed and mutually contradictory. He takes joy for one thing and suffering for another, not realizing that they are two faces of the same coin; he sees one man as an executioner and a murderer, and another as the victim, not seeing that both are expressions of one will; he sees one person living in pleasure and abundance while another is dying at his door, tortured by hunger and cold. So he asks, ‘Where is justice?’ and plunges into the pleasures of life as best he can. And, he doesn’t see that, in this very act of will, what he is taking, what he is appropriating for his own body, is the very stuff of the pain and suffering of existence, the very thing of which he is terrified. He sees the evil and wickedness in the world. But he lacks any notion of the fact that the joys and the agonies are nothing

but the two masks assumed by the same one universal ‘will to live’.

This passage is one short example of many that could be given for Schopenhauer, showing how well he appreciated what we might call the dark side of the Indian wisdom. But, it has to be remembered that he did not recognize any reality apart from this blind will to live that expresses itself in such complicated forms of suffering. Although, when theorizing, he spoke of the manifestations of will which lure humanity into suffering under the guise of enjoyment, as illusory and phenomenal and apparent, in practice he took them as real. He might call his poodle Atman after the transcendent Self taught in the Upanishads, but the Upanishadic Atman does not appear in his teaching, still less the Upanishadic doctrine of an Ishvara or God to whom one can turn in devotion. Schopenhauer could not accept that a world that contained so much suffering could be under the control of an omniscient, omnipotent deity. He took the typical rationalist’s view that a God to whom one could turn in devotion was a superstition, an invention of man’s fears, exploited by the priests and the political powers that be, to help keep the lower classes in order.

If Vedanta has a three-fold recipe for happiness and self-fulfilment, namely service, devotion and meditation, Schopenhauer only offered a very truncated form of this discipline. He ruled out devotion to a personal God, on the ground that no omniscient being would go on producing the incalculable sufferings in the world undergone by animals and humans. Vedanta prescribes meditation on the Self within as a means to become aware of the motionless blissful Self present within the world of multiplicity and suffering, and as discernible in the midst of it. Schopenhauer ruled this out because he had not the patience to try such practices and was too headstrong and full of his own ideas to listen when such teachings were offered to him.

Finally, when all allowance is made for the dark side of Schopenhauer’s character, one can say he offered us a worthwhile example. He felt he had a mission to ponder over the meaning of life and to explain to his fellow humans how they could relieve their sufferings. And to this end, he devoted himself to assiduous thought and assiduous study. The marks on the books in his library showed that he had actually read most of the great classics from which Aldous Huxley quotes, and he did come

up, as we shall see, with some useful and profitable teaching.

Here, for instance, is another passage warning us how easily we become victims of the blind will to live. He says:

Thus all willing arises out of need, out of lack, and so out of suffering. Satisfaction puts an end momentarily to this suffering. But for every wish that is satisfied, there remain at least ten that are not; and desire lasts long and is permanent, its demands multiply to infinity, while the satisfactions are short and scanty by comparison. Even the momentary satisfaction is merely apparent. Once one desire is satisfied, it gives way to another. We look back on the past satisfied desire as something we recognize to have been an error; the desire under which we suffer at present is a similar error not so far recognized as such. No object can give the will permanent satisfaction; every object is always like a piece of alms given to a beggar which feeds him today only to postpone his suffering till tomorrow. So long as we are under the dominion of the will to live, we can have neither permanent happiness nor peace.

Because of this aspect of his condition, man has what Schopenhauer called in a famous chapter of his main work 'a metaphysical mind'. Man, the most advanced creation of the will, suffers the most on account of his developed consciousness. Animals also suffer physically, especially at the hands of man. But they do not have the additional pain of mental worry about disasters to come. The eyes of cows grazing in the field have an enviable calm. Man alone is aware of his impending death.

In Schopenhauer's day class distinctions were very marked, and for the people at large, life was too laborious to permit of indulgence in metaphysical needs. The less a man is able to think, said Schopenhauer, the less he finds mysterious in his condition. Everything seems self-evident. What causes people with sufficient leisure to reflect deeply is the knowledge of death and insight into the hidden suffering latent in life. No-one would stop to wonder what the world consisted of if our life was endless and uniformly pleasant.

Schopenhauer speaks of the existence of a certain reluctance to accept a systematic doctrine of materialism, because it reminds man of his mortality and insists on it. In witness to this, he appeals to the fact that the earth is covered with temples, churches, mosques and pagodas.

People wish to be assured that they are in some sense immortal. But he thought the value of the various religious traditions very different, his remarks ranging from disparagement to praise, as in the case of the Upanishads:

People in early times were much closer than ourselves to the source of human life. Their intuitive powers were much more awake, their minds better able to have an intuitive grasp of nature, and hence they were able to satisfy their metaphysical needs better than we are able to do. Thus arose amongst the forbears of the Brahmins those well-nigh superhuman conceptions that were later deposited in the Upanishads.

Unfortunately, Schopenhauer does not go on to explain exactly what he valued most in the Upanishadic teaching. But let us look at his own teaching and get some idea of what he values from that.

Although he reduced reality to one all-pervading will, and regarded that will as blind, nevertheless he had to account for the order and uniformity in the world somehow. An optimistic philosopher, who believes in a wise, all-seeing Providence, has the problem of accounting for the manifest evil in the world. A pessimistic philosopher like Schopenhauer, who reduces everything to blind instinctive will, has the problem of explaining the elements of order, uniformity, organization and beauty in the cosmos.

When we speak generally of 'difficulty' in a philosopher, we mean that his ideas are so complex or his language so involved that we have difficulty in understanding him. Amongst the great continental philosophers, Schopenhauer was relatively free from this kind of difficulty, because he wrote in a singularly direct style, favouring concrete images taken from life in preference to abstractions and philosophic jargon. But when we speak of a particular difficulty in reading a philosopher, we usually mean the difficulty we have in comprehending how one part of his doctrine squares with the rest of it.

Many serious students of Schopenhauer have found a difficulty when it comes to his explanation of the unity, order and beauty to be found in the universe. He appealed, essentially, to a form of the Platonic doctrine of Ideas, but the problem is, how could blind irrational will have come up with the Platonic-style Ideas that form such an important part of his

system? Without attempting a detailed discussion of this difficulty, let us recall that Schopenhauer resolutely rejected the existence of an all-wise God who created and supervised the world. He shared the view of Ivan in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazoff* that no God worthy of the name would have produced a world so full of suffering. But this is not the Upanishadic view. Amongst many theistic passages, we find in the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*:

The one God, hidden in all beings, all-pervading, the inner Self of all beings, the ordainer of all deeds, who dwells in all beings, the witness, the knower, the only one, devoid of finite attributes, the one controller of the many, who makes the one seed manifold—the wise, who perceive Him as abiding in their Self, to them belongs eternal happiness, not to others.

Schopenhauer comes near to this view in many ways, but there is this big difference. For the Upanishads, reality is infinite light, infinite bliss, infinite intelligence. In its infinitude, it is not manifest, because there is no room for the gaps and variety on which manifestation depends. It comes out into manifestation, and manifestation, by its very nature, implies both joy and suffering. Eventually there is withdrawal from manifestation back into the primeval light and bliss. The manifestation in plurality, however, takes place in the principle of light and bliss, and this explains how there can be, and is, order and beauty in the cosmos. For Schopenhauer there is only the irrational will, with its blind impulse to propagate itself further and undergo further suffering.

How then to account for the glorious, ordered aspect of Nature? Schopenhauer says that the force of the blind drive of the will to create is so strong that it objectifies itself in eternal ideas of a Platonic kind, which serve as a sort of framework to hold its self-manifestation together. In this regard his words are,

By Idea I understand all the determined and fixed degrees of objectification of the will, in so far as the latter is the pure thing-in-itself and a stranger to all plurality—degrees which stand to particular things as their eternal forms and models.

Without claiming to take all this in, let us hang on to this much. Will, the reality, is one. It is only its illusory manifestation that assumes the

form of plurality. Because Will is one, its first objectification is in the form of unities, the archetypes of things. The mineral realm has its permanent forms, about which science can deduce laws. Life has its permanent forms, though individuality and difference are greater here. There is more difference between each animal of the same species than there is between each piece of clay and there is more difference between each human being than between each animal of a non-human species. As Schopenhauer believed that consciousness depended on a physical brain, he disbelieved in the idea of the soul as a permanent substance surviving the body, but did believe that human beings were so highly differentiated, one from another, that this presupposed a separate projection for each on the part of the Will. Each human being is a kind of Platonic idea; he has his separate timeless unchangeable character, and that is what makes him feel responsible for his acts.

With this necessarily sketchy account of the theoretical background, we turn to an even sketchier account of the practical side of Schopenhauer's training.

If the will to live is the great evil or source of evil, then it makes sense to set oneself a practical path to overcome the will to live. Schopenhauer made this the main goal for other people, though he signally failed to follow it himself. But he made provision also for a certain palliative, a temporary buffer against the importunate demands of the will to live—namely, the enjoyment of works of art. The aesthetic attitude to life, it is well known, is the opposite to the practical one. The practical realist looks at things in terms of what he can get out of them, in terms of comfort, security, reputation and so forth. The artistic or aesthetic attitude is one which particularly appealed to Schopenhauer. Here the object is contemplated as a thing of value for its own sake, and the secret of enjoying great art is to contemplate the beautiful object in the absence of any activity of the will.

Of course, commercial considerations come in to undermine the true appreciation of art, and objects come to be valued in cash terms, which in the end boils down to goods and services, and in turn to bodily comfort. But that aspect of the art world, along with pride in the possession of rich treasures, is irrelevant to true artistic appreciation. Schopenhauer remarks that the Dutch painters cause joy because they

paint insignificant objects with such perfect objectivity that they force us to participate in the serenity of their own vision of things. He says that the pleasures of nostalgia have the same cause—we are thinking of distant things which we can no longer desire or fear.

Sometimes a great work of art can give us a strange insight into the Platonic idea behind the individual object represented—a very finely felt and painted or sculptured animal can somehow give us some feeling of the essence of the whole species. The contemplation of certain aspects of nature yields a special calm and joy because they are independent of all practical considerations. This is especially true of modifications of light. The joy in contemplating a sunset is much the same whether the person contemplating it is in a prison or a palace. There is a similar charm in the spectacle of the moon, as the poets have not been slow to testify.

Broadly speaking, the beautiful is what makes us feel contemplative in a way that is neutral from the pleasure-pain standpoint. The sublime is that which induces the same attitude, but only after first arousing the pleasure-pain feelings and then dissipating them after a kind of struggle—for instance, when the sight of a terrible storm at first evokes fear but eventually the sense of fear is lost in the wonder aroused by the grandeur of the spectacle.

Considerations of this kind apply to attendance at a tragedy. Indeed, Schopenhauer saw art in general as having the mission of revealing the tragic element of life and in giving us a temporary sense of liberation from it and providing us with a hint of the need and possibility of a more permanent form of liberation.

Salvation, for Schopenhauer, always provided it was for someone else, was the negation of the will to live. While he stated the goal of life to be abnegation of the will to live, he did not really give any instruction about it on his own account: the best part perhaps is eloquent ascriptions of scenes from the lives of holy men and women of the past from different parts of the world. He himself admitted that abnegation of the will to live was the narrow path for the elect, the saints, whether canonized or not. He claimed that it was in no sense a selfish path concerned solely with one's own welfare, since the abnegation of the will to live yielded a truer insight into the nature of reality and hence a

deeper sense of our fundamental unity with all—and hence enhanced powers of pity. In this connection, he was fond of quoting, perhaps misquoting, the Sanskrit phrase: *Tat Tvam Asi, That Thou Art.*

Towards the end of his main opus, after citing Meister Eckhart as the greatest of Western mystics, Schopenhauer continues with a passage that reveals his view of the function of the philosopher. For Schopenhauer, the mystic is the discoverer of truth, but the philosopher still has a function: that of translating the concrete intuitions of the mystic into the language of abstract concepts, so that they will be intelligible to others. Here is what he says,

And what I here translate with my feeble tongue, in general terms, is not a fiction just invented today by philosophers. No. This doctrine was that most enviable life that was actually lived by all the saints and all the great souls found amongst the Christians, found in even greater numbers amongst the Hindus, the Buddhists and those of other religions as well. They may well have had different dogmas imprinted in their minds, but the way they lived their lives expressed in the same way, one and the same way of thinking—that immediate, intuitive way of thinking, which is the one source of every virtue and all holiness. We find here again that distinction we have met time and again in this study, that potent but so sadly neglected distinction, of such wide application, between abstract and intuitive knowledge.

When it comes to a knowledge of the essence of the universe, there is a great abyss between these two, which only philosophy can bridge. For to translate the concrete experience of philosophical truths by the mystics into abstract knowledge, to subject them to reflection—that is the task of philosophy, and that is all that philosophy can or should do.

A.J.A.

The Eternal Wisdom

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

NOW IT WAS the season of late autumn. In the valley of Shiva-Vana the leaves had already turned golden and the autumnal flowers were in full bloom. The sky shone clear like a sapphire and the valley lay like a garnet below it. Smoke was rising from the different dales, and here and there herds of deer were grazing under the shadows of the trees. The lovely fawns were running close to the does, while the stags, so stately in appearance, scratched their foreheads against the stems of the giant trees. The spotted antelopes were leaping in another glade of the valley, free and happy because they knew they had nothing to fear. The lowing of the cows in a distant pasture announced their contentment.

The sage Yajnavalkya, carrying his staff and dressed in a flowing blue robe embroidered with wool, emerged from his library. He looked unusually pensive. As he walked forward, his beloved Maitreyi came briskly towards him and handed him a roll of manuscripts wrapped in silk, saying: 'My lord, these are fresh copies made by your disciple, Bharadvaja, and he asked me to deliver them.' The holy man replied: 'Thank you, my darling; how watchful you are.'

Then, looking at his wife with a smile, he added: 'Though I should live a few centuries more, yet I should be unable to repay your manifold kindnesses and loving service, rendered to me so ungrudgingly.' Maitreyi, bowing low, retraced her steps to the hermitage.

Unattended by any of the disciples, Shri Yajnavalkya walked into the peaceful valley. A few fawns approached him. He patted their necks, calling each by a pet name. Then a large stag, grazing slowly, to whom the sage had given the name of Pavana, came near. He was a noble beast, king of his herd, but now aging swiftly. Shri Yajnavalkya called the stag to him and the animal came close and, recognizing his master, touched his breast with his head. The compassionate sage embraced Pavana and said softly: 'My good fellow, if ever you incarnate as a man, do not forget to call at this ashram.' As the yogi-rajah walked further afield, a number of does followed him, and the venerable figure of Shri

Yajnavalkya, surrounded by these noble and beautiful creatures, presented a picture which even the gods might envy.

He thought to himself: 'King Janaka, having formed an attachment for me, has expressed a desire that I should take charge of his empire, enabling him to retire for a few years and lead the life of a recluse. Yet I feel sure the monarch would not return and reassume his role as a great ruler. He knows the Truth, and although to one who knows the Truth, solitude or society are the same, yet it is a tendency of the purified (sattvic) mind to indulge in the peace of solitariness and thus to bless mankind from that high spiritual level. Moreover, I have no experience of statecraft, and all King Janaka's ministers are rooted in dharma.'

'No, I cannot accept the burden of ruling that great empire of Videha. There are a few of my disciples who are competent to go about preaching the ideal of liberation-in-life (jivanmukti); perhaps a few more will come. This ideal is what the world needs more than any other.'

The great sage paused, looked up at the clear sky as if communing with the infinite, then resumed his walk under the giant pines. A black snake crawled in front of him and received his blessings. Then he sat down on a rock, in deep silence.

The profound thoughts that move the mind of a universal mahatma are powerful enough to move the minds of millions. He said softly: 'I must renounce the world. I am now three score years and ten, and this is the time to enter the monastic life (sannyasa), leaving all worldly cares on the shoulders of the younger ones. Although a knower of Brahman (the Absolute) is under no obligation, either religious or secular, and is above all ethical injunctions, yet he cannot divest himself of that perennial spring of peace, that beautiful gem in the crown of a spiritual sage: compassion. Divine compassion is the shadow of a man of God. Forgiveness is the only duty he knows. I am directed by compassion alone to free the ever perfect and immutable Self (Atman) from the imagined bondage, from the fear of death, disease, or the loss of those who are dear. Yes, I will follow the tradition of the holy acharyas like Uddalaka and Ajatashatru.'

Then, going further, Shri Yajnavalkya sat down under a tree, supporting his aged frame against its trunk. It was a charming picture,

as if a holy image, with silvery hair, had been set in relief against the dusky bark of the tree. For some time he remained thus, in samadhi. Then he heard the sound of conch-shells and bells coming from the devotion hall of the ashram.

Rising quietly, the holy man walked back over the green grass, under the shadows of the lofty trees. It appeared as if those trees, shooting erect into the blue, did not forget their debt to their mother earth, and so they too, in affection, cast their shadows upon her. The little calves, only a few weeks old, having got loose from the pens, ran towards the sage. Approaching him with ears erect and tails in the air, they rubbed their necks against his blue robe. He patted them affectionately and said: 'You, Buddha, and you, Nala, should not break away from your parents.' Standing close to him and lifting their heads, the young calves turned their beautiful, peaceful eyes and their snow-white mouths to his compassionate face, as if to say to their spiritual father: 'We live in your love. You are our real parent.' The holy man led them towards the pen and guided them into the enclosure with his blessings.

The yogi-rajā then entered the devotion hall. The sound of the Vedic mantra being chanted and the fragrance of the incense mingled with the evening breezes, diffused peace.

* * *

A few of the chief disciples of Shri Yajnavalkya had gathered together in a corner of the valley. Intuitively they had felt that their revered Guru was contemplating the monastic life of a sannyasi. One of them, Yajnadatta, who had learnt science and philosophy and was well versed in logic and rhetoric, said: 'Brethren, our holy Guru is more contemplative than he has ever been before. We do not know what this means. Formerly, he often used to invite us to go with him on his walks and to delight us with the poetry of the Vedic sages; but now, and in fact for some time past, these dreams of pleasure seem to have faded. The other day I found our venerable Guru standing under a tree, saying something to himself. I offered three salutations, but he did not appear to notice me.'

It was true. Shri Yajnavalkya, the great dialectician who had silenced

scores of philosophers in the royal assemblies of King Janaka, had now become a profound contemplative. Another disciple confirmed these deep contemplative moods of their Teacher. He said: 'The lord of the universal wisdom is not so interested in his cows and calves as he used to be. His indifference to his surroundings, his mystic discourses and deep soliloquies, which now seem to override his interest in logic and metaphysics, give us cause for some anxiety. Oh, how shall we be able to live without him? He has supported us more than mother earth! He has provided us with moral and spiritual sustenance which far outdoes the nutriment we receive from the vegetable world.'

Another disciple, not yet twenty years old, then said: 'For the first time, I have heard the doctrine of immanence from our beloved Teacher. The uniqueness of his metaphysics is found in his doctrine of the all-pervasiveness of the Self (Atman): that everything in the world exists for the Self; that in every act of mental love the Atman is calling to the Atman! He has taught us that the goal of all endeavour is Atman; that all else is slight—a mere tinsel show. He has spoken of Atman in negative terms, and his famous dictum 'neti, neti', 'not this, not this', is unique in the whole history of metaphysics. The Teacher Shandilya speaks of the positive theology, but our Guru teaches the universally immanent character of Atman. The Self is not passive; it is the inner controller of all. Atman or the Self is the ultimate Light of man and all other lights are merely the lights of suffering. Who, before him, has taught that in the universal Light of Atman is included every other light, even the light of the reasoning mind?'

A silence fell upon the assembly and for about an hour no word was spoken. Then the sound of a flute, as if coming from a distance, fell upon the ears of the disciples. Its notes seemed to say:

O Lord, lead us from darkness to light;
From error to truth;
From death to immortality. OM

To be continued

MEDITATION AT SHANTI SADAN

A recent session led by the Warden

Meditation is a profound and rewarding practice. When based on an appreciation of the spiritual dimension of our life, it is a path of progress that helps to bring about an inner transformation. For it leads to an awareness of a level of our being which is dominated by the spiritual peace and the light of true wisdom. Meditation is our time of creative tranquillity—creative, because as our peace of mind deepens, so does our understanding of the unchanging reality behind the transient appearances.

As meditators, we might ask: ‘When will this deeper peace manifest in me, and the light of wisdom dawn in my being?’ It is true that the practice of meditation is available to everyone. But the hidden light and peace of our true Self will only be revealed if we see meditation as a means to higher knowledge—not just a calming practice but an awakening one. For we are dealing with the world of thoughts, and meditation can help us make a clearing in this interior hive of activity and enable us to be intuitively aware of the light that reveals our mental world—the power behind the mind.

So if our quest is for this higher knowledge, and we persevere with our practice, our mind will be influenced and lit by the higher self-awareness. The basic idea is that if we apply our attention and interest to the practice of meditation and the spiritual life, there will be a revelation of light and peace from our own deeper Self. This will prove to us that by turning within, we are looking in the right direction, and we shall know that within us there is something utterly serene and fulfilled, which knows no limitation whatsoever.

1. Inner Preparation

Approach the meditation with reverence and calmness. We feel that we are in the presence of the divine, within and around us. Mentally we bow to this invisible power.

2. Breathing Practice

Breathe slowly, drawing up the in-breath as if from the navel to the spot between the eyebrows. With each breath, carry the thought: ‘I am peace; I am peace.’ Do this for about four minutes.

3. Visualisation

Imagine the flame of a candle shining in the region of the heart centre. The flame is still, bright, upward-pointing. Just sit and think of this flame, which is a symbol of the divine Spirit, our innermost Self.

Some years ago, London’s Royal Academy of Arts held an exhibition of Russian religious paintings and icons. Most of these depicted holy figures or scenes from their lives. In one of the pictures, the foreground showed a group of figures involved in some religious event. But if you looked at the higher part of the painting, into the sky, there was something like a bright door or window, symbolizing an opening to another world—a world of light.

This image of a bright opening has some correspondence with our inner being. There is a higher spiritual dimension to our nature which can be revealed when we learn to tranquillize our mind through the practice of meditation. The awakening of this spiritual faculty can be compared to a new opening in the mind. It represents a new beginning, and through this inner faculty, if rightly guided, we will become aware of the realm of inner light and peace that is at the heart of our being and is our true nature.

Our visualization also pictures a light, an inner light, in the form of a candle flame seen shining in the region of the heart centre. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the quiet, meditative mind is compared to a still flame that has ceased to flicker because there is no wind to disturb it. In the same spirit, we let the wind of our thoughts die down through our restful contemplation of the inner flame. Devote five to seven minutes to this visualization.

4. Meditation on a text

OM. MY MIND RESTS IN CONTEMPLATION
OF THE EVER-SHINING LIGHT IN MY SOUL.
THAT LIGHT AM I. OM

The meditation puts into words the truth of the visualization and reminds us that our true nature is that ultimate light. Nothing can extinguish the light of our being, for it is immortal and one with the supreme. The source of the light is our 'I' consciousness, so the text affirms: 'That light am I.'

In doing this meditation, we are also teaching the mind where true rest is to be found. Allow about ten minutes for this contemplation.

Let us be wise and retire now and then during the day to this inner resting place. Whenever we do this, we will benefit deeply, gaining equanimity and inner strength.

5. Closing Offering

Close the meditation period by extending thoughts of peace and goodwill to all beings, without exception.



A PRAYER

O Ocean of Love, stillness profound,
Light and life of all who come to Thee,
Draw us into Thy peace.
That the noise of the mind be stilled,
And the music of the soul be all one note,
Thyself alone, my Lord, my all.

H.P.S.

Revelations of Happiness

When one has understanding, one should laugh; one should not weep.
Zen master Hsueh-Tou (Setcho) 980-1052

With the mind unattached to external objects, one finds the joy that is
in the Self. *Bhagavad Gita*

The closer the mind is brought to the Self, the happier it becomes.
Shri Dada of Aligarh

YOGA TEACHES that the source of peaceful happiness is within us. We cannot bring joy to others until we have found it in ourselves. But this joy is not what the world calls joy. It has nothing to do with success, achievement, acquisition or celebrity. It is rooted in the peace that we learn about from the enlightened teachers of mankind. It is the joy of discovering the spiritual dimension in our own being.

Nowadays, we demand swift gratification of our desires. Wealth is attractive because it promises this possibility. But true happiness is something stable, calm, pregnant with understanding. We have to work for it. This means working on ourselves.

We work on ourselves because what we seek is enshrined in our own being. It is deep, innermost, beyond the flux of thought and emotion. In the yoga philosophy it is called Atman, the true Self. It can be looked on as something present, though hidden, in our own centre.

There is an ancient, though very useful, conception, that our true Self is hidden within different levels of wrapping, so to say, as one might secure a precious diamond by first wrapping it in film, next in soft felt, then in a little box, then in a leather pouch, and so on. In our case, the external coverings are our body and our mind—or rather our sense of identification with our body and mind.

We do not want to negate the body and mind—that makes no sense. But for our revelation of true happiness, we need to lift our feeling of identity from these externals (and here the mind is seen as external) and restore our feeling of 'I' to the Atman, the real centre of our being.

The writer, Sir Thomas Browne, has said: 'Life is a pure flame, and we live by an invisible sun within us.' If we look at a picture of our

planet earth in cross section, we find a central luminous core hidden within various mantles or strata. From the outside, where we innocently stand, you would hardly believe such an arrangement was possible—though everything depends on this inner furnace, which is nearly as hot as the surface of the sun.

Spiritually, too, there is an inner sun, the source of our consciousness. Unlike the earth's sun-like core, it is not really enclosed or localised, but is universal and free. Nonetheless, the way to its discovery involves a certain turning within, as if it were enclosed and localised. But the spiritual principle we are drawing near to turns out to be boundless, all-pervading, transcending the walls of the body and the subtler shimmering curtains of thought.

The ancient yoga conception we have referred to in relation to the Atman and its coverings is the doctrine of the 'five sheaths'. These are conceived of and meditated on, as enclosures or coverings, or even five layers of 'self' at the core of which is our true Self. The sage Shankara compares them to the husks that hold the grain of rice, and which have to be picked off if we want to get at the rice.

The meditation on the sheaths—the enquiry into them—works on the principle that the closer the mind is brought to the Self, the happier it becomes. The outermost sheath is the body, which is seen as a kind of garment. The body sheath is called the food sheath, for, materially, it is made up of the food that keeps us alive. We feel we are the body, sometimes intensely, sometimes lightly, and sometimes we forget body consciousness. We feel it intensely when we worry how we look, or when in pain, and so on. We forget the body, or try to, in meditation. Our awareness of it becomes very faint when we are focused on something absorbing and when we are not troubled by pain. The body is not our real Self but an instrument of that Self. That man had the right idea who used to say: 'Let us take our bodies for a stroll. The exercise will do them good.'

According to the Indian conception, the next, and more inward, sheath is the life energy, or prana, which animates the bulk of the physical body and makes it a living, growing thing. This vital energy, or prana, is associated with air and our breathing process, and all it achieves for our metabolism. Like a conscious deity, it is also held to

sustain our senses, our bodily tissues, our organs of movement, our digestion, and so on. But the prana has no consciousness of its own. The ultimate force behind it is the supreme reality—the interior sun, so to say, or our true Self.

There is an interchange in the Taoist classic, *The Book of Chwang Tzu*, where the pupil goes to the teacher and says: 'I'm improving!' 'How so?', asks the teacher. 'I put rituals and ceremonies outside myself.' He comes back some time later: 'I'm improving!' 'How so?' 'I put benevolence and righteousness outside myself.' And again: 'I'm improving!.. I put the body outside myself.'

The purpose of the teaching of the five sheaths is to help us discern our true Self from all coverings and apparent limitations, and then to be what we really are.

The mind too is part of the covering material, not what is ultimately covered. It is husk, not kernel. The mind is envisaged as a subtle principle which in its own way pervades the whole body. By 'mind' in this context is not meant the mind in its more organised, balanced, resolute, penetrating and thoughtful phase, but the mind in its function as a highly charged field of sensitised awareness, instinctively and instantaneously moved by likes and dislikes, hope and fear, and set on self-preservation.

In its inner life, this phase of our mind is dominated by thoughts based on 'if'. 'If I do this, then that will happen. But what if I don't do this?' And so on, until a higher phase of the mind steps in. Hence this restless, reactive aspect of our mental life is called the lower mind or *manas*. It appears to possess selfhood, and we think, while lost in it, 'This is me'. But it is a sheath, another husk, a false self, that we can learn to step back from—to put outside our self, to know: 'I am not this'.

The higher phase of the mind is called the sheath of intellect or *vijnana* or *buddhi*. It is more internal than the manas, the lower mind, and pervades it. This phase of our mental life is meant to rule, guide and supervise the lower. As a subtle force, it penetrates the manas—it knows what is going on, and can give guidance when linked to its higher source, the true Self. It was to draw a contrast between these two phases of the mind that the Chinese sage, Mencius, said: 'I spend a

lifetime in careful thought, but not a moment in worry.’ Worry is the playground of the lower mind; careful conscious thought is the domain of our superior inner faculty. In the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, where this great doctrine is unfolded, the higher mind, the *vijñana* sheath or self, is associated with the qualities of faith, righteousness, truth and concentration—the word for concentration being ‘yoga’.

To the ordinary way of viewing things, we have reached the limit of what we are: body, life-force, mind and intellect—which all claim our feeling of selfhood at different times. But even our great and godlike faculty of intellect is an outer husk, an external sheath of something deeper, richer, more luminous, more fulfilling. This is the sheath of bliss, happiness or joy, closest to the centre of being, closest to the golden lotus of the true Self.

Yes—within us we have the gold of bliss, the untarnished lustre of true happiness. Joy is part and parcel of our nature—otherwise we would not spend our lives hungering for it. We see it clearly in very small children, who are quick to smile unless troubled by some physical discomfort. We enter into joy ourselves in deep sleep, where it has been said: ‘The brilliant happiness of dreamless sleep in the mind’s non-action.’ In fact it is only the mind’s action that cuts us off from the innate joy of our own being.

In ordinary life, we desire, we acquire. We have the contact or communion we longed for. For a brief time we stop desiring, we are liberated from longing. The mind clears. We are happy.

The yoga insight is that it is this brief inner relief from restless thoughts that allows the deeper bliss from the bliss sheath to shine through. That inner stilling is the cause of the revelation of happiness, not the nature of the object or the fact of contact or communion.

In the Upanishads the bliss sheath is associated with the whole range of joyous delights—joy on acquisition, enjoyment of possession and satisfaction, exhilaration that is the peak of happiness, and bliss, or *ananda*, in general. All these phases of joy are closeted and sourced in the inner being of man. ‘The closer the mind is brought to the Self, the happier it becomes.’

But the bliss experienced in this way is still a husk, a sheath, a false self, related to the changing world of relativity. It is still a covering. It

may be a very fine one, like tightly wrapped and smoothed cling film—but it too is a film or covering, a sheath to be set aside. This is because the source of the bliss in the bliss sheath is not the sheath itself. It is borrowed or reflected from what we really are—our true I. It is the reflection of the supreme bliss, the infinite bliss of Atman, reflected in the finite instrument of our individuality.

Like the pupil in the story from Chuang Tzu, the seeker has ultimately to say: ‘I put this finite happiness outside my self, and I am lost in the infinite bliss and consciousness of the true Self.’

In the Persian tradition, there was a king fond of chess. But he was not fond of losing. What really unsettled him was to hear the man before him call out ‘Checkmate!’ In fact, he would get violent if the truth of ‘checkmate!’ were put to him directly.

One day, his court jester, a wise fool called Dalqak, played a game with him. Dalqak won. But before calling checkmate, he rushed to a corner and hid beneath a huge pile of rugs and cushions to protect himself. Only then did a small voice from inside the pile murmur: ‘Checkmate, checkmate, O excellent Shah.’

The Shah said: ‘But what’s all this?’ Dalqak answered: ‘How can one tell the truth to you except under covers?’

All spiritual teachings transmit to us the Truth—the ultimate revelation of happiness—under covers, in terms our mind can grasp and which lead us to the next phase of understanding. Such is the instruction about the gradual transcendence of our sense of identification with body, life-force, mind, intellect and bliss, found in the Upanishads.

A.H.C.

POEM BY KHUSRAU

I have searched many planes of existence;
Heart-enchancing faces like the moon have I seen;
Fair ones of youth and tenderness have crossed my path;
But thou art so different, so different.

Translated by H.P.S.

Counsels on the Inner Life

SPIRITUAL TRUTH is universal. It can never be the monopoly of any particular religious faith or sect. Any genuine spiritual document based on its author's actual inner experience will confirm this. Thus in the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Lord in his form as Krishna, declares that he repeatedly takes birth in human form to help mankind:

Whenever there is a decay of righteousness and an ascendancy of unrighteousness, then I manifest myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil, for the firm establishment of righteousness, I am born in every age. (4:7)

Again it is recorded by Dr Shastri in his biography of his own Guru, Shri Dada, *The Heart of the Eastern Mystical Teaching*, that when Shri Dada was visited by some Christian missionaries, he invited them to read to his own disciples from the great Christian text, *The Imitation of Christ*. Afterwards Shri Dada told them: 'This is Upanishadic teaching' and he sang a devotional song which ended: 'Thou art the target at which philosophers shoot too high and ritualists too low. True lovers aim at Thee, and that is enough for them.'

Why is it that there seem to be so few true lovers around? One of the reasons is that most people are so involved in trying to cope with the problems of the outer life, that the subject of the inner life seems remote and irrelevant. And yet most of the social and economic problems which beset us arise from the frustration of our innate emotional needs, which inevitably arises so long as we go on seeking their fulfilment from the outer world. The fact is (in the words of Shri Dada):

Every heart is restless; no worldly object can satisfy the restlessness of the human heart. Your heart is like a bird in a cage; it is not happy there. It feels the call of the spring and the sun-filled sky invites it. The only way for the bird to be happy is to fly freely in the sun. The human heart is meant to be given to God; give it to Him and you will not feel restless.

In the Christian tradition, we find the same point being made by St Augustine in his *Confessions*:

Nor is it I alone nor some few besides, but absolutely all would fain be happy. Though one seeks happiness in one way, another in another, all have the same objective, namely happiness.

But as long as we go on looking for this emotional satisfaction and fulfilment, which we all long for, in the outer life, we can never find it:

Seek what ye seek, but it is not there where ye seek it... For ye are seeking the region of life in the realm of death. Tell me, where is God? Where is truth relished? He is within the very heart, yet hath the heart strayed from Him. Enter then into your hearts... and there find Him. Stand in Him and ye shall stand, rest in Him and ye shall be at rest.

Adhyatma Yoga is a method through which we realize our true identity with God within. The famous teacher, Shri Shankara, in his commentary on the Gita, gives the meaning of Adhyatma as 'That which first reveals itself to man as his innermost Self in the body, but turns out in the end to be identical with God'. And our teacher, Dr Shastri, has defined Adhyatma Yoga as 'the method by which man abandons the nature he thought was his and allows that which he really is to take possession'.

It is not a doctrine of escapism, but a means of reawakening to our true identity, while actively engaged in the duties of life. Our daily needs are not only active, but also intellectual and emotional. Therefore in daily yoga practice, we need to learn and apply the three corresponding practices, namely karma yoga, the yoga of action, jnana yoga, the yoga of knowledge, and bhakti yoga, the yoga of devotion. Adhyatma Yoga is a synthesis of these three yogas and all must be practised.

In practical life, it is love which makes the world go round; so it is devotion which really motivates us and supplies the driving force. Therefore the daily yoga practice is grounded in the yoga of devotion—either to a God with attributes—or an Incarnation—or to Absolute Truth. The need for right action (karma yoga) and quest for knowledge

through intellectual enquiry and daily meditation (jnana yoga) are also taught. But the need for bhakti is paramount, for devotion alone can supply the emotional drive needed to enliven and sustain our daily yoga practice and bring us to its promised consummation. As Krishna says:

Not by study of the Veda, nor by austerity, nor by gifts, nor by selfless action, can I be seen... But by undistracted devotion I can be known and seen in reality and entered into. (11:53-54)

We hear an echo of this oft-repeated promise in the Gita in the Gospels, where Christ promises his disciples: 'if ye abide in me, ye shall know the truth and the truth will make you free'. The same promise, from the same divine source!

Well, you may say, if the teaching of yoga is that loving is natural and it is only a question of knowing what to love, why do we need all this instruction in devotion and why is so much of the teaching in the Gita concerned with it? The answer is that 'emotion' and 'devotion' have different meanings—they are not synonyms. What is taught is that loving comes naturally; what is not taught is that devotion also comes naturally. Devotion has to be learnt. Devotion does not just mean emotional attachment, being fond of something or someone. The teaching in the Gita is that our precious emotional energy, which is so often expressed as reactions of attachment and its opposite, aversion, can be transmuted into the light and peace of devotion.

Attachment and aversion, raga and dvesha, lie towards the object of each sense; let none become subject to these two, for they are his enemies. (3:34)

Another teacher has said that attachment and aversion are like two apes sitting in the tree of the human heart. So long as they go on shaking it with their joggling and jolting, we can have no real enjoyment.

Even after God-realization, the ups and downs of life will continue, but having discovered the true source of everlasting joy, one is no longer affected by them. It is through devotion that we gain the capacity to practise equanimity through detachment and discrimination.

Attachment and aversion, likes and dislikes, are emotions—feelings

which arise to agitate our mind, often from causes we are unconscious of, whereas devotion means worship, which is a conscious act. As a nineteenth century writer, Charles Bodington, has rightly pointed out: 'True devotion springs from the will. It is the choice and love of the highest good manifested to the human soul.' In other words, devotion involves a conscious choice of what to love and then a conscious direction of our love towards the chosen object or ideal.

The practice of bhakti yoga involves a conscious decision to love God, however conceived of, and the conscious direction of our love towards Him—the choice and love of the highest good, called by the yogis, God-realization. Even while we are here, in this life, we may know It, but only through what the Gita calls 'undistracted devotion'.

Let us now take a closer look at the 'Counsels for the Inner Life' as we find them in *The Imitation of Christ*, which draws attention to Christ's statement 'The kingdom of God is within you'. Flowing from this, the author gives us eight Counsels:

- 1 Turn to the Lord with all your heart.
- 2 Forsake this sorry world and your soul shall find rest.
- 3 Learn how to turn from worldly things.
- 4 Learn to give yourself to spiritual things.
- 5 Then you will see the Kingdom of God come within you—this will be your own experience.
- 6 The Kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
- 7 These are not given to the worldly minded.
- 8 If you prepare a worthy dwelling for Him in your heart, He will come to you and dwell within you.

You can, indeed, find many authoritative Upanishadic texts confirming that 'the kingdom of God is within you'. One of the best known examples comes in the third book of the *Chandogya Upanishad*. It is called the Shandilya Vidya (the knowledge of Shandilya). In it the Rishi Shandilya tells us to meditate on 'Verily this whole world is Brahman, or God' because 'He is your Self within the heart' and 'He who realizes this will have no more doubts'. There are many parallel texts in the *Bhagavad Gita*, for example in chapter five, where this teaching is

linked to the yoga practice of mind control:

When the mind is unattached to external objects, one finds the joy which is within the Self. When the mind is united with God in ceaseless contemplation, one attains infinite and eternal joy.

Whoso has his joy within and his pastime within, and whoso has his light within only, that yogi attains the bliss of God, himself becoming God. (5:21-24)

Counsel (1) 'Turn to the Lord with all your heart' echoes the Gita:

Hear how, when your mind is intent on Me, practising yoga and finding refuge in Me, you shall know Me in full without doubt. I shall now fully teach you this knowledge combined with experience, on knowing which nothing further here remains to be known. (7:1-2)

This knowledge offered through practice of the spiritual yoga is very rare, continues the Lord. 'Among thousands only a few seek and find it.' And He goes on to show why. Only by seeking Him alone can we overcome the illusion of multiplicity created by the interplay of its three constituent qualities of balance, activity and inertia, known as the three gunas. Clearly the need to follow Counsels (1) and (2) is the message here: 'Turn to the Lord with all your heart. Forsake this sorry world and your soul shall find rest.'

It is through living according to the universal law of righteousness, called dharma, that we are led to divine worship. As Counsels (3) to (5) remind us: 'Learn how to turn from worldly things and give yourself to spiritual things. Then you will see the Kingdom of God come within you.' Those still attached to the illusion that worldly things can satisfy, says Krishna, fail to seek God within, because their desires delude them and continue to lead them astray. It is an echo of counsel (7) that true inner peace and joy are denied to the worldly minded. But Gita chapter seven ends with the promise that, though all of us are subject, from birth, to this delusion caused by the pairs of opposites, desire and aversion, those of pure deeds become freed from their influence and 'worship the Lord with a firm resolve'.

Those who thus take refuge in the Lord realize Him in full as the

reality underlying their innermost individual Self (Adhyatma) and understand the secret of action, even at the time of death. Plainly this consummation is implied in Counsel (8): 'If you prepare a worthy dwelling for God in your heart, He will come to you and dwell within you.' As the Gita puts it: 'To that ever united yogi, who constantly thinks of Me and long, I am easily accessible.' (8:14) And again in verse 22: 'The Supreme Spirit, within Whom all beings dwell, and by Whom all this is pervaded, is attainable through undistracted devotion.'

In *The Heart of the Eastern Mystical Teaching*, we find perfect harmony with these 'counsels'. What is the result of taking refuge in the Lord? Shri Dada says, 'If the surrender is complete... (that is, if all extraneous thoughts and feelings are eschewed) the individual soul will see the mind slowly vanish into the transcendental light of the divine consciousness'. Some useful advice on this is given in the same book by Swami Mangalnath, who had been a fellow disciple of Shri Dada.

Fulfilled and unfulfilled desires impress themselves on the imagination and cause disturbance of the mind... Say continually to yourself, feelingly and with great faith, that every object of the world is an illusory flower which promises joy but never yields its fruit. If you can once convince your mind of the futility of desires, you will easily control it...

Then, shedding light on the counsel, 'Learn to give yourself to spiritual things', Swami Mangalnath continues:

Remember also that the mind is always in motion. Direct it by means of vichara, enquiry into the spiritual truth, and keep it engaged in the consideration of the great Vedantic truths 'I am Brahman' and 'That thou art'. This is the positive method which, combined with and complementing the other negative method of denying the reality of transitory objects, will reveal to you a new kind of peace and light... Come what may, live in equanimity. Your real Self has always existed and will exist for evermore. Spiritual life is its magic pageant. Think that you are perfect even at this moment.

M.R.H.

Meditation, Truth and Beauty

THERE IS a world of truth and beauty within every human heart. Our happiness and well-being, as well as our ability to contribute to the happiness of those around us, depend on our connection with this inner world.

No human being is without contact with this realm of truth, but in the absence of any conscious communion with the deeper truth within ourselves, we cannot distinguish truth from error in our surroundings. If there is no contact with beauty within ourselves, we will not be able to apprehend beauty without. Fortunately, it is rare for people to lose all perception of these qualities which make life liveable. But the perception becomes dimmed. We begin to take the cynical view of life which is implicit in the offerings of the newspapers and the media.

Shakespeare expressed this view of man's life in the mouth of Jacques de Boys in *As You Like It*, in the great speech that begins:

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrance;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.

This is followed by a series of unflattering and materialistic vignettes of man's progress from babyhood, ending in the weakness and helplessness of old age—the view of one who judges life as essentially meaningless. But by making this view so patent, Shakespeare surely makes us realize that it is not so. The cynic's view is a pose, and is unbalanced. All our intimations of beauty, truth and goodness point beyond themselves to a higher realm and cannot be explained away by chemistry, economics, biology, physics or cynicism.

So we may wish to ask ourselves what we can do to escape from superficial attitudes and become more profound and more human. What can we do to deepen our attenuated connection with the world of beauty and truth? The answer may not seem obvious, but the ancient prescription tells us to stop doing anything at all. Stop your hands from

moving, your feet from taking you places, your eyes from seeing externally and your ears from hearing the sounds without. Turn within and become aware of the rich and wonderful realm of the mind. It is this inner world which we address with our meditation.

There was a time when neuroscientists thought of the brain as a kind of rigid telephonic exchange whose only business was to make connections. But nowadays they think of it as an organic re-programmable system. This is much closer to the truth. Our beliefs, our convictions, our inner attitudes, our unconscious, determine the experience and feeling we have of life. They determine the depth of our connection with the world of beauty and truth. And these attitudes, beliefs and convictions, which make up our inner world, change with the passage of time. Some change with the speed of a running brook and some as slowly a glacier grinds its way down a mountain valley, but change they must.

Sometimes the changes are dramatic. People who have been brought up in the Protestant tradition of Christianity have usually heard of conversion experiences, where a person finds that their whole view of life is radically changed. Before they were lost and now they are found, before they were blind and now they see. They see the light and adopt a new manner of life. Life is divided into a BC and an AD. Other people do not have such experiences and wish that they had. But these conversion experiences occur in every religion and there is nothing specifically Christian about them. The point is that inner changes in our set of attitudes take place all the time, and sometimes, when a new view supersedes an old one, they are definitive. There is conversion in Yoga, and it is a conversion to reality, beauty, wisdom and truth. The inner world is therefore remouldable, self-reprogrammable, plastic.

The meditation techniques based on the Adhyatma Yoga are simple and straightforward. Strain and force are not used, but persistence and determination are necessary. The practices have been used for thousands of years and are both harmless and powerful. We have to work to deepen and strengthen them, but sometimes there are people who seem to be prepared and take to meditation as a fish to water.

The condition of the mind determines our experience of reality. If we feel that we do not see enough of the beauty and truth in things, if we

are not aware of the hidden glory of the world, it is because of the state of our mind, not the environment. The state of our mind again depends to an extent on the culture we belong to, the language we speak, the family we were brought up in and so on. All this only has relative importance. The point of greatest importance is that everyone has the power to change the tendencies of their mind by their own will-power.

The philosopher and mathematician, Bertrand Russell, knew well how the reasoning part of the mind works. He remarked that when he wanted to work on a problem, he used to think hard about it for a long time and then forget about it. Some time later he would come back to it and would find that his unconscious mind had been at work and he would enjoy a flood of light on his problem. In the same way, when we hold a visualization in mind, or dwell upon a text, or go deep into a study, the effects penetrate the unconscious and manifest themselves in the course of time. Bertrand Russell knew that the mind is something that you use, and also that one must respect its way of working, in the same way that one respects a tool one uses for a job, or a tree one plants with a view to enjoy its fruits.

The mind is an organ and yet we find ourselves so often the victim of our mind. Some people are prone to feel unfairly treated. They often experience the mixed smart and titillation of a fully indulged resentment. They both hate and love the thoughts and feelings about what has been unfairly done to them, but either way they cannot let go of them. Other people would never let such petty thoughts occupy their mind. To say that we are prone to an inner state means that we lie down and are powerless before it.

As the practice of this Yoga develops, it comes about that there are fewer inner states before which we kowtow. Does the mind, after all, belong to you or do you belong to it? What then does this Yoga promise? Dr Shastri set this out clearly when he wrote: 'The holy Yoga, that is, the accumulated spiritual wisdom and science of freedom, does not promise you the delights and joys of the world. You are promised only one thing and it is intuitive cognition of the spiritual truth and the discovery of complete freedom in your own being.'

A.S-B.

SHANTI SADAN NEWS

During the summer term, eight lectures were given on Thursday evenings with some time devoted to meditation. In addition to themes which directly expounded the teachings of Adhyatma Yoga and Advaita Vedanta, a lecture was devoted to the Sufi master, Rumi, *The Wisdom of Rumi*, and one on Japanese poetry, the focus this time being on verses by the illumined sage, Kukai, otherwise known as Kobo Daishi. An essay about him is included in the section 'Three Yogis' in our *Yoga Handbook*. The term ended with a lecture by the Warden on *Yoga and True Christianity*.

The Tuesday meditation sessions, held throughout the year, are well attended. Each practice produces a deep communal stillness, as those attending make an earnest attempt to concentrate and pacify the mind. The set of three core practices is sustained for four weeks, then changed, sometimes including a practice new to visitors, yet drawn from traditional sources. For example, in the past term, the breathing exercise was accompanied by the simple affirmation, 'I am', a practice given by Hari Prasad Shastri in a public lecture in 1955. A practice sheet is distributed at every meeting, and visitors are invited to do the practices at home on a daily basis. Indeed, without such application, it is difficult to make progress in meditation, or to see the practice itself as meaningful and unfolding. For those unable to attend the centre, a sound recording of one of the practice sessions is available on the Internet and can be accessed via our website, www.shantisadan.org

On Sunday, June 8, an afternoon course was held at the Columbia Hotel, Lancaster Gate. The first talk considered the difference between *Intellectual Knowledge and Spiritual Wisdom*, showing how both are necessary and helpful for our growth of understanding, but ultimately spiritual wisdom alone satisfies the deeper urges of human nature. The second lecture gave practical advice on how to lead our inner state of mind *From Stress to Serenity*. The final talk by the Warden gave the spiritual and yogic view of *The Complete Life*, as one that fulfils our need to act, to love and to know, through adopting the three phases of yoga practice—karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga.

The next afternoon course will again be held at the Columbia Hotel on Sunday, 19 October 2014. Details will shortly be available on the Internet and in the autumn number of *Self-Knowledge*.