

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 2015

Weekday evening meetings at Shanti Sadan

Every Tuesday evening at 8pm throughout the year there is a practical guided meditation session.

On Thursday evenings at 8pm from 8 October to 26 November there will be a series of talks on the Yoga teachings with spiritual practices.

Afternoon Course

The Autumn afternoon course will be held on Sunday 18 October 2015, 2pm - 5pm, at the Columbia Hotel, Lancaster Gate, London W2.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

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NON-DUALITY—NEARER THAN WE THINK

One principle common to all the great religions is that the supreme Power is all-knowing. Even the non-theistic Buddhists, who 'take refuge in the Buddha', assume that the spiritual being they are communing with, knows their state of mind. As for the western monotheistic faiths, there are abundant references to God knowing not only the fall of a sparrow or the tread of an ant (Koran), but also the thoughts and intentions that arise in the hearts of human beings. If this were not so, silent prayer would be meaningless.

The implication of this divine omniscience is that, somehow, the supreme Power is present within our own being, as a knower of our mind. This presence must be non-material, permanent, changeless and

conscious. Because it is changeless, it is non-mental, for the mind is always changing its modes. But from birth to death, the witnessing presence remains the same—undivided, unageing, ever-aware. The mystical assertion of ‘God within’ follows logically from a belief in the divine omniscience.

When we turn to the question ‘What am I?’, we find our inner experience mirrors this theology. Our changing thoughts are known by a deeper awareness that itself never appears as a thought. This deeper awareness is also permanent, unchanging, non-material; nor can it be characterized as mental, since it never appears as such. What is mental appears before my innermost awareness; what I am, at source, subsists as that awareness.

Are there two awarenesses—two changeless presences—at the heart of our nature, one being the consciousness that is our ‘witness’ Self, the other being the all-knowing consciousness of God? Such a duality at this level of our being, makes no sense. Duality is in the finite mind and intellect, not in the spiritual principle that witnesses all. The permanent Knower of the impermanent mental events, is what is durable and essential in us, and it is the true Self, not different, in essence, from that seemingly ‘other’ omniscient Power, hitherto thought to be exterior. And so the classics of non-duality declare, ‘There is no non-dual Reality except the Self; there is no Self except the eternal witness.’

What about the related idea of the Lord as the inner reckoner, keeping a precise and thorough account of our moral condition? The mechanism of what has been called the law of karma—itself an expression of the supreme intelligence—ensures that we reap what we sow, without the need for an inner invigilating intelligence. The Divine can thus be contemplated as ever free from duality, pure, perfect, unbounded, eternal Consciousness, and we are not separate from That.

Discovering our Infinite Nature

We function in the world of time but the roots of our being are in eternity. We seem to be limited but there is something in us which is not at all limited, and which is at the root of our being.

Hari Prasad Shastri

THE CHIEF PURPOSE of the Yoga of Self-Knowledge is to awaken us to the truth of our essential nature. This truth is that our innermost Self is identical with the supreme reality that underlies and makes possible the universe. Our fundamental nature is infinite, imperishable, and transcends the conditions that apply to our physical and psychological being. Adhyatma Yoga is one of the paths that will enable us to realize this infinitude within ourselves.

This doctrine of the transcendence of the true Self runs like a vein of gold through the teachings of the enlightened exponents of Yoga. The supreme capacity of the human mind is for higher knowledge—*jnanam*. This is the wisdom that transcends the mind itself and all duality and limitation. Under its light, the infinitude at the heart of our being will be realized as the permanent and untaintable truth, the real nature of everything. ‘That which is the subtle essence, this whole universe has That as its Self. That is Reality. That is the Self. That thou art.’ (*Chandogya Upanishad*) To pursue this self-realization is to turn our endeavours to life’s supreme purpose, because this quest alone leads to ultimate fulfilment.

This realization may be compared to an awakening. These teachings have the potency to awaken recognition, because they appeal to our true identity. They are a device for waking us up from a kind of sleep in which that identity has been eclipsed by the sense of individuality limited to the body and mind. The metaphor of sleep is used to indicate our state of spiritual ignorance, whereas awakening denotes the altogether superior and real state of knowledge, when we know ourselves as we are in truth.

By using the term ‘spiritual ignorance’, it is not intended to devalue our present knowledge. It refers to that basic condition, common to all

of us in our unawakened state, where we feel ourselves to be separate, individualized beings, and lack that vital realization of our deeper unity with all, which alone confers true peace and fulfilment. It is not the true nature of the soul, but a kind of delusion, and delusion is dispelled through the awakening power of higher knowledge.

If we wish to wake someone who is sleeping, we call them by their name, and very probably they will wake up—though perhaps we will need to repeat the call before it takes effect. Our own name has such power and meaning that as soon as it is recognized, the dream world is undermined and we wake up. This is the case with the teachings on self-knowledge. The message of the illumined sages makes its appeal to our true Self and not to the superstructure of the personality. It strikes the bedrock of our being. In this way, it is like the voice that calls our name to awaken us from sleep.

It is our deeper identity that is being acknowledged and affirmed when we are given such meditations texts as:

OM. I am one with the infinite power of love.
I am peace. I am light. OM.

OM. I ever was. I ever shall be.
I am Truth infinite. I am I. OM

Such statements have the power to cancel false identification.

Our true Self—our infinite nature—needs no illumination. It is ever self-illumined, being the inner light which makes all experience possible. Then what is the dream-like existence that seems to fill its place, and persuade us that we are separate, limited and vulnerable beings, the restless victims of desires and fears? What seems to veil reality and plunge us in illusion, is our mind and the habits of thought and feeling that we have developed over the years. In particular, it is the feeling that we *are* this mind, rather than the light and substance underlying the mind, which seemingly binds us.

There is nothing to despair about in this situation; rather, it can be turned to our advantage. For we can transform our mind, and the life of Yoga is to turn our mind from a cause of apparent bondage to the means to the realization of the freedom of our infinite nature. Nor do we need

to spend time and effort in analysing the contents of our mind. What is necessary is a much more direct course with definite results. The Yoga principle is that when the mind has been brought to tranquillity, and our attention is directed towards the inmost centre of our being, the sense of the underlying presence of our higher nature will begin to stir in us.

There is more to this than being skilled in relaxation and self-control. Yoga is the cultivation of a new way of thinking, feeling and willing. Its aim is to make our mind an instrument through which the truth of the Self will be revealed. So the seeker learns how to combine the practice of stilling the mind with something far more profound: it is the process of psychological elimination and refinement which is sometimes called ‘purifying the mind’.

Purifying the mind is a deep and personal process, which has nothing to do with judging others. Basically, we need a mind that is capable of profound concentration on spiritual ideas and symbols, that is not ruled and distracted by thoughts of the world, and can forget itself in the quest for higher beauty and wisdom. This is helped by studying the classical writings on the higher self-knowledge. Then our course involves eliminating thoughts of conflict and hostility, and reflecting on the underlying unity of all revealed by the teachings. In this way the hidden thorns that vex our heart will be dissolved, and the thoughts that rise up in us will be kindly and harmonious. We will become less dominated by reactions and judgements based on appearances and more perceptive of the deeper reality underlying all equally.

The unfoldment of the illumined understanding is usually a gradual process, and its flowering within the personality tends to take place slowly, so we do not have to worry about finding ourselves in a psychological situation we cannot deal with.

This development is made possible through that higher phase of mental activity indicated by the word ‘buddhi’ in the yoga psychology. Buddhi includes the powers of will and discrimination—specifically, the will-power to sustain our efforts in spiritual practice and resist transitory inclinations that lead us to forget our supreme purpose. Buddhi also refers to the discriminating faculty that discerns the consequences of action, and is increasingly aware of the difference between the eternal and the passing, reality and appearance. Thus the known powers of will

and intellect are given a new direction, aided by our selective reading, reflection and meditation.

When the buddhi is gradually cleared of worldly preoccupations, when our will and intellect thirst for union with the deeper reality, the buddhi becomes sensitive to the ultimate Power that underlies it, somewhat comparable to the way a silted mirror becomes increasingly reflective as the silt is removed. It is through this inward receptivity that the transformation of the mind takes place.

Though our infinite nature transcends involvement in any process, relatively speaking the 'influence' emanating from our true Self is the essential power at work in this rise of the higher buddhi. This influence on the buddhi is both pacifying and purifying, reflecting the peace and purity of our higher nature. The Self is the ultimate source of attraction, with a power to focus and fill the mind so that other thoughts and urges are held in abeyance. And as our infinite nature is pure and absolute knowledge, this buddhic inner communion confers indirect—because reflected—knowledge of ultimate reality until we are ready to realize our identification with that reality as 'I'. Progress and expansion will come through this communion, and valuing it above all finite gratifications. As a mystical verse expresses it: 'You have me. Do not let me go. Clasp me! Grasp me! Do not let me go!'

Even the wish to read and ponder writings on self-knowledge suggests a stirring of our higher faculties. The course we have outlined presumes that we are convinced that ultimate fulfilment is not to be found in the outer world, 'the world of time', but that it is to be discovered at the root of our being, in 'the realm of eternity'. Our advance in understanding depends on the depth and persistence of our enquiry into the true nature of the Self. The truth which makes us free is already within us. It does not need to be implanted or received. But it has to be uncovered by removing the psychological veils that hide it, as it were. There is insight in the lines of the poet, Robert Browning:

Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fullness...
...to know

Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without.

As well as being the ultimate source of inner light, our true Self is also the ultimate source of joy and bliss. Here are some words of Swami Rama Tirtha:

Joy eternal, unbroken peace, is yours, nay, you are that.
Realize your centre, and be there for ever and ever.

All human beings in their different ways seek joy and shun suffering. This natural gravitation towards joy shows that we feel at home in joy, for our true nature is joy absolute. If you strive to realize this natural joy of your infinite nature, revealed in the deep inner stillness, you will discover that you in your true nature are the source of joy. 'Joy eternal you are!'

The aim of Yoga is to awaken us to the bliss that lies concealed as our divine centre. The longing for true bliss is the motive power for pursuing an authentic spiritual path. The *Bhagavad Gita* often speaks of the joy and satisfaction of self-knowledge. It is 'infinite joy' transcending any sense experience, however rich. The sage realizes 'the bliss of Brahman (the Absolute)', which is the bliss of the true Self. He is one 'who has his joy within and his recreation within'. Nor are joy and peace held in reserve until the end of the spiritual path. Peace and inner satisfaction accompany spiritual living.

A great help to the realization of our infinite nature is the yogic teaching on the difference between the real Self and the limited ego. If anything is central in our experience, it is our sense of 'I'. Mental life would hardly make sense without this point of reference. This 'I' is normally felt to be the owner the qualities that comprise our individual personality, and the centre of our world. Since human beings are treasuries of innumerable wonderful potentialities, as our nature unfolds from babyhood, and our sense of 'I-hood' develops, we come to feel that there is something special and unique about ourselves. This is our secret

assessment of our worth. Deep down, we know there is greatness and glory hidden within.

During the sleep of ignorance, our feeling of being special is applied to our body, mind or intellect. But this is often challenged by a world where we are not universally appreciated. Moreover, as we witness the changes inherent in our life cycle, our self-esteem may be unsettled. Yet our sense of immense self-worth is not a delusion. It simply has a deeper source—the spirit, our true Self, our true ‘I’.

Our real Self is the only truly unique principle, because it is One in All. ‘I ever was. I ever shall be. I am Truth infinite. I am I.’ The Self is one-without-a-second. Our innate sense of uniqueness, as individuals, is a pointer to the absolute uniqueness of the Self. Yoga teaches us how to re-establish our sense of I-hood where it really belongs: in the immortal and infinite Self, and to withdraw its identity-feeling from the body and the mind.

So there is in us the limited ‘I’, the ego-self. But there is also the infinite ‘I’ that underlies and supports every ego. This infinite nature is closer to us than the ego, being the innermost consciousness that observes the ego in operation.

Most of us are keenly sensitive to our ego’s reactions, secretly enjoying its sense of expansion when praised, and experiencing discomfort when criticised. An anecdote tells of a man who visited a psychiatrist. While lying on the couch being analysed, he asked: ‘What’s that hissing sound?’ The doctor said: ‘Don’t worry—it’s only your ego being deflated.’ Our ego’s encounters in the world are not always so painless!

Yet the ego is a pseudo-reality and is not our true nature. It is part of ‘the world of time’—the limited world of relativity. Through introspection, we can view the ego objectively, and hence it is something that is known, and not the ultimate knowing principle in us. But can we know by introspection the Self that underlies and supports the ego? We can no more see our Self than the pupil of our eye can see itself. The Self is in fact at no distance from us because it is what we truly are. We miss it because our gaze is turned outwards.

This habit of extroversion gains such momentum that at first it seems strange and hardly possible to disidentify our consciousness from the

outgoing mind and establish our identity as the inmost Self—the ‘I’ behind the ego. But far from our infinite nature being unknown, it is rather something that is *more than known* to us. It is that which makes knowledge possible—the ultimate light behind all experience. Without its presence, there would be no experience, and there would be no source for our empirical ego to borrow its light from. The true Self is the light of pure awareness in us, the ultimate light of ‘knowing’. When realized, it is known to be Consciousness Absolute.

For those who follow the path of self-realization, our infinite nature will come to light through the process of pacifying and purifying the mind and the awakening of the higher phase of the buddhi, indicated earlier. As we become familiar with the concept of our deeper spiritual Self, we will find ourselves drawn to it as iron to a magnet. At the same time, we shall no longer feel compelled to uphold and defend our personal ego at all costs. In fact, the usual assertions of the ego—our insistence in being right, our self-justification, etc., will be seen by us as unnecessary, even laughable, because we shall be established in a deeper and freer centre.

The goal of life is the realization that one’s own Self is the one Reality in which this entire universe inner and outer, appears phenomenally, like the glint of silver imagined in a sea-shell. This is the I-hood that transcends egoism, the I-hood without I. It is called in the *Bhagavad Gita* a ‘wonder’, and its revelation exposes the empirical ego as an illusion, while our infinite nature manifests as clearly as the all-beholding sun.

This realization is indicated in the *Masnawi* of Jalaluddin Rumi:

The spirit was made glad by that I-hood without I, and sprang away from the I-hood of the world.

Since it has been delivered from I, it has now become I: blessings on the I that is without affliction!

How should this (spiritual) I be revealed by thinking? That I is revealed only after passing away from self.

This extract from Rumi highlights the paradox: that our limited personality and the infinite Self that underlies it, share the same name: I. But what a difference between the word ‘I’ used egotistically, and the

word used for deeper contemplation, as in the text: 'I am pure knowledge, imperishable, infinite. I know neither joy nor pain. Whom can they touch?'

The fact that this word 'I' can be used egotistically need not prevent us from using it in the more profound sense. The 'I', which we first associate with the ego, is the indicator of the innermost Self, because it turns our attention to the subtle realm within us where the true Self is realized.

But in seeking realization of the Self that underlies the ego, we have to be prepared to release our hold on the world, as it were, and to merge in the peace, light and bliss of our real nature. Only then will we find ultimate fulfilment. Affirming the true Self implies the negation of the false self. It is as if someone acting the role of Hamlet—who had 'made himself' Hamlet—decided to turn to the audience and tell them his normal name. Instantly, the Hamlet self is negated. Its authority dissolves. Similarly, our usage of the word 'I' as a pointer to the supreme Self makes possible our disidentification from our limited self, and is the key to liberation.

Our fulfilment is nearer than we think. What we have to do is to pause, reflect on the teachings about self-knowledge and turn within to our source. Here and now, this infinite nature is the being of our being, the original light of our knowledge and the source of our bliss. When we turn within and investigate it for its own sake, we shall have found the means to transcend relativity and realize completeness. We shall know ourselves to be that inmost centre where 'Truth abides in fullness'.

B.D.

TIME WELL SPENT

King Mahmud of Ghazni, of the early eleventh century, invaded India seventeen times and took so many slaves that the price of a Hindu in Kabul was twopence. His empire included Afghanistan, much of Iran and north-west India. He was very fond of Ayaz, a slave. He made him the richest man and the Premier. One day people told the King that Ayaz was plotting against him. 'Every day for an hour he disappears and shuts himself up in a room which no one can enter.'

The King was sure of the loyalty of Ayaz. He went one day and saw what Ayaz was doing. He found he had put on the most humble and beggarly dress in which he had been discovered by the conqueror, and he was praying not to forget what he was, and not to become oppressive and tyrannical; for he was originally a poor man.

We too, in the midst of our occupation and worldly life, should retire every day for an hour or two into meditation, put on the garb of sat-chit-ananda (existence-consciousness-bliss), make peace, tranquillity, wisdom and devotion, our crown and wealth, and meditate on it. In this way all will be well with us, and we shall be free from the fear of relapse.

The supreme enquiry is: 'What is the nature of my Self?' And the nature of the Self is the nature of God, and the nature of God is the nature of sansara (the world). The Self, world and God mean one and the same thing. If you have known the true nature of the world, you have known the nature of God and the Self. A saying of the prophet Mohammed is: 'He who knows himself, he knows God.'

H.P.S.

Light from Haiku

LET US consider a few short Japanese poems in which, as seekers of wisdom, we may detect a spiritual or meditative value. The poems are in the form known as haiku, which in the original Japanese consists of three lines which normally add up to just 17 syllables divided 5-7-5. To give you an idea of how this works poetically, here is one the last haikus by the greatest exponent of this art form, Basho:

Shiragiku no 5
Me ni tatate miru 7
Chiri mo nashi 5

White chrysanthemum
No matter how closely I look
Not a speck of dust

This translation keeps closely to the 5-7-5 form and we can catch the rhythm. But generally, English translations can be in two, three or even four lines, and still convey something of the haiku's atmosphere and meaning. For example, Miyamori*, in his great anthology, translates the same poem in two lines:

Ah! on the white chrysanthemums,
Not even one speck to be seen!

Hari Prasad Shastri lived in Japan for two years, learnt the language, and sometimes included a haiku poem in his lectures if it conveyed an insight. Here is one of these poems, composed by Emperor Meiji:

So busy flitting from flower to flower,
The butterflies, even, it seems
Have no time for quiet dreams.

* Asataro Miyamori, *An Anthology of Haiku Ancient and Modern*, Maruzen, Tokyo, 1932.

The point made by Dr Shastri in this context is that our busy lives are so claiming of our energy and attention that many of us neglect to cultivate the deeper spiritual side of our nature. The busy butterflies have no time for quiet dreams. By quiet dreams Dr Shastri suggests that what is meant is the spiritual contemplation sometimes called samadhi. Taken even further, one could say that the poet regrets the trend of the age and is indirectly recommending a return to spiritual values.

One thing about this kind of haiku is that—actually—the poem is about butterflies, not about mankind at all. Then why might these associations—this claim that the poem contains spiritual insights—arise in our mind?

The answer is that the haiku poets were steeped in spiritual values. These values include peace of mind, love of nature, simplicity of life, appreciation of what might be called divine life running through the smallest and simplest of things. Not least, the poets themselves knew the value of learning to still their own mind. This enabled them to appreciate not only sound, but silence; not only the richness of colour and form, but something vast and unseen in which all nature manifests. One could say that, whether the haiku poets intended it or not, in many cases there is more to their poems than the scene they sketch in so few words. If we listen carefully and reflect, there is often something universal hidden behind the particulars, something sublime concealed in the ordinary.

Here is another haiku composed at a poetry party where Basho and some friends were in peaceful recreation. They took turns to compose their lines, perhaps with silence in-between, and with minds in total focus. Each poet would take as his prompt the last line spoken, adding his or her link to the chain. Verse 9 out of 36 is by Kyorai:

Everything
In the silence
Full of peace

This haiku is unusual, for two reasons. First, there is no pictorial or sensory image at all. It is pure abstraction: silence, emptiness, peace. In other words it is directly spiritual, suggesting a sense of the infinite. Usually in haiku poetry, this depth is suggested indirectly, not directly

stated. Haikus rarely preach or prompt. If they transmit peace, it is likely that the word peace will not be mentioned. Yet peace is transmitted when our heart is open, not only to the words, but to what was stirring the mind of the poet when that haiku was born. There will be peace in the poem if it springs from a state of mind that is serene, impersonal, self-forgetting and at one with what it writes about.

Here is an example where the word peace or its synonyms is not mentioned at all, but some may feel that peace and purity fill the poem.

The shrine
In the sacred grove
A cool wind blows

Some moment in nature is preserved. It is left to us to share in the experience behind the words.

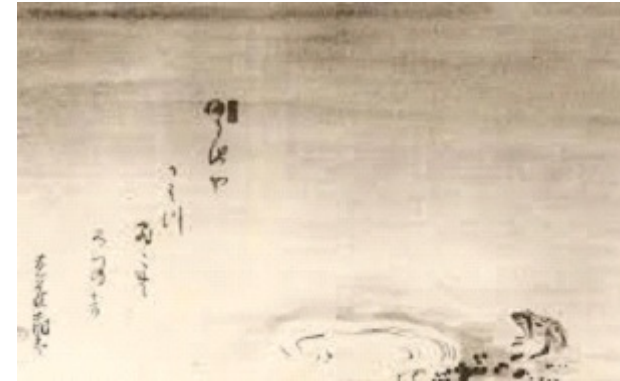
Another haiku which shares the same spirit is:

A bird sings
The mountain grows quiet
Summer bracken

The last three examples ‘voice’ the inner silence from which they spring, in few words, as is apt.

In haiku poetry there is something obvious and something hidden. What is obvious is the scene being described. What is hidden is the tranquil, open, egoless state of mind of the poet, a state of mind that has empathy for all things and does not judge or prefer. It is this purity—even if it manifests temporarily as a gifted moment in the mind of the poet—that will reveal itself to us in our own tranquillity of heart.

The most famous haiku of all is Basho’s poem about the frog. At the time he was sitting in what he called his small broken house, not far from the river Sumida which flows through Edo (Tokyo). He had not yet taken up the wandering life that characterized his later years. It was a warm day in March with quiet rain and the distant cooing of a pigeon. Now and then a splash could be heard.



Basho's illustration and calligraphy of the 'frog' haiku

Basho was a man of deep meditation trained in the Zen tradition. While sitting in silence, he responded to a particular splash, and said:

A frog jumped into water
A deep resonance

He spoke this in verse, not prose:

Kawazu tobikomu
Mizu no oto

It was the last two lines of a haiku, following the 5-7-5 structure. A disciple suggested as the missing first line:

Amid the flowers of the yellow rose

Basho thought about it, but then he decided on:

Breaking the silence of an ancient pond
A frog jumped into water
A deep resonance

There are many different translations. The point to grasp is that Basho is not telling the world: ‘Look—enjoy nature. Sit calm. Don’t be lost in your mundane thoughts about your affairs, your desires, about yourself. Be open. Live in the now. Appreciate what is happening around you here and now—silence as well as sound.’ Basho is not saying these things to

us. But that poem could not have been written unless this was his own state of mind, unless this was the habitual atmosphere in which Basho lived.

Another haiku which transmits this sense of focus, self-forgetfulness and of being alone with the alone, is this one, also by Basho:

Under the bright moon
I walked round and round the lake
All night long.

These poems suggest that the poet's mind has won through to a degree of peace and higher understanding. There are also many haikus which indicate in their own way qualities needed to draw us to that higher wisdom. Here are two haikus through which the poet, over and above the word picture, may be transmitting a deeper, universal insight. In the first, the poetess, Chine-Jo, is recalling a familiar sight on warm summer nights—a swarm of fireflies with their luminescent flickering.

The fireflies' light
How easily it comes on
How easily it goes off again

We may ask: What is spiritual about this? Isn't it just observing a phenomenon of nature? But we need to remember the Buddhist meditative background out of which this culture evolved. The light which comes on easily is like the easy joy of sense pleasures, which last a little time and then cease to please us as before. The same observation is made by the Scottish poet, Robert Burns:

But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You sieze the flower, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snow falls in the river,
A moment white then melts for ever;
Or like the borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form
Evanishing amid the storm.
Nae man can tether time or tide...

'The fireflies' light' is in fact Chine-jo's last poem—her death poem, and she is referring to the light of life itself. Unusually for a haiku, we have a poem deliberately symbolic, as if telling us: 'All is passing and illusory. Don't be deluded. Seek the eternal, the transcendent.'

To seek the eternal means to pursue the upward path of spiritual endeavour. It needs patience and perseverance. The result is not like the brief, weak light of the firefly, but the all-embracing light of wisdom. Our efforts may seem to yield little satisfaction to start with. As the great Chinese text, the *Tao Te Ching*, puts it:

The way that is bright seems dull.
The way that leads somewhere seems to lead nowhere.

So as seekers we need encouragement, reassurance. Here is a poem by Issa in which we can also discern, alongside its gentle humour, a larger meaning.

O snail
Slowly slowly
Climb Mount Fuji.

Issa has seen a snail slowly climbing a wall, or a rock, or some slope. The important fact is that the movement is upward, effort is needed, and the climb has to be advanced step by step—it cannot be done in a rush.

Does the poet think that the snail is capable of reaching the icy top of Mount Fuji, which rises above 12,000 feet? Issa was a lover of birds, animals, insects, people. He knew about the path to spiritual enlightenment revealed by the Buddha and the Zen masters. He knew this was a summit we all can reach as long as we have—like that snail—patience and continuity of purpose. Actually, a snail can move faster and farther than we might think, and morsels of food left on the roof may well induce a snail at ground level to crawl up the edifice and reach it, drawn by the aroma. This famous poem can in fact be applied to any taxing endeavour, urging patience and instilling hope.

Here are two more poems by Issa. It is a summer evening. The oppressive humidity has been replaced by a welcome coolness. The sound of a temple gong or bell is heard in the distance—perhaps a time for reflection. At first sight the haikus look identical:

The evening cool
Not knowing the bell
Is tolling our life away

The evening cool
Knowing the bell
Is tolling our life away

Who is the one who hears the bell and doesn't give it a thought? Who is the one who takes it as a reminder—as a prompt not to waste time, but, like the snail, to keep to the upward path to the summit? Perhaps the pair indicates two sides of the same mind, and the age-old choice between heedlessness and conscious living.

Our preparation for enlightenment does involve seeing our life in this world from a new angle—a detached, equable standpoint. It is a preparation for the realization of our true nature as something free from all change and destruction, free from the limits of mind and matter, transcending ego, infinite, non-dual. In relation to this higher teaching, here is a haiku by the artist-poet, Buson.

There was a tub
With no bottom
Rolling in the autumn blast

The poem seems to report nothing significant, picturesque or spiritually meaningful—just a commonplace sight one might encounter in the untidy part of town on a windy autumn day or night. The tub must at one time have been filled with something, perhaps oil or rice wine, before it attained its present state of utter abandonment. Its top would have been well-sealed so that nothing could get in or be lost. But all that has passed. Now it is empty through and through, unresistant to the great universal force, the wind, which blows through it and around it.

For many of his readers, Buson's haiku would have been a reminder of the self-transcendence of enlightenment. The tub is like the mind, initially filled with opinions and attitudes, desires and fears, and well sealed against intrusion. The wind is the spiritual teachings, their special power, and the wind is also the great reality that is their source. Our mind learns how to unseal itself—that is, how to open itself to the higher

wisdom. If we are wise, we allow our unenlightened views to seep away and be lost. Our mind then becomes permeated by the higher idealism and is transformed, clear, peace-loving, eager for deeper knowledge. Thus prepared, we are in a position to grasp the essential insight, namely, it is our sense of individuality—our ego—that is the ultimate blockage or obstacle to the life of freedom. Like the bottom of the tub, the ego has to be loosened if there is to be the free flow of the boundless wind.

In enlightenment the ego is transcended—the bottom falls away from our psychological tub, so that the reality fills all. The heart of the supreme wisdom is this emptiness that is full, this fullness that is empty. It is referred to by Dr Shastri when he writes of the knower of truth 'as one whose heart is as a running river—apparently confined by its banks, but really connected with the infinite silvery ocean.' It is the 'I and my father are one' of Jesus, or, in Sufi terms, the declaration of Bayazid: 'Beneath the coat I am wearing there is nothing but God.'

Expressed philosophically, what remains when the ego-boundary is transcended is infinite consciousness realized as our true and only Self. It is also Beauty Absolute, the perfection sought in art, poetry, human relationships. Its fountainhead is our own being, our inmost Self. In its relative aspect, this truth is expressed by Dr Shastri in the opening words of his book, *Echoes of Japan*, which are worthy of our contemplation:

OM. WHEREVER THERE IS BEAUTY OR ATTRACTION, IT IS A
REFLECTION OF MY SELF—THE ULTIMATE CAUSE. OM

We began with a poem about a white chrysanthemum. Here is another, which reflects the haiku poet's love of nature, love of silence, and also the hint of humour which adds to the charm of this unique and fundamentally spiritual form of art.

They spoke no word
The visitor, the host
And the white chrysanthemum

A.H.C.

AN EXTRACT FROM 'ECHOES OF JAPAN'

While in Kyoto, my steps were guided towards Maruyama Park. I walked rapt in contemplation of the beauty and peace which filled the atmosphere. The shadows of the trees grew longer and longer, the sunshine more and more mellow. After walking three-quarters of a mile, I turned my eyes backward, and to my surprise found that I had climbed a high hill. The slope was so gradual that to ascend it had required no extra effort. I saw the city, stretched out far below amidst the pine trees, the river gliding like a silver stream. The difficulties of life, and they meet us at every forward step, are overcome almost unconsciously, under a peaceful mind, devoted to the serene atmosphere of love and knowledge....

A little further on I saw a thatched hut. An old *obasan* (lit: 'aunt') was sitting in front of it with hot green tea and rice cakes. She rose as she saw me and said, "*Irasshai!*" ('Welcome!'). I sat on a cushion. She poured out the hot green tea and gave me a few crisp rice cakes. She said, 'I have sold tea and cakes here for fifty years.' 'Aunt', I said, 'you are very fond of this place, I can see it!' 'I loved a Japanese poet of the Shin-Shu school, in my youth. I was happy in his love. He died in an accident. My whole life has become meaningless since then, except for my devotion to *Amida Sama* for the peace of his soul. His body lies buried here. I set up this hut, so that I might remain here and pray for him daily at his tomb. Fifty years already, and...' She broke down.

I placed half a *yen* before her and left the spot. It was already dusk. Returning to my hotel, I recited the *Prajnaparamita Sutra*. I could not sleep that night. We must love long and deeply to beautify our life, and to find peace and truth.

H.P.S.

Self-Knowledge—the Key to Freedom

THE HUMAN RACE chooses to call itself *Homo Sapiens*, that is, the people who know, or are wise. In fact *Homo Sapiens* includes sub-species such as the Cro-Magnon, who are no longer alive and differ from us in significant ways, so modern humanity officially calls itself *Homo Sapiens Sapiens*—the really knowing, knowing hominid.

Sometimes it is our apparent lack of wisdom that seems to characterize us; our inability to cooperate and share, to resolve conflicts of interest, sets us apart in the natural world. But even in this, the amount of knowledge we have only highlights our lack of wisdom in applying it. Knowledge is central to human nature; the capacity to know is not so much something we have, as what we are.

In particular we have a capacity to preserve and share knowledge; our ability to record and communicate means that our knowledge is cumulative; we who are alive today have inherited the collective experience of the past, and those who come after us will do the same. And now technological innovations are taking our power to store and disseminate information to new levels.

All these developments are based on our unique human ability to think in abstractions and concepts. Some say it is language that makes us particularly human, but language is based on something more general and fundamental: our ability to think in abstractions and concepts. It is this which enables us to go beyond the immediate experience of the world presented to us by our senses. We see the world; we touch, smell, taste and hear the world, and this we share with the animals. For other creatures, this is all that they know, or at least nearly all they know—exactly what the senses are presenting at the very moment. For we humans, the situation is completely different; what the senses present to us is just the first of many layers of experience.

We have this ability to abstract from just how things are as revealed by our senses, and to imagine how they might be different. In this way we can innovate, think of different ways to meet needs, we can conceive of something new and make it happen. Our mental world is an interplay

of our senses telling us how things are, and our imagination presenting how things might be.

And out of this dynamic comes preference. We do not just see how things are and how they might be; we have powerful likes and dislikes, desires and aversions, in regard to it all. All this stems from our power of abstraction, to think beyond how things just are.

Closely connected to our power of abstraction is our ability to think in concepts. This is the ability to make one idea out of many. We can only think of one thing at a time; to overcome this limitation we can put lots of ideas together to form a concept, and then we can think of that concept as one. So we can ask ourselves questions like: 'Would I prefer to spend today at home or in the countryside?' If we unpacked all the different bits of information contained in the concepts 'home' and 'countryside', they would be far more than we could keep in mind at any one time; but we form them together as a concept and then can think of them as a whole and combine or compare them with other concepts. Ideas we use all the time are compounds of innumerable elements: think how much is packed into concepts like home, job, family, supertime, London, Greece, respect.

Because these concepts are compounded from our own experiences and associations, every mind forms in its own unique way the countless concepts that make up its inner world. This ability to conceptualize, gives rise to all our mental and emotional life; from it comes the diversity in how each of us perceives and understands the world.

So homo sapiens is an appropriate name for us; the Latin means something like 'the people who can form judgments', and that is exactly what we are. This is the root of our great potentials, and also our biggest challenges. One could say that the most wonderful thing about the human mind is that it takes us so far beyond just how things are. And one could say that the most challenging thing about the human mind is that it takes us so far beyond just how things are. We are creatures who know, who want to know, our mind is a wonderful instrument of knowledge; at the same time each mind creates for itself a view of the world radically coloured, and often distorted, by its own dynamics.

These distortions arise most forcibly in the form of desire and aversion, acceptance and rejection. It is worth reflecting on the

significance of this; we love to know, to discover; yet we are compelled to do so through an instrument that works by creating concepts for itself out of countless impressions and associations, and which is full of attraction and aversion, acceptance and resistance.

We are probably all familiar with an ancient mythological account of the origin of the human situation. According to this, in the beginning, humanity lived in a state of complete harmony with nature; in this primordial garden everything we needed simply grew around us, and what we didn't need was an idea that no-one had thought of. The only rule required to preserve our stay in this garden was to avoid the fruit of a certain tree. What was forbidden was not sensuality but a certain kind of knowledge: the fruit of the knowledge of good and ill; that is, the consequences of knowing things, perceiving things, as good or bad, attractive or repelling. The moment we internalize this, everything changes; our state of innocence ends; we feel isolated and vulnerable, and life becomes a struggle.

In the non-dual philosophy it is not held that there is anything fundamentally wrong with humanity. We are not basically bad; it is that our knowledge of reality and ourselves is incomplete, and as we have noticed, is in many ways distorted. The great challenge of life with which the deeper teachings must help us, is to know the truth of all this within and around us. The teachers of this tradition are clear on this point; which has much practical importance. Our problem is lack of knowledge, or wrong knowledge. And therefore the solution must be right knowledge.

So the key to freedom is knowledge—true knowledge. How then are we to proceed? First, let us fully recognize the nature and scope of the issue. We need knowledge, and yet the working of our mind—the way we usually gain knowledge—is a principal source of what obscures our vision. So the usual methods of learning are clearly not adequate here. The task is to reform our mind, or transform our inner world, in such a way that it ceases to be something that distorts and removes us from reality, and is instead a channel or aperture through which reality can be realized. When we have understood this need, we are ready to begin the path of spiritual enquiry.

Second, let us be clear about the kind of knowledge we seek. It is not

more facts about the external world that are required. It is not even knowledge of what is sometimes called God, if by that we mean some all-embracing fact about the external world. Any such knowledge would necessarily be mediated by our minds, and as such would be an idea about reality, or a representation of reality, in our minds, and not reality itself. We seek reality itself, and it is to be sought not as a fact or idea in the mind, but as that in which the mind exists and is revealed. We need to see through, or go beyond, the structures and workings of the mind, to know that in which all this inheres, and by which it is illumined.

It follows that what we seek is not knowledge of something distinct from us, but of our own essential nature; it is knowledge not by knowing but by being. It follows further that this fundamental reality cannot be individualized, but is the reality in all beings. The traditional teachings confirm that the true Self is boundless, universal and transcendent; to know That is to be one with the ocean in which all the waves of being arise. So Self-knowledge is the key to freedom from all suffering and constriction.

How then is this Self-knowledge to be sought? Roughly, there are two phases, although in practice they are to be pursued in tandem. The first is how to reform our mind; the second is how to go beyond it completely, to that in which the mind is sustained and illumined. Let us begin with the inner adjustments we need to make. We have probably heard that one of the essential qualities to be cultivated on the spiritual path is what is called equanimity or evenness of mind. We may have heard of heroic feats of detachment and endurance achieved by renunciates in their retreats, and perhaps we have also had the disheartening feeling that if this is the essential basis of the spiritual life, then, sadly, we lack the natural aptitude required to succeed in this department.

It is true that evenness of mind is to be cultivated on this journey: but this does not imply the need for extremes of indifference or endurance. We will have a more balanced and practical understanding of what is called for, if we remember always our goal, and the challenge: our goal is true Self-knowledge, and the challenge is that our view of things is distorted, particularly by the effects in the mind of likes and dislikes, acceptance and rejection. It is this distorting power of attraction and

repulsion that we want to mitigate by the practice of evenness of mind. This does not mean, and cannot mean, establishing a total unawareness of what is pleasant or unpleasant, helpful or detrimental. It does mean the ability to see these things as they are and not be unduly distracted from our purpose by them. We learn to have these experiences, without being dominated by them. This kind of equanimity does not imply a lack of love for life; actually it means loving life with a heightened awareness of what is really precious about life: the potential for almost infinite expansion of awareness which is to be found in our own hearts when they are freed of psychological burdens.

This evenness of mind is sometimes called desirelessness. We can see that this does not mean we somehow have to kill out all our inner impulses and preferences, which would be a depressing prospect indeed. It does mean learning not to be controlled by our impulses and preferences, while maintaining our inner balance and clarity. It is recommended that we look on the everyday experiences that life presents of pleasant and unpleasant, heat and cold and so on, as opportunities to practise this inner evenness; but always keeping our balance by remembering that this quality is not an end in itself but a means to the end, which is to approach and be united with truth.

Another name for this evenness of mind is detachment. Detachment, rightly understood, is the essential quality to be developed on the path of inner enquiry, because it has a wonderful positive aspect. At first sight, detachment looks like a discipline, and so it is, and yet detachment is also a form of freedom, a priceless inner freedom. We already clarified that detachment is far from not caring. A parent who has learnt not to be angered by the tantrums of a two year-old is not an uncaring parent. To see with detachment is to appreciate someone or something for themselves, not only for the effect they have on us. We first practise this in relation to the world and those around us, and increasingly realize that the key is detachment from our own mental reactions, and ultimately from the mind as a whole. The obstacles to inner clarity and freedom dissipate as we become grounded in this perspective from which the mind is something we observe and experience, rather than what we feel ourselves to be.

This inner freedom, from our minds and mental reactions, and thus

from the world, can be consciously fostered. The most direct way of doing this is by reflecting often on our goal, and considering other matters by that standard. Our goal is liberation and fulfilment; that degree of fulfilment embodied by Christ and the Buddha and the authors of the Upanishads, and which nothing in space and time can undermine. Considered beside this, the ups and downs of life, apparent successes and failures, fortune and misfortune, are really not so overwhelming. In time we will come to see that the world of time, space and causation is necessarily characterised by such fluctuations and qualities; the great lesson is that they cannot be avoided or entirely controlled, and that freedom and fulfilment is not to found among these ups and downs but beyond them. Thus we will be relieved of much inner tension and come to look at these phases of life with a natural degree of even-mindedness, if we keep the awareness of our ultimate destiny bright before us.

When this degree of inner freedom has been established in the mind and the distorting effects of attraction and aversion thus mitigated, then we can progress with the second phase of the inner path, that of finding a way right through the experiences presented by the mind to the reality in which all this exists.

To do so we need to fully absorb the teachings of non-duality on the true nature of the Self. This means attending carefully to the classical texts that convey them, and the expressions of really competent teachers, such as Shri Shankara and Shri Dada, who inspired the founder of Shanti Sadan. We need to satisfy ourselves that these teachings are entirely reasonable and then take our stand in life on the conviction that beyond appearances lies reality, and That is the reality in us, our true Self.

There are two main ways in which we absorb these teachings. Firstly we want to establish a more or less constant remembrance of those principles, a loving remembrance of what may be called Higher Truth or God. This is a way of seeing, which becomes habitual, that reality lies beyond appearances and is in essence unified and harmonious and is the Self of all. This way of seeing is what we mean by conscious living, or mindfulness in its full sense. Second, we practice regularly withdrawing from other activities for set times in order to focus one-pointedly on the principle of transcendental non- separation, and our identity with that. These regular times of turning exclusively to the reality within, are what

we call meditation.

What is the reality on which we meditate? According to this teaching, what is real is what does not come or go, which is ever stable, and which does not depend on anything else. Is there anything in our experience which does not change? Yes, it is the light of consciousness itself. And also what we might call the 'is-ness' in everything we experience. As our inner vision becomes stabilised in equanimity and with the guidance of the holy teachings, it is possible to distinguish the light of consciousness from everything that it is conscious of, and to distinguish the is-ness from everything that is. In all, there is a sweet essence of light and is-ness that we can learn to discriminate and to love. Love is a sense of identity, and as this love grows, we increasingly realize that this sweet essence of light and being is more truly our self than anything else. In this way our inner eye is drawn beyond appearances to reality, and with this deepening Self-knowledge, we approach the ultimate freedom.

P.H.

POEM OF INŚAY

If you say he exists only in the Kaaba,
'Tis false.
Wherever my gaze turns I see Him plain.
O Inśay, what else can I say?
All the quarters of the two worlds
Are filled with the light of the Lord.
He occupies all abodes from eternity.

Translated from the Urdu by A.J.A.

The Eternal Wisdom

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

THE GREATEST teachings which transform the soul are communicated by the spiritual Teachers by means of their mere presence. Words cannot communicate what the soul wants to convey. Like the morning glow of the rising sun, or the peace of the autumnal moon, or hushed silence charged with an indefinable power—such is the vivifying influence on the soul which emanates from the divine Teachers. Peace, shed by their presence, pervades the whole atmosphere, as the sages unconsciously communicate the psychic part of their nature to all beings, uplifting them from the narrow world of ‘I’ and ‘mine’. All feel it momentarily; but that disciple whose soul is identified with the soul of the Teacher conceives the spiritual wisdom, and in the course of time this brings forth the sun of the supreme realization of Truth.

The materialist or the hedonist may not recognize this truth; but those who have had experience of such spiritual immanence cannot for a moment disbelieve it. The statement of the sage Patanjali that animals which are natural enemies of each other, give up their enmity in the presence of a yogi, is literally true.

For some six months the maharishi Yajnavalkya has not spent so much time with his disciples as formerly, nor seen them so often. When he did appear, a loving disciple would lead him from the door of his hermitage to the devotion hall or to the instruction grove, but he seemed to be absorbed in his own thoughts. He looked neither worried nor melancholy. There was nothing troubling his mind, for the ocean-like consciousness of Shri Yajnavalkya was undisturbed by any event.

The disciple Yajnadatta and a few others have now completed their course of study, extending over twelve years. Today they return to their homes in the hills to engage themselves in their worldly duties, to live as householders and to inspire their children with the love of peace and learning; to add to the wealth of the community; to create beauty in art and literature; to sympathize with the poor and the afflicted; to diffuse the holy knowledge of Self-realization, and to cultivate the divine consciousness.

In the pine grove, the holy rishi was seated on a white blanket, while his disciples arranged themselves in rows before him. Those students who were retiring from the ashrama had brought coconuts, fruits and bundles containing gifts. They bowed low and their spokesman said:

‘Holy father, you have been to us not less than our real parents. You have forgiven our faults. You have treated us with such kindness that we have forgotten our own homes! You have imparted to us the light of the divine science. What indeed can we offer to you? All that we are, all that we shall ever possess is yours, O Lord. We will keep the discipline you have given us and will do our best to prove worthy of your great name. O Shiva! O Shankara! O Vishnu! Accept our salutations.’

For a while they stood mute, while tears fell from their eyes. The holy rishi was unmoved. He said: ‘My children, I give you my blessings. May you be ever possessed by the love of Truth; may universal compassion be your motto.’ Then he read to them:

The Self is knowable through the practice of truth, through right conduct, absence of luxury, austerity, wisdom and continence. When the impurities of the heart are dissipated in this way, then the taintless, the resplendent, the all-pervasive blissfulness is intuitively recognized by the wise.

Truth alone triumphs, never untruth. By truthfulness is meant this divine path trodden by the sages who have given up all desires. They ascend to the supreme abode of the real, the true, the imperishable.

This was the blessing of the rishi. Two of the brahmacharis offered gifts of silk saris, gold rings and other precious jewellery, saying: ‘To our holy mothers, who have looked after us in health and ill-health, who have shut their eyes to our faults and magnified our virtues, we offer this little dakshina.’

The holy sage left the pine-grove. The party of those who were to leave went to the cow-pens and bowed down to the cows of their master. Then they took up their bundles for the journey and slowly made their way out of the hermitage. The wind blew gently; the sun shone on the hills; the retiring disciples slowly disappeared behind the mountain range.

To be continued

Transforming the Mind

From a lecture given by Hari Prasad Shastri

ONE OF THE great lessons of the spiritual Yoga is that each and every person has within them the inner light of imperishable Truth. There is none without it, neither is this light extinct or lost forever. But if we neglect to live it, if we do not take advantage of it, we are like someone who has a large patrimony but is unaware of it, and lives in poverty and squalor. The right way of living is first to live as a wise human being, and then to develop one's higher spiritual potentialities, and finally to live as a *jivan-mukta*—one 'liberated in life'.

What is wise living? Aristotle has said it is to live according to reason and also according to tradition. Some say tradition has no value, and that man can create his own tradition. They have no insight into real science or real philosophy. In science we arrive at the truth by experiment, observation and reflection, but there is a tradition set by the scientists of old, and we walk according to it. We do not discard it unless it is abundantly defective; and this is called the way of reason.

But reason itself, unless filled with the light of benevolence and wisdom, is insufficient to guide us to the highest path of life. No word has deceived humanity more than reason. Many pernicious doctrines, in the course of history, have claimed the hearts of the people because they have seemed reasonable. In fact the highest way of living is above the mind, above reason, and also above will.

If you consider the history and achievements of the greatest contributors to the realms of art and science, you will find most of their products were those which were not done voluntarily, not on the mental basis nor the intellectual basis; they came from a source of unknown origin. Goethe remarked that he hardly believed he had written certain passages—that they were thrown into his mind by some higher force. Read the history of the abolition of slavery, and you will find that when Pitt delivered his final speech before Parliament, moving the resolution for the abolition of the slave trade in 1792, he seemed to be hardly conscious of what he was saying, yet his words flowed forth and moved

all who heard them. His words came from a source that is above reason and above individuality.

The meaning is that we little individuals have our little channels of mind, but there is a cosmic mind also. We have our reason, but there is a cosmic reason also. We have our intellect, but there is a cosmic intellect also. When our stilled and refined mind is in touch with the cosmic mind, then flows through us what we call inspiration.

This inspiration is what is behind the greatest works of art and the most profound insights of the scientists. Einstein never used a telescope or performed any laboratory tests; he only used pencil and paper to work out his great theories. That was the foundation of his scientific contributions.

Therefore let us not depend too much on intellect. Let us not be proud of the fact: 'O well, I can do it—I know how to do it.' As long as you are under the sway of egotism, rest assured that very little good comes out of you.

How is the supreme good made manifest through us? That is called inspiration when our soul is in contact with the universal soul, the Spirit. Our mind is a ray of that mighty sun, and when our mind is conscious of its own individuality, it is weak and its products are not worth while. But when our mind is unconscious of itself, and is merged in the supreme mind of which is a ray, then flow from it inspiration—the source of great music, art, benevolence and every kind of good.

There is an infinite realm of ideas, benevolent and uplifting, and when you restrain the channel of your localised mind, and open it to your higher Self, God, then ideas of perennial importance and great beauty flow from you. Nobody ought to think: 'I am dull. I cannot do anything.' The best formula is: 'What man has done, man can always do. What man has achieved, man can always achieve.' This is the true confidence—self-confidence not based on egoity, but on the spirit of God in you. This is the root cause of discovery, invention, inspiration, wisdom and right living. If you can still your mind, and purify it of all selfish desires, and by meditation bring your mind into touch with the cosmic mind, you may not be conscious of doing anything; each and everything that is worthwhile will come out of you.

We need discipline. Discipline means to realize clearly that as long

as we feel we are working for our own little self, we are only harming ourselves, and we are building a castle on sand, on which a wave is advancing and will sweep aside forever. If we build on inspiration, on the basis of God-consciousness, we are building on a rock.

We cannot live pure unless we give devotion to God—that is to say, unless we pass from the finite realm to the realm of infinity. There is a part of us that wants to be finite; there is another part of us that wants to be infinite. The urge in the infinite part of man is expressed in prayer, meditation, devotion to God, according to the holy spirit of God. If you live in this way, anything that is seemingly untoward which happens to you comes as a purifying process and will lead you to greater and greater good.

Have nothing against anyone in the world. Forgive, forgive, forgive. Then live in the consciousness of infinity, forget the ‘I’, forget the ego. Fill your mind with thoughts of virtue, beauty and truth. You find easily such thoughts in the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Gospel, the *Ramayana*. Such classics are replete with the highest spiritual thoughts that lift the mind away from its finite preoccupations, and connect it with the infinity of truth. In this way we transform our mind into an abode of peace, beauty and truth.

Common clay can be transformed into the most exquisite pottery. In the British Museum you will find on display a Lohan—a life-sized meditating figure created in the Tang dynasty more than a thousand years ago. It has been submerged in water, it survived the Mongol conquest, and even today, though in a position of show, it radiates great peace and an influence that silences the mind. Materially it is just China clay, yet clay has been turned into a Lohan. Just as clay can be turned into an object of supreme beauty, I assure you that your mind—which is a much higher evolute of nature—can be turned into Godhead.

What is needed is that we should be one-pointed, persevering, and not be afraid of anything. Fearlessness is the greatest passport to spiritual success in life. Swami Rama Tirtha has said: ‘Don’t cry “What! What! What!”’. Go within and say: “Come what! Come what! Come what! I don’t mind it at all.”’ It is a great practice.

Yoga is the art of transformation of the mind from an evolute of matter into the light of Atman, our true Self. What have we to do?

Form the mind. The formation of the mind means to have a steady mind. It is to have a purpose in life, and to shoot the arrows of our mental energy on this target, and as they touch the target, they impress the clay of the mind with the divine light and the higher peace called *shanti*. Form the mind—that is, make a synthesis of your desires, your ambitions—what you want to do. And examine that synthesis to see how far it conforms to your spiritual ideal in life.

Inform the mind—through continual study of the writings that remind you of the great spiritual principle within you and which shed light on its nature. When your mind becomes tired of the contemplation of philosophy, turn to other writings which create uplifting associations. Do not let the mind be vacant. If you guide it consciously, it will become a great servant and friend; if you leave it to its own devices, it will lead to innumerable difficulties. Therefore inform the mind through right and selective study.

Transform the mind. This means to make the mind still and to fill it with right ideas, devoted to God and to the good of all. Meditate and live as far as possible in the world of great ideas.

Is this all? No. Finally transcend the mind. The real aim is illumination. The highest point in our life is spiritual illumination, called *jnanam*. How to transcend the mind? Forget the mind, overstep it. When you have overstepped the mind, then the divine ray which dwells in the mind comes in contact with the mighty sun, the sun of peace, and then the mind is illumined.

An illumined mind means a mind which is spiritually conscious—not morally conscious only, not materially conscious, not conscious of the senses only, but spiritually conscious. You will say: ‘What will happen? When that transcendental truth is contacted by the mind, what happens?’ All doubts are cut asunder forever, all suspicions are gone, there is light within and light without. Like a river gushing from a glacier, as Swami Rama Tirtha said, peace gushes out of our personality. Having achieved this illumination, a person knows there is nothing further to achieve, and this spiritual achievement cannot be marred by any adversity or calamity. This is the true art of the transformation of the mind.

Going Beyond the Mind

A discourse given by the previous Warden of Shanti Sadan

ONE OF THE great differences between the Advaita philosophy and Western thought is in its attitude to the mind. Almost all those Western philosophers who have found room for the spiritual dimension in their concept of man have stopped short at the mind. What Aristotle speaks of as the soul of man is the most refined aspect of the intellect. Plato's world of reality is the world of ideas or forms, and although this is conceived of as having an existence independent of all the individuals, it is essentially a view of reality constituted by idealized mental concepts. For Plato, the ordinary, everyday world was a shadow play created by the light reflected from this ideal world of the universal archetypes.

This tradition of seeing the reality behind appearance as in some way represented by the mind of man has permeated the mainstream of Western philosophy ever since. It is seen in Berkeley, Spinoza and Kant. Even Hegel's absolute is an absolute idea.

In the Advaita, on the other hand, mind and matter are both evolutes of one and the same *prakriti*, and the mind in itself has never been so overrated. Reality does not finally reside in the mind at all, but in that element which is beyond the mind. 'That which is not thought by the mind, but by which, they say, the mind thinks—that verily know thou as Brahman and not what people here adore.' (*Kena Upanishad* I.6). The intellect is not even competent to approach that reality, still less to express its essence. It is That from which the mind turns baffled back again.

In the Western tradition one has to go to the mystics to find this point truly appreciated. Behind the mind with its faculty of painting before us innumerable pictures of joy and sorrow, hope and fear, there is an imperishable element in man which enables the mind to function. It is, in the words of the holy sages, *sat-chit-ananda*, existence, consciousness and bliss.

St Augustine gives a clue to this reality, present within, and yet transcending the mind, when he speaks of three characteristics of all

thought, which, as he says, 'exist in themselves'. These three things (he says) are to be considered carefully: they are 'to be', 'to know' and 'to will'. He speaks of them as a kind of trinity in the mind, three-in-one and one-in-three. They are inseparable in experience, for every man can say: 'I am, I know and I will.' Moreover, he can equally say: 'I am knowing and willing', and 'I know myself to be and to will', and 'I will to be and to know'. And Augustine says that in these three a man can see how the life of the mind is one life and one essence; the three are distinct, and yet they are one.

These three characteristics, of which Augustine speaks, are the reflections of Sat, Chit and Ananda in the mind. For it is the being of Atman (the true Self) which gives existence to the mental life; it is the consciousness of Atman which enables knowing to take place; and it is the bliss of Atman which is the object of all willing and desiring. But Augustine shows the depth of his spiritual understanding when he goes on to issue a caution. Each man, he says, can see this being, knowing and willing in himself. 'But when he discovers and can see anything of these, let him not think that he has discovered that which is above these, Unchangeable: which is unchangeably and knows unchangeably and wills unchangeably'. (*Confessions*, Book 13.11).

Behind the changeable mind is the immutable reality, Atman. As the Lord says in the fifteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, 'That light which residing in the sun illumines the whole world, that which is in the moon and in the fire, that light do thou know to be Mine.' 'And I am seated in the hearts of all: from Me are memory, knowledge, as well as their loss; it is I who am to be known by all the Vedas; I am indeed the author of the Vedanta as well as the knower of the Vedas.' 'He who, undeluded, thus knows Me, the highest spirit, he, knowing all, worships Me with his whole being, O Bharata'. (XV.12, 15, 19).

This is what is meant by going beyond the mind.

S.D.S.

Living in Steady Knowledge of the Self

THE PHRASE ‘one of steady knowledge’ or ‘one established in wisdom’ comes in the second chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*. This wisdom concerns the true Self—the supreme spirit established in the centre of man’s being. The basic doctrine of Advaita or non-duality, on which Adhyatma Yoga stands, affirms that the one supreme reality, called Brahman, the Absolute, is not different from the real Self of man.

Brahman is no intellectual abstraction, and it is this great principle that is also called God, or Ishvara. In this sense, spiritual reality, which is ultimately transcendent and ‘beyond the range of mind and speech’, may be approached by us as ‘a living, loving, power, determined to evolve conscious perfection in us—such being the goal towards which all life is evolving’. Brahman is the one God worshipped in all the great religions, who grants his grace to his devotees in whatever form they seek him. He is the God of love of Christianity. For Moslems, he is Allah, the compassionate and the merciful. He responds to his Hindu devotees when they approach him in his various forms as Vishnu or as Shiva, and for Mahayana Buddhism, he is the Buddha nature. There is a verse by a Buddhist master, which indicates the unconfined, universal nature of spiritual experience:

The mountain—Buddha’s body.
The torrent—his preaching.
Last night, eighty-four thousand poems.
How, how make others understand?

This Yoga is not itself a religion, but a method by which we can come to understand in our own conscious experience this one universal truth which lies at the heart of all religions—that God is one and the real Self of man, and that all are one in Him. Although this claim contradicts our experience of being limited and mortal individual selves in a world of multiplicity hemmed in by uncertainties and prone to all kinds of suffering, it has been made since ancient times by those who have themselves experienced it. They have described it as a spiritual reawakening to the fact of non-duality. From this higher standpoint, it

is our so-called normal experience of being limited mortal individuals in a world of multiplicity, that turns out to be illusory, transient, and appearing real solely by virtue of the Brahman-nature that reveals and underlies it. The sages affirm, on the basis of their own experience, that by making conscious efforts to become established in our true Self, we too can be liberated from illusion in our present life. In the words of the Upanishads: ‘Even while here we may know this. Those who know this Self become immortal here; others go only to sorrow.’ ‘Those who know that Absolute Bliss shed fear forever.’

This is the basic doctrine of Adhyatma Yoga found in the Upanishads. The *Bhagavad Gita* is the classical text on the practical path to self-realization. It teaches how we may become established in our true Self, the supreme spirit or God within, through daily practice of the spiritual Yoga.

The teaching on Yoga in the Gita begins in chapter two. It takes the traditional form of instruction given by a spiritual teacher, in this case the Lord himself in his form as Krishna, to a disciple, the warrior Prince Arjuna. All teaching is a transmission in which both the transmitter and the receiver must participate; it has to be received as well as given. However skilled and compassionate the teacher, he or she cannot help unless the pupil is receptive. Spiritual teaching also, which has been called a transmission from heart to heart, must be received as well as given, and can only be imparted to those ready and willing to receive it. It can only help those who genuinely want it and apply for it. Thus in the Gita we find that it is only after Arjuna has declared ‘I am your disciple, instruct me who have sought your grace’, that the instruction by his divine Teacher can start.

Krishna begins with a general description of the goal of Yoga and the path. This is what makes the pupil, Arjuna, eager for more and prompts him to ask the further question: ‘O Krishna, what is the description of one whose mind is subdued and steady, who has obtained inner light?’ It is in answer to this question that the description of ‘the one of steady knowledge’ follows.

Even though Arjuna accepts that such people actually exist, we may perhaps be excused from wondering why such descriptions are asked for and given. What is their practical value? Is it no greater than that of

being asked to believe that George Washington really never told a lie? Shri Shankara anticipates this doubt in his commentary and gives the actual purpose and practical value of such descriptions:

From verse 55 to the end of the discourse the characteristic attributes of a man of steady knowledge as well as the means of obtaining that knowledge are taught... For everywhere in spiritual science (adhyatma shastra) the very characteristic attributes of the successful yogi are taught as the means (of attaining that stage) since they are to be attained by effort...

We see then that this description of the characteristic attributes of the 'one living in steady knowledge of the true Self' has a practical purpose. It is intended to show what characteristics one must acquire by effort through yoga practice in order to become 'established in wisdom' oneself. And this particular description in the Gita also describes the method and the obstacles to be overcome.

Why do we need to practise Yoga? How does one set about it? What are the obstacles to be overcome? These are the questions covered. They are also questions bound to arise in the mind of any serious enquirer into this Yoga.

In the exposition of this verse by our own Teacher, Dr Shastri, he reminds us that the seeker is 'one who is on the way to liberation in life'. Then he explains the verse in the light of the non-dual doctrine:

There is a region of illusion and a region of illumination. The one established in knowledge lives in the region of illumination, defined as pure consciousness, and practises detachment from the region of illusion, defined as 'the mind and all its objects'. This means consciousness of all phenomena, not only our mind itself but all the other names and forms we experience in and through our mind and senses. It includes the whole of our sense experience as well as our thoughts and feelings, all multiplicity in fact whether experienced in the waking state or in dream. The one established in wisdom knows all this consciousness of individuality and separateness and multiplicity to be an illusion, like seeing a mirage or a dream. He or she should therefore practise detachment from it, finding contentment in the region of the

Self, the region of illumination, pure consciousness.

This is a twofold practice, negative towards the region of illusion, positive towards the region of illumination. Our Teacher says: 'It means that all the experience of individuality and multiplicity is to be negated as unreal, phenomenal, slight... and the region of illumination, pure Consciousness, [is to be taken] as spiritual perfection. The one established in wisdom (the jnani) already knows that the mind and all its objects belong to the region of illusion (Maya) and that there is neither contentment nor happiness in that region.'

So the negative practice of detachment from the illusion comes naturally so long as one continues steady in the positive experience of contentment in the reality, the Self, 'convinced without any doubt that one is Brahman, the supreme Reality, existence, consciousness and bliss, in which there is no want, no ambition and no imperfection'.

Before knowledge has arisen, the yogi seeking it must practise inducing the state of detachment towards the region of illusion. The aspirant must also adopt the positive attitude of finding contentment in the realm of illumination. But, unlike the one of steady knowledge, the aspirant is not yet established in that region of pure consciousness and bliss, so how is the aspirant to practise finding contentment in it? Dr Shastri says: 'the latter state of inner illumination does not dawn suddenly like the appearance of a beautiful rainbow. It is the result of continuous practice and love of Guru and God.' As Shri Shankara says, the characteristics of the successful yogi, the one established in wisdom, have to be attained by effort. Then Dr Shastri describes the positive practice itself:

He trains his mind by meditating on the truth: 'Brahman is real, all else is unreal'; and when knowledge is obtained, he is confirmed in the truth.

Dr Shastri gives the illustration of dreaming. The aspirant still dwelling in the realm of illusion is like a dreamer dwelling in his dream, in which he feels he is a king enjoying the pleasures of his palace, but then becoming dissatisfied and wanting to enjoy a wider range of pleasures. This makes him struggle and become agitated within his dream. But when by repeated practice of detachment and meditation on

‘I am the dreamer, the one consciousness behind the dream’, he becomes established in that knowledge by waking up—even if it is only for an instant on the first occasion—while awake, he is no longer agitated by the dream. Either he smiles at his condition of ignorance in the dream, or he becomes detached from it. Until he is fully awake, he has to maintain this attitude. He doesn’t want to keep on falling asleep again into the dream that the illusory struggle and agitation are real. Similarly, says Dr Shastri, the yogi knows that all the ambitions abiding in the core of his mind are barren and have not the least shade of happiness in their fulfilment. The yogi seeking to become established has to mature this attitude by effort as a means to waking up from the illusion.

The practices are to be done, says our Teacher, ‘with love of Guru and God’. In the Gita the Lord repeatedly declares that devotion to him is essential in such texts as ‘By devotion he knows me in truth, who and what I am. Knowing me thus, he forthwith enters into me.’ And in chapter four, he declares: ‘Know this: by long prostration, by enquiry and by service, those men of wisdom who have realized the truth will teach you wisdom—knowing which, you will not again fall into error; and by which you will see all beings in your Self and also in me.’ (4:34-35). The Gita is an epitome of the teachings of the Upanishads, and in the concluding verse of the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* it says: ‘These subjects which have been declared shine forth for the high-souled one who has the highest devotion for God and for his spiritual teacher as for God.’

In this way, says Dr Shastri, one becomes established in the Self. Then ‘he is contented with the Self’. It means that he is convinced without any doubt that he is Brahman, existence, consciousness and bliss, in which there is no want, no ambition and no imperfection. As we have seen, the state of living in steady knowledge of the Self has to be emulated by the aspirant.

Dr Shastri ends his commentary by indicating how this maturing is to be brought about.

The spiritual state is matured by associationship with one’s spiritual community (sangha), study, service, meditation and devotion. When the sun of illumination has dawned, then all ambitions are taken to be unreal and unfounded. All the psychic perfections are also known to be like

shadows. Then how can any ambition arise in the mind to disturb the equanimity of the yogi? In the last resort he is satisfied with himself, that is, with his higher Self. This is the state of one who is established in wisdom.

What, then, is the main obstacle to becoming established in this knowledge? It is our own restless mind. In the Gita this universal difficulty is analysed.

There is no wisdom for the one who cannot focus his whole personality on the contemplation of the Self; the unsteady mind is not fit for meditation. The unmeditative will not find spiritual peace and where is happiness for the one without peace?

A man dwelling with pleasure on objects of sense becomes fond of them. This attachment gives rise to desire for enjoyment and this desire, when frustrated, produces anger. Anger produces delusion, and under delusion one loses one’s memory of spiritual knowledge; then spiritual understanding is lost. Loss of spiritual understanding leads to spiritual ruin.

For the mind which follows the wandering senses loses its wisdom as a ship carried away by a gale is blown off its intended course.

As Shri Shankara points out in his commentary this describes how the mind which is altogether engrossed in the thought of the various objects of the senses, destroys the devotee’s discriminative knowledge of the Self and the not-self, by carrying away one’s consciousness from the Self and turning it towards sense-objects.

Who has not said, even if only to oneself: ‘Sorry, I got carried away, I lost control! I forgot myself!’ When we are told that the teachings of Yoga are not theoretical but based on experience, we can accept this so far as our present experience goes. And when later on in the Gita, the pupil Arjuna complains that he finds his mind to be restless, turbulent, strong, obstinate and as hard to restrain as the wind, we can sympathize because we share this experience too. Even the Teacher, Shri Krishna, agrees: ‘Doubtless the mind is hard to restrain and restless.’ But then he goes on to say that ‘nevertheless by detachment and by practice it can be

restrained'. We may find this promise harder to accept at first, but it is something which we can verify by doing the practices.

Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras* defines Yoga 'as the stilling of the fluctuations of the mind, so that the seer of the mind may come to abide in his real nature.' Like Krishna in the Gita, Patanjali also gives the means of stilling the mind as detachment and repeated practice. And the medieval commentator, Vyasa, explains that repeated practice involves 'habituating the mind in the experience of knowledge'.

The value of detachment as a means of stilling the mind has long been recognized by teachers and philosophers in many different traditions, such as the Stoic philosopher Epictetus, who wrote: 'There is but one way to tranquillity and happiness, and that is to account no external things thine own, but to commit all to God.'

Detachment in the Gita does not mean aversion to our circumstances and daily duties. It is: 'He who meets pleasure and pain with equanimity is fit for immortality.' It means to cultivate an even-minded and also open-hearted approach, free from anxiety about results. 'He who acts with detachment, resigning his actions to God, is not tainted, just as the flower of a lotus is untouched by water.' Dr Shastri's own advice to his pupils was: 'Do your best and let the rest go.' The ideal attitude to be aimed at is given in chapter twelve:

He is dear to me who hates none, who is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from attachment and egoism, who meets pleasure and pain with equanimity... and whose thought and reason are directed to Me.

In other words, we should also be practising the positive approach to the reality underlying the illusion through repeated daily meditation on it.

The spiritual awakening from the illusion of egoism to the consciousness of our true Self, is attainable through the daily practice of these means to steady knowledge. It will lead us from the winter of ignorance, through the spring of sustained practice, to glorious eternal summer of supreme wisdom. I quote the concluding verses of chapter two from our Teacher's translation:

When the yogi gives up all ambitions and desires existing in his mind

and is fully satisfied with the Self, then he is said to be one who is established in wisdom. The man who abandons all ambitions and lives in perpetual detachment without any sense of property or desire for approbation obtains spiritual peace through knowledge of God [Brahman]. This is the divine state. He who has attained it is never deluded. Those who attain it even late in life, also realize the divine infinite bliss.

In the words of Swami Rama Tirtha: 'Rama tells you that when we realize the truth, the world is converted into a veritable heaven for us. There are then no foes, no fears, no troubles, no anxieties, no pain. Verily, verily, it is so.'

M.R.H.

A PRAYER

As water is the only support of the millions of waves and bubbles which appear in it, so You, O Lord omniscient and omnipotent, are the only support of the billions of universes which come and disappear.

You are Truth-Bliss.

Overcome by your power of illusion—that is, insufficiency of our approach to You, we rely on external objects.

Teach us to take refuge in You with a tranquil heart, devoted to the good of all.

H.P.S.

MEDITATION AT SHANTI SADAN

A recent session led by the Warden

Each time we sit in meditation we take a further step on our interior journey to the goal of life—spiritual enlightenment. This goal is ever present because it is our true nature, but our self-knowledge needs to be deepened and clarified, until we recognize ourselves as we are—free from all the ideas and influences that seem to limit us. Meditation is the most effective way of lifting our consciousness from absorption in outer things, to the great calm that always underlies our inner life.

Meditation is different from ordinary thinking—even quiet, reflective and philosophical thinking. It is an attempt to slow down the stream of thoughts and to make our mind as serene as possible. This serenity, when practised regularly, frees our heart from all narrowness and leads to the expansion of our consciousness. Our ultimate purpose is to realize the pure, changeless and limitless consciousness that is at the root of the mind and the hidden source of its life and knowledge.

This deeper realm within us is the infinite, transcendent reality, and it is indicated in our meditation text:

OM I AM LOVE. I AM THE OCEAN
OF PEACE AND LIGHT,
SELF-SUFFICIENT AND SELF-ILLUMINED. OM

This depth of understanding is potential in all of us. But it only comes to light when our mind is made serene and relieved of its load of thoughts—which includes our worries, desires, fears and constant preoccupation with the things we are involved in.

The mind is to be treated as our instrument and not our master. In learning how to calm ourselves down for certain arranged periods of time, we have the best means of sustaining our mental strength and deeper well-being. A serene mind reveals the measureless value of our true nature—the essence of our being.

When our spectacles get misted over, our surroundings appear foggy. The view is very different once our lenses are clean. In the same way, the mind that is habitually tranquil and at peace with itself, has a different vision of life than the mind which is ever restless. We need not

worry about whether a path to perfect knowledge exists or does not exist. If we cultivate inner serenity through meditation we will discover the higher peace and limitless consciousness in and as our own eternal nature.

We prepare for our practice by sitting for a minute or two in silence—in reverence for the deeper Reality, within and around us, which is That in us which transcends the relativity of body, mind and world.

BREATHING PRACTICE

We sit upright, ensuring that the upper part of our body is not bent over or contracted in any way. This allows a clear channel for our breathing. Then we breathe a little more deeply than usual, giving our attention to the breathing process. Breathe slowly, drawing up the in-breath as if from the navel to the spot between the eyebrows. With each in-breath carry the word: ‘Peace’, with each out-breath, ‘Patience’. Do this 21 times.

Peace and patience go together, and these great qualities, when cultivated, keep our mind at its best. There is no peace without patience, and no patience without peace. By taking these words on our breath, we plant them in our mind; or rather, we remind ourselves that we already have these qualities, for their ultimate source is our higher Self.

VISUALIZATION

In this visualization practice, we picture and nurture in ourselves a progressive pacification of the mind. Devote two minutes to each of the three stages.

Stage 1

Calmly witness the stream of thoughts and impulses that arise in your mind. Let them flow by. Feel that your essential being, your true I, is like a rock in the midst of a swirling stream, motionless, ever secure, witnessing the thought-stream but not flowing with it.

Stage 2

Imagine that the water has become calmer, and that our mind is becoming peaceful, free from stress and agitation. Affirm: ‘My mind is calm’, while remembering that your ‘I’—motionless like the rock—is the ‘witness’ of both mental activity and calm, ever independent.

Stage 3

Imagine the water has become perfectly still, no wind stirs it, there are no ripples. Hold the mind in this stillness.

The serenity we cultivate through meditation need not depart when we emerge from our time of practice. We will make great advances if we carry the spirit of equanimity with us during the day. This does not mean lack of interest or enthusiasm for things we do in the world. But it means avoiding those emotional extremes, the strong likes and dislikes, the passion and anger, that replace our inner serenity with stress, conflict, confusion and fatigue. We learn to protect our mind from these extremes of expression as carefully as we would protect a rare curative herb that has been put into our safekeeping.

As aspirants to the ultimate joy—which surpasses any sense-delight or intellectual gratification—we also protect our mind from the distracting, and sometime polluting materials with which our senses are showered in daily life. In the words of St Paul, if we want to be truly creative, we feed our mind on ‘whatever things are true and uplifting’, and we do not give our precious and irreplaceable mental energy to that which is unworthy of our attention. We become one-pointed in our search for wisdom.

Serenity of mind, equanimity in daily life, lead to the deepening of our experience—the opening of our inner world to the light and peace of our true Self, which knows no boundary or limitation at all.

MEDITATION TEXT

Our meditation text universalizes the great stillness which we approached in stages through our visualization.

OM I AM LOVE. I AM THE OCEAN
OF PEACE AND LIGHT,
SELF-SUFFICIENT AND SELF-ILLUMINED. OM

The one consciousness, peace, light and bliss, is the great reality underlying our own life and mind, at one with the power behind the whole cosmos. Focus on the text for ten minutes, calmly recalling the mind to the sentences—or a phrase within them—if the attention strays. Feel that the words point to the nature of your true Self, that which is deeper than your individualized consciousness and is universal.

* * *

To live in equanimity and goodwill during the day is the way we can help the world. Our prayers and wishes, in the form of words and actions, may indeed help. But words and actions are finite. Our spirit of equanimity—peace and patience—has its source in our infinite nature. It is all-embracing, untouched by time, and it flows for the good of all, being one with all. So let us sit for a minute or two in tranquillity charged with goodwill to all.

Having performed our meditation practice, we are inspired to:

Rise in tranquillity
Walk in peace
Stay in harmony

MY FINAL ADVICE

If I have to live only five minutes I would say:

1. Be free from all external and internal influences. Be master of yourself. There is no happiness for a prisoner. Break the bars of the cell of dependence on friends, foes, climate, medicine, money, passions, anger, avarice and egoity.
2. Enrich your mind with love of truth, uplifting poetry and philosophy.
3. Value your time more than any other thing. Do not let them waste it. Make the best use of your time by quickening your inner evolution in pursuit of the spiritual truth and celestial beauty.
4. Strengthen and develop the innate sense of spiritual values. In the market of the world buy the commodity of spiritual wisdom.
5. Know that sense pleasures and physical comforts are non-essential; the less of them the better for your spiritual growth.
6. Accumulate energy by conserving it. In the tranquillity of your heart, convert the life energy into the light of intuition by meditating on the supreme truth. See your spirit in that light as the infinite and immortal repository of bliss. It is reality. It is to be pursued with all love and outer detachment.
7. Do not think ill of any creature even if they hurt you. Do not blame any; do not complain. Patiently live for truth, sat-chit-ananda.
8. Avoid being a nationalist patriot. Be a universal lover of mankind. Do not trust politicians and do not be one.
9. Mould your life on a spiritual pattern. Know you have no friends. Do not crave sympathy and love from the world—they do not exist.
10. God is the ultimate reality. Bring your mind closer and closer and yet closer to Him. Avoid all sectarianism. Belong to God and not to those who claim to be his special favourites. Harmlessness and compassion are the highest virtues.

It is possible to have inner peace in the world. Give God glory.

H.P.S.

SHANTI SADAN NEWS

Each Tuesday, Shanti Sadan has held meetings devoted to meditation. The same practices are developed each week during the course of a month, after which a new set is introduced. For example, in July the breathing practice incorporated the idea that with each breath, peace is filling our being and radiating from it. This was followed by a visualisation of the blue sky as a symbol of the infinite, helping the mind to clear itself of the limited thought forms and rest in that which is free and boundless. This led to meditation on the text: 'OM. With a mind at peace, I rest in the light and freedom of my true Self, the infinite consciousness. OM.'

During August the practices included a visualisation based on the words: 'I sit in the direct light and stillness of being.' This practice derives from one given by Marjorie Waterhouse, a past Warden of Shanti Sadan, in a letter. She writes: 'I have found that the only way to stop assaults of the mind is to create a short inner picture....which, after you have practised it with visual imagination for a certain time, settles itself as a background to the activities of your mind. One of these imaginative formulas is: "I sleep (or talk, or work—whatever you are doing) in the direct light and stillness of (Thy) being." Sometimes it will include 'Thy', sometimes 'being' only. The result of this is that slowly you become more aware of this descent and interpenetration than of what is going on in the mind, and in fact less and less goes on in the mind under that influence. This belief has got to be constantly fostered at first, afterwards it will be accepted, and support and influence the mind.'

The autumn lectures begin on Thursday, October 8th with a talk on The Complete Life. Details of the Sunday afternoon course are given below.

Autumn 2015 Special Course

Sunday 18 October 2015 2-5pm

Columbia Hotel, 95 Lancaster Gate, London W2 3NS

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|--------|--|
| Talk 1 | Tranquillity and Transcendence
First Guided Meditation Practice |
| Talk 2 | Living Beyond Fear
Second Guided Meditation Practice |