

## SELF-KNOWLEDGE

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### ADHYATMA YOGA

The highest spiritual wisdom experienced by the Seers of Truth has been passed down from ancient times to the present day through a line of traditional teachers. Its metaphysical side, Advaita Vedanta, establishes by reasoning a non-dualistic explanation of the universe; its practical side gives guidance on the life of thought and action, so that the purpose of life may be fulfilled. The essential teachings are:

1. The universe is a phenomenal expression of the supreme Reality which is by nature Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute.
2. Our innermost Self transcends the limitations of body, mind and ego, and is not other than the supreme Reality.
3. The purpose of life is conscious realization of this identity, and this can be achieved while engaged in the duties of life.
4. Self-realization gives unbroken peace, poise and bliss. It is the ultimate goal sought consciously or unconsciously through philosophy and religion, art and science.
5. The one Reality reveals and pervades all beings, and underlies the highest teachings found in the world's religious traditions.

Adhyatma Yoga was introduced into Britain in 1929 by the late Hari Prasad Shastri, at the wish of his Teacher, Shri Dada of Aligarh. The centre is at Shanti Sadan, where the teachings are given in the traditional way.

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### BEYOND WINNING AND LOSING

The philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) believed human beings were innately competitive, and that this trait ruled our mind. Even if we appear to mingle peaceably with one another, there is always an interior gladiator, ready to thrust and parry its way to a position of personal gain and glorification. Hobbes justified strong government as the only way to prevent the human race from destroying itself in a perpetual war of all against all.

The spirit of competition is alive and well, though nowadays, thankfully, many of its outlets are non-violent. Exams and targets are forced on us at an early age, and this means winning or losing, with the accompanying emotional ups and downs. Competitiveness is so pervasive, driving sport, business, politics, academia and the rest, that we sometimes forget why we are competing, and to what end.

But the urge, or duty, to compete, and the thirst for glory, can never

be an end in itself. We indulge in ventures and adventures because we believe such actions will make us feel better. Feeling better means that the underlying motivation, even of the drive for absolute victory, is happiness.

Our competitive individuality is usually too busy to reflect on deeper issues, though such reflection reveals that true happiness is not to be found in the sphere of winning and losing. The flaws in that ethos were signified a little time ago by an outstanding sporting coach who, after a run of remarkable successes, had to taste the bitterness of what he felt was a significant failure. He admitted to feeling embarrassed and humiliated. He reflected that even the pleasure of past achievements was 'wiped out' when you lose; and of those achievements, only the first was meaningful, because you had the joy of surprising people. Thereafter, they expected you to win.

Winning and losing, honour and disgrace, are what the spiritual classics call 'pairs of opposites', and the wise person is one whose happiness is not made or marred by these visitations. In the lines of Rudyard Kipling, he is one who 'can meet with triumph and disaster / And treat those two impostors just the same.' They are impostors because the competitive spirit is not the whole of human nature, nor its most useful and mature phase. Sooner or later experience will prove that the gain of empirical prizes is not the way to permanent happiness.

The danger here is that we may become so disillusioned by what we judge (often wrongly) to be our failure that we abandon all application, and succumb to apathy and cynicism, as our active nature wearies and seeks only repose. Paradoxically, repose is the remedy for the fever of competition, but not the repose of apathy or giving up the game. It is the repose of inner peace—the peace that ever abides in the depth of the mind, yet is veiled by that competitive, outgoing spirit that causes all the unrest we experience.

Progress in Yoga is from restlessness to serenity, and serenity to the wisdom of enlightenment. It too requires gladiatorial valour in guiding our inner energies to harmony and the higher quest. But the ultimate triumph is unchallenged, for we shall know that our true nature is 'one without a second', the spiritual principle that transcends individuality and is the one power underlying and supporting the whole universe.

## Actualising the Inner Light

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The inner life needs light, and that light is the light of meditation.

*Hari Prasad Shastri*

We travel on a journey that was accomplished before we set out. The real end is gained when we stay still.

*Swami Rama Tirtha*

THE LIGHT that is uncovered by the practice of meditation, when we are inwardly still, is the light of peace and wisdom. To uncover this light we need to adopt the role of a special investigator. The field of our investigation is our own Self. Our enquiry centres on the question: 'What am I?' This enquiry can only be pursued if our state of mind is serene and undistracted. The purpose of the higher Yoga is to bring about this state of mind.

Sometimes a market is held alongside a mosque, a temple or a church. What a difference between the bustle of the market and the peace of the place of worship. Our mind too has its market place and also its quiet space within, its inner sanctuary. The central shrine is our innermost Self, which turns out to be the universal light of knowledge and bliss.

This infinite knowledge is our highest potentiality. It is not to be found in the market—in the mental realm of chatter and agitation. But when we enter the deeper realm of 'I', in serenity, and with our desires for worldly gains hushed for the time being, something of the light of the Self will be reflected in our tranquillized mind. We will be launched on that 'journey that was accomplished before we set out'.

The realization is that the light of eternal Truth is the basic nature of 'I', the Self. The true Self is ever enlightened. In the words of the *Mundaka Upanishad*, 'it shines surpassingly in blissfulness and immortality'. (II.ii.7) This is the great Truth of our higher nature. It is implicit in such statements of Jesus as: 'Before Abraham was, I am', and in the lines of the Chinese poet-recluse, Han Shan:

Face and form alter with the years.

I hold fast to the pearl of the mind.

It is the pearl of wisdom and eternal beauty, which begins to reveal itself in our mind when that mind is serene and undistracted.

This transcendent Self is something far deeper than the limited personality, the close-fitting mask that we usually identify ourselves with. This Self is deeper even than our sense of individuality, this little island of being that makes me feel separate from the Whole. The true Self, the ever enlightened Self, is limitless, not bounded or restricted in any way. It is established in complete and eternal freedom. The path is to free our mind from all narrow conceptions, to foster the awareness that there is one divine life interpenetrating all. The goal is to realize: 'I am the Self of all', or, in the words of a meditation text:

OM. I AM ONE WITH THE INFINITE POWER OF LOVE.  
I AM PEACE. I AM LIGHT. OM

How then do we set about our investigation? In chemistry, if we want to establish the existence of a new element, the task is to show that element in its pure form, uncompounded with anything else. The work of Madame Curie in isolating radium from the mass of pitchblende that it pervaded, is an example of undaunted perseverance. This is similar to the position with the supreme Self, which has to be discerned within as the ultimate principle of consciousness. As investigators, we advance our enquiry undaunted by difficulties. It is then that we gain the understanding that all associations that cling to the 'I', that appear to define the 'I', have nothing whatever to do with the 'I' in its true nature. For the real Self is what remains when all the qualities, all the descriptions of myself, all the images of myself in my own mind are negated, are subtracted, are sifted away, just as gold from the mine needs to have its surrounding ore shelled off, or as that pitchblende was separated from the pure radium.

As investigators, we already have the clue to the highest Truth within us. It is here, now, in our simple sense of being, I exist. It is with us every instant of our conscious life, the true nature of our consciousness. But this simple sense of *being* and of *being conscious* appears to belong to our body, our mind, our moods, our nervous system, and so on. It seems all too obvious that *their* pain and joy is *my*

pain and joy. In the lines from Shakespeare:

If you prick me, do I not bleed?  
If you tickle me, do I not laugh?

This is true, but it is not the whole truth about the Self. Though in a certain sense we live *in* and *with* the body and mind, or, as the *Bhagavad Gita* expresses it, we *wear* these clothes of flesh and thought, our being is not entirely identified with them—and, in the final analysis, it is not identified with them at all. Its nature is that supremely subtle and inward awareness that *knows* all our experiences, but is not part of them. This is the place where perfection is to be realized, a place we have never moved away from and can never move away from. In the words of the *Chandogya Upanishad*: This is the Self which has no sin, no decrepitude, no death, no sorrow, is ever fulfilled [literally, 'has unfulfilled desires'].

Therefore, it is a mistake to think of our true Self in terms of age or with reference to our sins or disappointments in life. If we grasp this teaching properly, nothing will be allowed to get us down. Our innermost nature transcends these human limitations.

Our essential being is indicated in a simile of Jalaluddin Rumi:

Thy true substance is concealed in falsehood, like the taste of butter in the taste of milk. Thy falsehood is this perishable body; thy truth is that lordly spirit.

During many years this milk, which is the body, is visible and manifest, while the butter, which is the spirit, is perishing and naughted within it,

Till God send a messenger, a chosen servant, a shaker of the milk in the churn, that he may shake it with method and skill, to the end that I may know that my true ego was hidden. [*Masnavi* III 3029ff):

Our bodily qualities and states are not the ultimate Truth of what we are. Though visible and manifest, they are changing all the time. If we are sixty, it is of no use if we renew our passport with a photo taken many years earlier. Face and form alter with the years. Our state of mind, too, is only something that is true while it lasts, and no mental

condition stays unaltered. Change is the very nature of the mind. We will not find ultimate Truth in that which changes.

Underlying the changing appearances, inner and outer, is something durable, eternal, immortal. We already have a fundamental knowledge of this fact because we all have a sense of *continuous identity*—of being the same person, even though our body and mind have changed so radically down the years. We know there is something more than this mutability, and this is indeed the case. It is the unchanging awareness before which all mental activity appears. But the nature of this awareness as our true Self has to be realized. Then we will know ourselves as consciousness absolute, the reality underlying all experience.

The key fact about human nature is that we can make use of the changing energies of our mind, to transform our experience into inner illumination leading to the transcendence of all limitations.

What is this pearl of the mind, this supremacy, that is our higher nature, and how does it relate to the Whole? The ultimate Truth is that the innermost Self is, in essence, identical with the supreme reality, Brahman, the Absolute, the All. This can be summed up in the formula: 'Truth is Self, and Self is God, and God is the all-pervasive Reality.'

When we see pictures of planet earth from space, we encounter a new perspective, where human affairs are viewed against a cosmic background, and localised quarrels seem meaningless. Our lives appear little indeed—like a single beat of the pulse, compared with the seeming endlessness of time and space. But this is not the whole story about our being. For our true nature and essence is eternal and without any boundary. It is not only in inner unity with all the other appearances in the universe, but in a real sense, we—as consciousness and pure being—are the all. Our underlying reality is one and the same in all.

Our investigation is not intended to lead us from a state of being that is familiar and homely to one that is new and foreign to us. It is to realize the Self as it is and always has been as free from all the conditioning that life imposes on us, and to live in perfect freedom and security.

This may seem a far-off ideal, but actually it is the natural state of the Self. It manifests in a distorted form in our worldly aspirations, in

our love of glory, of freedom, independence, in our recoiling from the thought of death, in our love of praise and distaste of personal criticism. But this urge for perfection cannot be lastingly fulfilled for our body and mind, which themselves are subject to restriction, criticism, defect and death. Satisfaction is possible only through the higher self-knowledge beyond individuality.

Self-knowledge involves the cancellation of the 'ignorance' or 'nescience' that persuades us of our identity with the body and mind. This conviction, in the Vedanta philosophy, is regarded as wrong knowledge—false identification. We can only be truly free and fulfilled when we banish nescience, through letting in the light of Truth.

What is the function of light? To banish darkness. Darkness may have prevailed long ages, but once the light is in, there is a complete change and no longer fear of the unknown.

There was once a deep cave on a hillside that was feared by the superstitious villagers. They had convinced themselves that an evil spirit dwelt in the cave and they attributed various disasters to the mischief caused by that spirit. This belief was passed down the generations, so no one thought to challenge it. Then a visitor came to the region, who knew all about caves, and he knew perfectly well that the people were deeply afflicted by what in Yoga is called nescience.

This nescience has three forms:

*lack of knowledge*—we don't know what is in the cave;

*false knowledge*—there is a demon in the cave;

*doubt*—the wavering in the mind due to uncertainty.

The visitor suggested: 'Let us take light to the cave. Do not fear immediate entry. Several of us will attach the light, in the form of fire, to long poles; then we shall be able to keep our distance, yet see what is there.' Such was his manner that he inspired confidence, and appealed to something deeper and more stable in the personalities of his hearers. They went, realized that the cave was perfectly safe, and their hearts were set at ease. The situation had not changed. What had happened was that this dangerous, mischievous nescience, this lack of knowledge, false knowledge and doubt, had been banished by light. It is the same with our inner being. In truth, there is nothing to fear,

nothing to be anxious about.

What about our situation as seekers? The worldly experiences do affect our bodies and minds, but the crucial fact to hold on to is that our real Self is not affected by events, change or decay. Our Self is free, transcendent, enlightened, the Self of all. This being so, the light does not really need to be let in, because it is our true nature. But while we are fixated on the world and are hungry for its food in the form of sense experiences, we are unlikely to look in the direction where Truth is to be discovered, namely *within*. So when we actualise the light, it means we actualise the higher wisdom, the teachings that tell us what is already within, our divine wealth. These come to us like glad tidings of boundless wealth that we have somehow forgotten or overlooked. Spiritual practice is the way we realize our inner wealth. It means working on our mind in such a way that this nescience, this uncritical belief in the reality of this ever-changing world, is re-examined, challenged, and the light within us comes to dominate our consciousness.

Truth is the essence and richness of life, like the butter concealed in the milk of our ordinary experience. To return to the simile of Rumi:

A great shaking is required in the effort that the milk might render back that butter from its inmost heart.

The butter in the milk is invisible. Hark, churn the milk knowingly from side to side, that it may reveal that which it has hidden.

What is this churning process that will bring to light the best in us, our higher nature? Normally the mind's energies are scattered over many things, roving from one interest to another. While scattered in this way, the highest creative potentiality of the mind, its potentiality for illumination, will not be realized. What is necessary? The mind's energies have to be focused. The energy of the sun is always with us, but if we want to draw on its power, we have to use a lens or a solar panel, and so on, to capture its energy and turn it to a creative use. The great energy of the mind, which is wonderful in its force and abundance, can be channelled and focused within. This is done by focusing on a symbol of Truth, some form, word, or sentence, that

points to the infinite nature of our Self. Then we shall no longer be misled by this unreal nescience. The light of Truth, our essential Truth, will shine as self-evident and self-revealed.

We remember the saying of Jesus: 'If thine eye be single, thy whole body will be full of light.' This is the result of that fusion of our inner energies, our one-pointed concentration on a symbol of Truth, conceived as present in the depths of the mind itself. We are already permeated by that light. But it only becomes apparent to us when our mind is absorbed one-pointedly in the inner stillness.

Truth is not complicated, nor is the path to its realization. The path can be summed up in three simple injunctions:

Turn within

Calm the mind

Focus the attention on the spiritual principle  
underlying the mind.

The supreme art of life is to live in such a way that we can turn within and find peace at any time—not just peace, but inspiration and wisdom. It is a matter of practice. To one who is new to typing, it may seem an impossible feat that someone can type rapidly without even looking at the keys, and yet this skill is second nature to so many. In the same way, once we grasp the concept: 'The mind is my instrument. I can influence and steer its operations', we can confidently make a start on the path of inner transformation.

The firm foundation is our meditation practice. It is greatly helped by making time to connect ourselves with the realm of tranquillity and spiritual thought during the day. This is done by pausing occasionally to lift our mind away from the outer scene, and revive some saying that reminds us of who we really are in truth. These spare or in-between moments come to all of us. If we are alert and eager to transcend our limitations, we will find that such opportunities are more plentiful than we might imagine. What seems impossible now will become possible and natural as we advance. Our mind will be transformed into an abode of peace—an abode of divine bliss.

There are obstacles to be overcome, but if we are sincere in our wish

to live in Truth, help is always close at hand, and we will find that all life's experiences, even apparent setbacks, can be transformed into aids for our higher awakening.

The source of lasting joy is within us and if we persevere, there will be a psychological turnaround, where the attraction and joy of inner serenity becomes the magnet of our interest and quest, and we find that this is what we want and need more than anything else. Nothing need cut us off from our own infinite wealth. What is needed is faith that our true Self is the infinite, ever perfect spiritual principle. This faith is helped by an understanding of the basic principles of the non-dual philosophy. And our faith leads to understanding when we make our personal experiments in tranquillity through practising meditation and giving ourselves time and space for reflection and inner communion.

The path revealed by the higher Yoga is a return to our true home, self-realization—the home we have never really left. It is the goal of life, the consummation of experience, the final result of the millions of experiments we make as we journey through experience. It relieves us of all fear, anxiety, sorrow and uncertainty, just as the coming of the light expelled all the dark imaginings associated with the cave. In the words of the *Crest Jewel of Wisdom*:

Realizing the highest wisdom, we do not grieve. For our nature is bliss, all-bliss everywhere. We have nothing to fear from any quarter. [224]

**B.D.**

## **A PRAYER FROM THE VEDAS**

May my mind ever think of the good of all beings—  
That mind, which is a means of divine knowledge,  
which takes man far, far during the waking state,  
which causes objects to be known to the senses,  
which abides in the subtle cause in the state of sleep—  
May that mind ever think of the good of all beings.

The mind, which manifests its modifications  
in the form of the intellect, will and memory,  
which is the means of accomplishing the good of all people,  
May that mind be directed towards justice  
and the exercise of truth and love—  
And may it ever think of the good of all beings.

The mind which, when engaged in the practice of Yoga and  
devotion, acquires a knowledge of the past, future and present,  
through which the laws of the world are known—  
May that mind ever think of the good of all beings.

The mind, in which a knowledge of the four Vedas  
abides in seed form,  
which has the capacity to know what is best for all beings—  
May that mind of mine ever think of the good of all beings.

The mind, which controls and leads the senses,  
as a charioteer directs his horses,  
the mind abiding in the region of the heart,  
which never grows old and whose speed is inconceivable—  
May that mind of mine ever think of the good of all beings.

*from the Yajur Veda  
translated by*

**H.P.S.**

## Self-Development

---

ONE OF THE chief purposes of life is self-development. The mental development means our capacity to love truth. It is expressed through our practice of virtue, of which patience in distress and forgiveness in prosperity are chief characteristics. This gives the mind serenity.

A serene mind is essential to the development of love of truth and the unfoldment of the infinite potentialities of the mind to raise itself to the spiritual region and to realize the peace which passeth all understanding. We are freed from the fear of death, and endowed with passionlessness and the inner light which transcends the joys and sorrows of life.

Man has physical appetites, such as the need for food, shelter, security and sense-satisfaction, if such a thing exists at all. The moral appetites, such as sympathy with fellow men in distress, compassion and forgiveness, express the real value of reason and emotion, and must also be satisfied, or our spiritual development will be impeded.

Then there are the spiritual needs which, when satisfied, make the life worth while. Their chief characteristics are humility, undisturbable peace, the urge to see infinity in the finite and to seek the light which never fades. Under the spiritual light the sufferings—which are an integral part of life—are utilised to further the peace within. Submission, as in the case of the stormy life of Beethoven, prepares the way to the spiritual light. It gives fearlessness, a sense of unity in diversity and consciousness of the infinitude of the Self.

This is the climax of self-development. Appreciation of beauty is a help if it is on a non-possessive and universal basis. Possessiveness in regard to beauty hampers the journey of the local self to the universal self within it.

Now let us discuss the question of philanthropy. Unless man serves his kind and other living beings irrespective of racial or national considerations, his self-development is retarded and the rays of the spiritual light are blotted out. Our chief contribution is moral and spiritual. We do not undervalue the contribution of those who use their great wealth to relieve human suffering, but the moral and spiritual

growth of man is a crying need, particularly at this time.

Without trying to be dogmatic or expressing self-superiority or trying to collect disciples and followers, the knowers of Truth are those who communicate their inner experiences to aid the self-development of others. As an artist uplifts the soul of his votaries by evoking in them spiritual desires, so the enlightened communicate their experience, not merely bookish learning, to stimulate the spiritual appetite of their fellow human beings. They infuse into them a desire for universal compassion and love of the light within. They make no converts: their mission is to light the path of the weary pilgrims to the temple of the universal Truth, with the experiences of the sages of the past corroborated by their own experience.

A majority of people do not understand the phrase ‘spiritual attainment’. To them material gains have a real meaning. The moral achievements have value for the few who have advanced on the path of self-development.

Imagine a beautifully bound volume of the poems of Goethe containing many pictures. Some observers will like the appearance of the book, others the illustrations. They are compared to those who realize the material and moral value of life. But the real enjoyment of the book is for those who can appreciate the poetry and savour its deeper meaning. Such is the spiritual value of life also.

Those who have touched the innermost circle of light in the consciousness of the Self and view the world as a great drama enacted by the spirit, know the ultimate value of life. They try to awaken in us that inner vision which gives a sight of the infinitude of the spirit in practical experience. Their contribution has no amusement value, nor do they try to impress others with their own importance and depth of learning. To the enlightened, the seeker is God, the path is God, the goal is God, and all is God.

The ABC of the path is to run away from our localised ego into the realm of infinity. First we forget our self-interest and equip the mind with truth and beauty with the purpose of serving God in others. Then we suppress the mind and lead it to the vacuity within. ‘All is an empty dream except the Self’ is the motto. Illness and health, spring and winter, abuses and respect are all the same: mere words or sensation but

nothing real in them. This vacuity is filled with the light of 'I am'. This 'I' is universal. A great flood of peace fills the mind. But it too is ignored, because 'all that is finite is Maya'.

This is real self-development. It is not free from relapses. By courage and single-minded devotion to the ideal we overcome the tendencies to relapse. We live in the world to glorify God and to make Shanti and Dharma illustrious.

Thought and self-expression as light are the characteristics of the developed individual consciousness. Each harbours the highest potentiality—to become a person of spiritual illumination. Come what may, you have done your duty.

**H.P.S.**

#### **ALL LIGHT, ALL PEACE, ALL BLISS**

Under the shadowy trees, as the breezes played with the leaves,  
And the violet clouds sailed overhead,  
I sat on the green lawn talking of the Gita.  
The heart beat slower and slower,  
The eyes closed under the divine decree,  
The sparkling light of the mind  
Mingled with the great light.  
The world was blotted out;  
It was as a dusk picture on cloud.  
What remained?  
Only the One without a second.  
Nature cried out: 'OM TAT SAT, SHANTI, SHANTI'.  
This life was a tiny scene  
In the infinite dream of Maya.  
He lifted the veil and showed His Face:  
All light, all peace, all bliss.

**H.P.S.**

## **From Worry to Serenity**

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Unless a man is insane or super-sane, he must be subject to worries, anxieties, grief, agitation and so forth. These are the stages on the way to lead a man from sanity to super-sanity, that is, spiritual wisdom...Our worries and anxieties can be made footstools towards the higher life of truth, beauty and liberation for all mankind—like the love of the Buddha for all living beings.

*Hari Prasad Shastri*

WORRIES are natural for humankind, faced with the many challenges of this complicated and unpredictable world. Even small children often appear to be overshadowed by concerns they cannot express, so that the compassionate mother hugs the child and says: 'But darling, what are you worried about?' As adults, we may have outgrown the insecurity of childhood, yet it is likely that our faces are visited many times a day by a worried expression.

We say to each other, 'Don't worry', but this kind of hand-squeeze rarely changes our mood. The mind goes on worrying just the same. More to the point would be to say to our would-be comforter: 'OK, I won't worry if you will kindly share with me your method for stopping worries.'

It is wholesome to be reminded that worry and anxiety signify stages of mental growth. They afflict the sensitive person far more than the easy-going companion, and sensitivity is a precious human quality. Worries are often associated with a quickened conscience, or with heightened powers of reasoning and imagination. The worried mind is not sunk in indolence or sloth. It is thinking, thinking, and its ruminations are often creative.

But, as human beings, we also have an urge to progress, to move onwards and upwards. The trouble with worrying is that it is often circular and repetitive, taking its toll on our energy and stamina, and distracting us from the task in hand. Our worry-thoughts fail to show the way to anything higher or enlightening, and can inhibit us from achieving anything worth while.



In contrast, the Yoga of Self-knowledge is based on two great positive facts about human nature. The first is that our innermost being is divine. It is changeless consciousness and bliss. Our innermost Self transcends worries and anxieties, even while our mind may be worried and anxious. It subsists as the ultimate light of subtle awareness that reveals to us what is happening in our mind, yet never entering into those happenings. Free and transcendent, one Self pervades all.

Worry causes forgetfulness of our higher nature and puts us in a false position, where our feeling of identity, of ‘this I am’, is held in the finite—the mind—whereas its source is the infinite, the Self. The higher Yoga enables us to transcend not just worries and anxieties, but all mental activities and restrictions, and know ourselves as perfect peace and freedom.

The next great positive fact about human nature is that our mind can be transformed into peace and light. This means that our life can be guided in such a way that more and more of the light of our divine source, the real Self, is reflected in our mind. There is a meditation text that enshrines this principle:

OM. TAKE UP THE MIRROR OF YOUR STILLED HEART  
AND LOOK AT THE REFLECTION OF INFINITY IN IT.  
THIS IS WISDOM. THIS IS PEACE. OM.

There is no magic or superstition involved in this transformation. It is brought about by training—essentially a voluntary self-training, while guidance is available if we are serious about it.

During this self-training we get to know the powers and limitations of our mind, much as a teacher discerns the strengths and tendencies of a pupil. We discover that our mind functions on two different levels. First there is the level of casual, undirected mental activity. The mind goes on murmuring and mumbling, almost like a radio in the background. This is the level of our mental life that responds to outer stimuli, and that comes up with feelings like: ‘That’s good—how pleasant’ or ‘I don’t like that, I won’t look’. All these impressions and reactions, involving attraction and aversion, serve as fuel to sustain our endless, aimless, internal discourse with ourselves. For most of us,

worries and anxieties function on this level of our mental life, and, for purposes of analysis, we may call it the lower mind, or *manas* in Sanskrit.

But *manas* does not exhaust our mental range, or determine our inner quality. Within the mind there is a superior, sage-like function of authority and insight that we may refer to as the higher mind. It operates when we consciously use our intellect, and when we deliberately apply our will.

The intellect does not ‘take turns’ with the lower mind. It is a subtler phase of the inner life that pervades the lower mind at all times. It always knows what *manas* is producing. Similarly, our will is omnipresent in *manas*, as another aspect of that superior function, and can be evoked at any moment to influence the thought stream.

For example, the intellect can detect daydreams, and its partner, the will, can lead us back to the point. This often happens when we are trying to learn something, and our attention is meant to be focused on the job. The lower mind wants to go on picking daisies, dreaming of the working day’s end, or speculating about the latest unread text messages, and so on. The higher mind, through intellect, becomes aware of its wanderings, and through will, brings it back to the real-time situation and purpose.

This higher faculty of the mind, this source of judgement and will-power, turns out to be the key faculty that is evoked, developed and purified in our training for enlightenment. It is stronger, more inward, more fundamentally ‘us’, than the worrying level. With insight, this higher functioning of our nature can be activated to such a degree that it can guide and direct the mental life from within, throw off slavery to aimless thinking, and lead one forward on the path to illumination.

This potential for illumination is based on the central fact that the higher part of our mind has a spiritual element in it. Intellect-will itself has a higher phase, still more inward, still closer to our true spiritual Self, and this higher phase becomes operative through our continued spiritual training.

Everyone contains within themselves the secret of life and of liberation, and it is concealed as a potentiality for expansion and transcendence within our higher mind. When this higher part of our

mind is weaned from selfish preoccupations and is steeped in goodwill to all, it becomes purified and naturally begins to seek to transcend itself. It starts to have intuitive knowledge of the realm of inner freedom, infinitude, perfect peace, and self-bliss, and responds ever more willingly and lovingly to the pull of the higher life.

One way of indicating this development is to say that when our inner being becomes purified, it reflects the innermost light of our spiritual nature, the central sun of our personality, to a greater and greater degree. Then we know in our own higher experience that there is no greater good we can do to ourselves than to 'take up the mirror of our stilled heart and look at the reflection of infinity in it'. As a Japanese spiritual author has said: 'The brightest mirror is not on the wall.' The brightest mirror is the human heart itself when it is tranquillized and charged with peace and goodwill to all.

There is nothing wrong with the lower kind of mental activity, as long as it is happening according to our will and conscious choice. We have to respond to life, we have to evaluate our experience with goods and bads. Our self-preservation demands that we heed the natural selectivity of the lower mind, for example, to choose what is ripe and avoid what is stale, because it helps us to survive, and is based on a wonderful practical wisdom. But the way of inner progress to enlightenment is that our mind should move according to our choice, and not as an independent or imprisoning force. This principle is suggested in the saying of the Chinese sage Mencius: 'I spend a lifetime in careful thought, but not a moment in worry.'

What is the difference between careful thought and worry? Careful thought is a conscious process. It is ruled and guided by that higher part of our mind, our intellect and will. Careful thought means using the mind, not being used by it. Worry is largely a case of unconscious thinking. The worries are never consciously invited, but somehow manage to ambush our attention without warning.

In order to help us appreciate and practise some of the Yoga teachings on banishing worries, let us look briefly at some basic everyday strategies for dealing with worries.

1. End the outer causes of the worries, e.g. acquire a vast amount of money.

2. Escape from the environment that reminds you of your worries, e.g. take a holiday.
3. Attend to your worries at certain well-defined times; at other times, 'they do not exist'!
4. Look at the phenomenon of worry itself, and deal with the problem from within.

1. The attempt to bring to an end the outer causes of our worries, by wealth, and so on, is most difficult. That is precisely why these worries persist. Even if we have wealth, new worries will emerge, we can be sure. There is the old story of the snares of 99.

A poor, but contented, couple, shared a simple hut and were very happy together. A rich neighbour envied their peace and joy, and craftily threw 99 rupees through the window. The next day he discovered that in the hut, the fire had not been lit, there was no smell of cooking—in fact the little hut seemed shrouded in gloom. It happened that the couple had spent the whole night counting and recounting the 99 rupees, and then searching every nook, for they felt sure it must have been a hundred—and where was the missing rupee?

No doubt many of their material needs would have been satisfied by the windfall, but instead, something in the mind had been aroused that caused fret and worrying, though there was no justification. Is it not the same in our business world today, where the wealthiest companies are ever restless and thirsty for acquisitions, and our targets are always being revised on the basis of more, more....more is best? This is called manufacturing worries out of nothing, or creating waves where there is no wind!

2. The next strategy for banishing worries is to escape from the surroundings that remind you of your troubles—to disappear for the weekend or longer, and perhaps allow your mind to be numbed by the effects of drink or drugs. Even a child can see that this is not a solution but a postponement; there is no easy escape from coming back to 'face the music'.

3. The third strategy is to give our worries a particular time-slot, when they receive our full attention, but to give them no thought at other times. This is bordering on the higher Yoga, for it is nothing less than the careful thought recommended by Mencius. Where this is our strategy, the so-called worries no longer deserve the name; they have become challenges. We are not ruled by them. They have become practical matters demanding our attention, and need not depress us with sticky personal feelings of fear or inadequacy—feelings that go far beyond the time-slot we have given to these particular problems.

The Victorian Prime Minister, William Gladstone, was equipped with this power of inner management. His biographer and colleague, Morley, records that when Gladstone returned home from the House of Commons, while removing his hat and cloak, he would say: ‘Now I lay aside all my political business. Now that I am home, I am in a new sphere, with my family and with my studies.’ And it is said that even on the day he lost the Premiership, he returned home as normal, removing his hat and cloak, without discussing the matter, until the truth came out much later that day.

We said this application of controlled thought to one’s troubles and difficulties, is a kind of Yoga. And we can expand on this by quoting some words of Shri Dada of Aligarh:

The mind not only thinks, but has the power to choose what to think. Let it decide to think what is good, what is beneficial to all, and not what is at the time alluring but ultimately leads to suffering. I do not let my mind think what it likes. I keep it busy with thoughts of God, Yoga and benevolence.

This is an example of bringing into operation that higher part of our mind, consisting of intellect and will, and which has a spiritual element in it. In the Yoga classics, it has the Sanskrit name, *buddhi*.

4. The last strategy for dealing with our worries is to look more closely at the worrying process itself, and see what can be done on the inner plane.

As we have implied earlier, worry is a name for a certain kind of

thinking activity, useful if conducted with controls, but painful if left to its own devices. It is painful because it makes us feel restricted, small, impotent. The dictionary definition of worry bears this out: ‘Worry: a troubled state of mind arising from the frets and cares of life; harassing anxiety or solicitude.’

We may say: ‘Some people enjoy worrying. Some people need something to worry about.’ But this is to view human beings superficially. Our deeper urge is for inner freedom, bliss and perfection, and if our so-called obsessive worriers were convincingly shown the prospect of higher states, it would surely strike a chord in their being.

The other point about the limitations of worry—the first was that it can be classed as painful state of consciousness—is that the mist of worries hides from our inner eyes our deeper spiritual nature.

Those familiar with Yoga will say: ‘This is nothing new. All thought does that. Thinking itself is a veil that keeps us hypnotised by its motions, so that we cannot see more deeply into ourselves.’

It is true that restless mental activity that has no spiritual content and is concerned with our life in the world, tends to hide the connection of our consciousness with our innermost essence. But when we are worrying, as opposed to just thinking idly, or daydreaming, we introduce a further degree of alienation: worries tend to make us feel small, dwarfed by events, weak and powerless before the problems of life. This is a serious matter, because it amounts to a repudiation of our godly nature that is always within us at the deepest level and is there to be discovered, if we wish. So we have every right to be worried about being worried, and to join in the old chorus:

Begone, dull care!  
I prithee begone from me;  
Begone dull care!  
Thou and I can never agree.

How can we end this life of inner restriction, that is, rise above it, transcend it, and realize the higher truth about our divine nature? Let us be practical. First, we need action on the inner plane. Moses parted the waves of the Red Sea by raising his rod. Thought-waves can, with

practice, be influenced more easily than sea-waves, by applying the inner power of the spiritual practices. We need above all a strong practice that will induce us to sit still for a short while, and replace the present train of thoughts with something potent and beneficial.

We are invited to do our first practice to banish worries—that is, to end the tyranny of unconscious thinking. The practice is to sit still and serene, and, after a few deep breaths, to make a little picture as we are breathing. The picture is: As we are breathing in, preferably through the nostrils, to imagine that we are drawing the breath slowly up a central path in the body, which begins with the navel, and passes up through the heart region, neck and face, to reach its end point at the spot between our eyebrows.

Make this picture, or feel in imagination this motion, on your in-breath, that is, drawing the breath up as if through a central path, beginning at the navel and ending at the spot between the brows. Then, with the out-breath, just release it gently, normally, with no mental picture.

This practice will calm the mind, and set up a current that is strong and pure. First it will be felt alongside the aimless thoughts, and then, with practice, this central region of our being will draw those thoughts into itself, and render them silent and harmless. Let us try this now for eleven times.

The clouds hide the sun. It is strange how a small cloud can obstruct the light of the sun and even mitigate its heat. If we are on a beach, and a cloud passes, we may need to cover ourselves for a moment because of the chill. How mighty and great is the sun! How thin, evanescent, puny is the cloud!

The cloud of thoughts may be similarly compared to the might and splendour of the divine Sun within. Thoughts do not mar the glory of our true Self. What is more transient than a thought? Do we recall our thoughts of even one minute ago? And yet, these ever-changing thought forms seem to have a hypnotic effect over us, while the true centre of force and attraction within our being, the centre of bliss and light, seems to be non-existent.

The next practice is one that will strengthen us in the midst of worries, help to banish them, and eventually give us power to end the

worrying habit. In this practice we learn to assert our innate superiority to the passing thoughts, by taking our stand on the reality of our true being.

Once again take a few deep breaths, and become aware of the movement of the thoughts. Know what you are thinking. Observe the pictures forming and fading in your mind. But also know: These pictures, these forms, this internal chatter, is different from me, who sees all. They are no better than passing illusions. Therefore, when the thought pictures come up, we say:

OM. It is an illusion. I do not want it. OM

When we have had a little experience of this practice, we will find ourselves more vividly aware of our mental processes, and more empowered to give a direction to our thoughts, and later, our feelings. We will reach a higher degree of awareness, a step towards real inner freedom. Devote five minutes to this exercise, aiming at sufficient mental calm and clarity that you are able to discern the thought's rise and presence, and the will and courage to negate it. If something important arises, it will not be forgotten and can be dealt with after—not during—our practice.

Worries and anxieties come from two fundamental sources. First, we are troubled by outer events and affairs. But then, even when outer things are not pressing us, we still sometimes find ourselves in a discontented, troubled state of mind. So there are certain worries that seem to ooze through from the depths of our being, and they are often related to our unfulfilled desires.

In Yoga, what we are constantly desiring is significant, and it is part of self-knowledge to know ourselves in this frank, undisguised way. But we are then taught to be connoisseurs of life, gourmets in the question of what we desire, and to desire the highest: Self-realization, or its synonym, God-realization—for our true Self turns out to be non-different from the supreme reality, the Self of all.

There is no substitute for this goal, and it is the absolute desire lurking behind all our relative desires, albeit unrecognised by the

majority. All want lasting joy, knowledge that confers on us fulfilment, but if we expect this in the material world, we are looking in the wrong place. Happiness abides in God, and it is the nature of God within us. So we find in Yoga there is a whole department devoted to tutoring us in good thoughts and good feelings as regards the spiritual reality.

There is divine poetry in the higher wisdom, that will fill our minds with spiritually dynamic thoughts. There is a practical philosophy that confronts the great questions in life, meeting them with clear reasoning, and leading us to discover certainty of meaning in ourselves. And we have practices that are graded and adjusted to what we are and where we are spiritually, and that will help us on to the next step.

Now we offer a meditation text, once given at a public meeting by Hari Prasad Shastri:

OM. I AM YOUR MASTER, O MY MIND.  
IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU SHOULD OBEY ME.  
BE STILL. YOUR REAL HOME AND SUPPORT  
IS GOD WITHIN ME. OM.

This is the final phase of our education, the last learning curve: to tutor the mind so that it knows its place in the hierarchy of our being. The destiny of the mind is not that it should rule us, or throw us down. In itself it is no guide. It is too fickle and confused to do us good in its own right.

We invoke first of all the power of that higher part of the mind, which drives the affirmation: 'I am your master, O my mind. It is imperative that you should obey me.' But this is not all. We want mastery because when the mind is made calm, something of our deeper spiritual nature will shine through. We need not be anxious about this. It may not happen immediately. Deep changes in human nature often first occur in the mind's inmost recesses, and they are introduced into our conscious mind slowly, almost imperceptibly. But what is certain is that if we pursue this meditation and self-culture, the mists will clear, when we are ready for them to clear.

It is the testimony of the sages that our infinite nature will be revealed when the lower activities of the mind have been brought to quiescence, and the mind rests in a loving and expectant inward

stillness. The word 'loving' is apt, because we have within ourselves the source of all love and joy, the treasure of the universe, the divine spirit. In this meditation text it is called 'God within'. We might call it by some other name, but the meaning is perfection, power, the most refined intelligence, waveless, full bliss. This is our home.

Swami Rama Tirtha writes:

What you thought to be your home  
Was the cause of your forgetting your real home.  
Oblivious of your spiritual home  
You made your home in illusion...  
What wonder that you lost your sovereignty.

Our sovereignty has not really been lost. We have just acquired habits of not noticing it. Through savouring these meditation texts, the lost memory, the inattentiveness, will be stirred and healed. Something not of this world will shine through, and show us how laughable it was to think we were confined in that little body and mind that was dominated and pressed by worry and anxiety.

Shortly before the coming of spring, if we look closely at the trees and shrubs, we can see countless buds appearing as tiny tips, seeking expansion. They will have to wait a little, but the life is there. So too in us, the spiritual life is here, and it will be revealed and manifested if we take the steps towards its unfoldment. Awakened men and women are people like us, who decided to give time, priority and attention to this supreme quest for illumination, and gained the reward—liberation.

A.H.C.

## LIVING IN THE NOW

In the spiritual classic, *Yoga Vasishtha*, we find the following teaching:

The way to be rid of this delusion of the mind is to fix our attention upon the present moment, and not to employ our thoughts on past or future events. The mind is clouded so long as the mist of its desires and fancies overshadows it, as the sky is overcast so long as drifting clouds spread over it.

Teachings that urge us to rest in the present moment—the now—are common to all the great spiritual traditions. Jesus advises his disciples to ‘take no thought for the morrow’. The 13<sup>th</sup> century Christian mystic, Meister Eckhart, speaks of the eternal now: ‘There exists only the present instant... a Now which always and without end is itself new.’ And in the *Masnavi*, Rumi quotes the saying: ‘The Sufi is the son of the moment’ and adds: ‘He is of the (timeless) River, not of Time, for “with God is neither morn nor eve”: there the past and the future and time without beginning and time without end do not exist.’

In one sense it is logical to consider that reality is contained in the present moment. The past has by definition vanished; the future has not yet arrived. Even in past times, what we experience is always experienced in the present moment, which in turn had its own phenomenal past and imagined future. And what we will experience tomorrow will again be only in the present moment. So there is an obviousness in the teachings that remind us to rest in the eternal now.

On the other hand, the teaching ‘to fix our attention upon the present moment’ is subtle, profound and not to be achieved without deep insight and a genuine urge to renounce spiritual ignorance (avidya) and be free from attachment. For it is clear that in a sense the past has not gone away at all, because that marvellous instrument, the human mind, harbours the impressions of everything we have ever consciously experienced or known—or known about.

Hence any obscure detail from the seemingly forgotten past can flash into the mind in waking or in dream with a vividness that has lost nothing with the passage of time. Such is human imagination, human memory, that the past is gone. but won’t go away; the future has not yet

come, yet looms large in our thought world.

Yet though impressions cling to, and even characterize, the mind (antahkarana), they have no ultimate reality. The very transiency of these mental events, their passing from the unmanifest into manifestation and back again, exposes their phenomenal nature. When the *Bhagavad Gita* tells us ‘Beings have their beginning unseen, their middle seen, and their end unseen again’, this truth applies equally to the world of thought, which alike is comprised of the ever-shifting qualities of matter (the gunas of prakriti), the ever-flowing river of worldly experience (samsara). So we might equally say: ‘Thoughts have their beginning unseen, their middle seen and their end unseen again.’

What binds us to past and future is desire and attachment, for these always refer back to what has been enjoyed and look forward to satisfaction. What liberates us is to pursue the ultimate desire, the only desire that is truly fulfillable and based on the real—the desire to realize one’s true identity as the Self of all. The sage Vasishtha continues:

The minds of the wise are not without activity, but, through their knowledge of the vanity of earthly things, they are without those feelings which bind.

Our strategy is not to manipulate experience in such a way that the mind no longer has thoughts, for the mind *is* thoughts and nothing else. Our way forward is to free our true Self from its sense of identity with the life of the mind, to stand back, so to say, and realize that the passing clouds of thoughts are different from and never taint our infinite and immortal Self, the unwavering, pure consciousness that witnesses all change but is never affected by it.

This innermost consciousness is the source of the reality of the present moment, the eternal now. It is our true ‘I’, ever above time, and self-knowledge is to know directly:

I was, I am and I shall be! Nothing other than Myself ever was or is now or ever shall be! What bliss that I have now come to remember that whatever existed in the past was verily my own Self, and whatever I knew was indeed my Self-cognition! (*Vira Vijaya* 132-4)

**B.D.**

## A Reading of the Quran from the Non-dual Perspective

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THE TEACHINGS and practices of all mystical traditions involve a special relationship. It is a relationship with one that symbolizes and forms a connection with the Reality that transcends our minds and senses. This relationship develops through affinity and love towards unity and identity. Christian mysticism begins with a recognition of the special qualities of Christ, and the seeker is drawn through love towards union with Christ. So too does the Buddhist gravitate to the Buddha. And thus the inner enquirer proceeds through forms to the universal.

The same essential principle applies, as it must, in Islam also. Islamic mysticism has a particular quality, which to some extent it shares with Jewish mysticism, in that the embodiment of higher truth which first draws the heart and mind of the seeker, is not a person, but a book, a written text—what is known to us as the Quran.

Perhaps there is some connection between this and the fact that Islam has produced an extraordinary wealth of mystical poetry, including that of Rumi, and the poet known to us as Hafiz. The name Hafiz means one who has memorised the Quran, and it seems that the poet we know by that name did so at an early age. These mystical writers and teachers are of great interest in themselves, and much of the literature about Islamic mysticism focuses on them. Here the intention is to try to keep the focus on the Quran itself; to consider what the Quran has meant to mystics who have grown up within Islam and what it may mean to all enquirers.

It should be noted here that there is a view among Islamic scholars that the Quran exactly as it was given in the original language has special qualities that cannot be translated, so in this sense all translations are seen as essentially commentaries on the original. With that said, here is what is thought to be the first part of the Quran as it was made known to Muhammad, although it is from Chapter 96 of the current arrangement:

Read! In the name of your Lord, who created, created man from a clot

[of blood]. Read! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know. Yet man behaves arrogantly, because he thinks himself self-sufficient: truly, all will return to your Lord. [96, 1-9]\*

As we may have heard, the word Quran comes from a root meaning to read, or recite. Here immediately are themes that run throughout: the supreme power of God; and that all praise is ultimately due to God alone. The words ‘taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know’ seem to refer to the idea we find in all traditions, that the purpose of revealed scripture is to tell us something we cannot know otherwise, about the higher truth and ultimate source of ethics. If we want to know about material and rational things, our senses and minds can tell us. But what is true transcendentally is beyond them. Our minds cannot know if there is a higher reality or how to approach that. The first role of revealed texts is to tell us that there is something beyond, and to indicate that the way to live in harmony and approach that is through ethical living and self-purification and devotion. This is the basis of religion as both an ethical code for all to live by, and as the starting point for those inclined to dedicate themselves to a personal search.

A recurring theme of the Quran is that God knows what is in our minds and our true motives.

Say, ‘God knows everything that is in your heart, whether you conceal it or reveal it; He knows everything that the heavens and earth contain; God has power over all things.’ [3, 29]

There are many references to earlier revelations:

He who purifies himself, who remembers the name of his Lord and prays, shall indeed be successful. But you prefer the life of this world, although the Hereafter is better and more lasting. This indeed is what is taught in the former scriptures—the scriptures of Abraham and Moses. [87, 14-18]

And there are many references to what follows from right and wrong thought and conduct.

\*Translations of the Quran are from the copyright-free version by Wahiduddin Khan, distributed internationally by Goodword Books.

Those who fear their Lord shall have gardens through which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever: and a goodly welcome from their Lord. God's recompense is best for the virtuous. [3, 198]

Having looked into the Quran, it is clear that the question will come up in our minds of how are we to understand this. Is the meaning entirely obvious, or is there more than one way of understanding it? On this point there is a verse:

There is no deity save Him, the Mighty, the Wise One. It is He who has sent down the Book to you. Some of its verses are clear and precise in meaning—they are the basis of the Book—while others are allegorical. [3, 6-7]

The commentaries explain that the Quran deals with two sorts of subjects. The first concern worldly matters such as historical events and codes of conduct which can be understood and expressed directly. The second pertain to matters that cannot be understood by the human mind, such as the nature of God and the condition of infinity, and these are necessarily referred to allegorically. In this connection, a note of warning is sounded.

Those with deviation in their hearts pursue the allegorical, so as to create dissension by seeking to explain it: but no one knows its meaning except God. Those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say, 'We believe in it: it is all from our Lord.' But only the wise take heed. [3, 7]

This caution is apposite, because it is easy for the mind to distort things, and for those with their own agendas to try to unduly influence others on such matters. As was said, questions beyond the understanding have to be approached allegorically, and here it is essential that we proceed with all care and respect and sincerity. The mind must never assume an authority it does not possess, and it is a grievous error to try to influence others here in pursuit of one's own interests. The only heart we can and should try to reform is our own.

Here another question does inevitably arise, and that is the nature of the Quran itself. Is it divine, or of the world, or partly both? Can we even understand this? Again, this is a kind of question that arises in all

spiritual traditions; in all religious philosophies there is special interest in the nature of the bearer of the message. This is bound to happen because they form the bridge and inhabit both the world we experience through our senses and the reality beyond. So one of the most discussed questions in Christian thought is the nature of Christ—is he human or divine? As is well known, after much debate and conflict, a view was reached that now forms the official teaching of the church, involving the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. In Buddhism, the Buddha is understood to have been a man who experienced a varied life, and also an embodiment of the Buddha nature, which abides beyond all limitations, and which is the eternal basis of all.

In Islamic thought there is an equally central question, on the nature of the Quran. Simplifying a lot, we can identify two schools of thought, which are sometimes known as the rationalists and the traditionalists. The rationalist view is that as the speech of God, the Quran was preceded by God: it appeared at a particular time and place and was created by God at that time. The traditionalist view is that the Quran is entirely of God; it is not touched by place and time, so it was not created like everything else that was created by God, but rather it is co-eternal with God. There was a time when the traditionalist view was considered heretical; now it is accepted by the majority of orthodox Islamic theologians.

It will readily be seen that much complexity arises if we consider these two interrelated questions: how far is the meaning of the Quran unambiguous or is it to be interpreted; and is it entirely divine and co-existent with God, or is it in some degree shaped by the particular time and place at which it appeared to humanity?

From the point of view of the mystics and those who are interested in inner exploration, it is not necessary to be committed to an intellectual doctrine. These issues involve the nature of God and eternity, so they are beyond what the intellect can fully determine. This is where the way of enquiry is to seek to draw closer in love, reverence and communion. What is important here is our sincerity and dedication. There is a well-known passage:

God: there is no deity save Him, the Living, the Eternal One... He



knows all that is before and all that is behind... [People] can grasp only that part of His knowledge which He wills... He is the Sublime, the Almighty One! There shall be no compulsion in religion: true guidance has become distinct from error... God is the patron of the faithful. He leads them from darkness to the light. [from 2, 255-257]

That there shall be no compulsion in religion is foundational. This follows from the principle that what matters is our true motives and values. The nature of God, or the sublime, is beyond the grasp of the intellect. What reason, and our sense of love and beauty can do, is to clear away the inner obstacles that obscure the light. These obstacles are uncontrolled thinking, unruly emotions, prejudices, desires for worldly status and power, and all the rest. It is these that the seeker strives to reform, in order that one may be inwardly open and sensitive to the subtle influence of what is called here the light by which God leads his devotees. This is the basis of the mystic path, or the way of inner enquiry, in all traditions.

We have looked into the Quran, and considered some of the questions that immediately arise. At this point let us note some striking facts about the Quran and the circumstances in which it was revealed, which are familiar to those who have grown up amidst the teachings and culture of Islam. And this will lead us into further reflection on the essential teachings of the Quran itself.

Up to the time of the Quran, Mecca, and in particular the Kaaba, was a place where many idols and local gods were worshipped. At the time, that is the sixth century of the common era, the monotheism of Judaism and Christianity was established in much of what had been the Roman empire. Yet the Kaaba at Mecca was a major shrine and pilgrimage site associated with older beliefs in many gods. And it was exactly here that the Quran appeared, stating in the strongest possible terms that there are not many gods but only the one true God.

It is also clear that at this time and place, the law was essentially a matter of physical strength. Families and clans looked after themselves; and the right to lead was based on the capacity to take care of their own, but for those without strong families and clans, there was no provision or protection.

According to the traditional accounts, the man we know as the

Prophet Muhammad had become a prosperous merchant and respected figure at Mecca, yet apparently something within increasingly impelled him to withdraw to the hills outside Mecca for solitary contemplation. And then, as we know, through him a message was communicated, with a force that has affected the history of the world. As we have seen, the essence of this message is that there is no God but the one true God, and that all human beings should be treated kindly and justly. It is taught that there is a great reward for those who follow these precepts, and frankly terrible consequences for those who do not. Nothing is hidden from God, and in the end everyone will be rewarded exactly according to their acts. It is said that anything can be forgiven and remedied if we sincerely recognise our errors and mend our ways. However if we persist, the consequences must follow. It is a grave error to try to appear righteous but actually to practise deceit and exploitation. In the Quran, these things are expressed in a way that overwhelmingly affected the minds of those who first heard it at the time, and it remains one of the world's most influential religious texts.

As well as being the messenger, we know that Muhammad became the leader of the community that formed of those who accepted this message, and when the vested interests of the old guard tried to suppress and oppose them, he fought and led a war to establish the right to exist for a society based on the principles of one true God and the just treatment of all. In this Muhammad completely succeeded, and united Arabia in monotheism. This happened in his lifetime, and in the following decades his successors took control of the lands that had once formed the mighty Persian empire, and much more. All this is familiar to those who have grown up with the Quran and Islam.

The message that shaped these events is expressed in verses such as these (always remembering the limitations of translation):

From those who repent and mend their ways and make known the truth, I will certainly accept their repentance: I am the Ever Relenting, the Most Merciful. Those who deny the truth, and die as deniers, on them shall be the curse of God and of angels and of men altogether. Under it they shall remain forever; their punishment shall not be lightened, nor shall they be granted respite. Your God is one God. There is no deity save Him. He is the Compassionate, the Merciful. [2, 160-63]

As well as these overall principles, in the Quran we find specific matters treated in considerable detail. For example concerning inheritance:

Men shall have a share in what parents and relatives leave behind, and women shall have a share in what parents and relatives leave behind, whether it be little or much. This is ordained [by God]. If other relatives, orphans or needy people are present at the time of the division, then provide for them out of it, and speak kindly to them. [4, 7-8]

As we see, if these precepts were fulfilled, regarding the rights of women and protection of the vulnerable, this would be an outstandingly enlightened society. The consequences of wrong-doing in these respects is stated unequivocally. The same passage goes on:

Those who are concerned about the fate of their own helpless children if they should die and leave them behind should show the same concern for orphans. Let them fear God and uphold justice. Those who consume the property of orphans unjustly are actually swallowing fire into their own bellies; soon they will burn in the blazing Flame. [4, 9-10]

We remember that these teachings were given at a place and time where the old worship of many gods was a way of life, and where clans and families thought they had to look after their own by all possible means, because that was what everyone else was doing.

Let us return to the most important message of all in the Quran, from which all the rest follow, that there is only one God. It is said:

Your God is one God. There is no deity save Him. He is the Compassionate, the Merciful. (2, 163)

This is a message for mankind. Let them take warning from it and know that He is but one God. Let those possessed of understanding take heed. (14, 52)

They are deniers of the truth who say, 'God is one of three.' There is only One God. (5, 73)

The consequences of error in this connection are correspondingly severe:

God will not forgive anyone for associating something with Him, while

He will forgive whoever He wishes for anything besides that. Whoever ascribes partners to God is guilty of a monstrous sin. (4, 48)

What then are the consequences of right thought and action? On this we find passages such as these:

As for those who believe and do good works, We shall make them enter gardens through which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever; therein they shall have pure spouses, and We shall admit them into a dense shade. [4, 57]

Those who fear their Lord shall have gardens through which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever: and a goodly welcome from their Lord. [3, 198]

For those who believe and do good deeds—We do not let the reward of anyone who does a good deed go to waste—they shall dwell in the gardens of eternity where rivers flow at their feet. Reclining upon raised couches, they will be adorned with bracelets of gold, and will wear green robes of fine silk and heavy brocade. An excellent reward and an excellent resting place! [18, 30-33]

This is a small sample of many such verses. So, if we want to dedicate ourselves to the pursuit of truth and goodness, what does this mean for us?

Firstly, we may be assured that we are to be guided by the essential principle that there is only one God and the way is devotion to God alone. It would be an imperfection then, to make an idol, or an end in itself, of the gardens of paradise, and to seek to please God in order to enjoy them. Our dedication to Truth is to be for the sake of Truth, not gardens of paradise, however sublime. And we remember that the nature of eternity, it is accepted, falls within what can only be spoken of allegorically. From this it follows that paradise is to be understood along the lines of closeness to God. Closeness to God is certainly where ordinary thoughts and words are inadequate. The mystic strives to restrain the individual will and mind and give way to the universal—this is the starting point of mysticism in all traditions.

Common to all the genuine schools is the advice that here the individual must proceed with great respect and care, and will need guidance. It is essential not to be tricked by whims and idiosyncrasies

that actually spring from the imperfect mind. So at this point, Christians and Buddhists will attend with much care to the example and teachings of their ideal, and their spiritual directors, if they have one. And seekers in the Islamic tradition are most careful to follow the Quranic injunctions to be fair and kind, and most of all, never to give the reverence due to God and God alone to anyone or anything else. A sincere enquirer might read such verses as these with much interest:

The satisfaction of worldly desires through women, and children, and heaped-up treasures of gold and silver, and pedigreed horses, and cattle and lands is attractive to people. All this is the provision of the worldly life; but the most excellent abode is with God. Say, 'Shall I tell you of something better than all of these? For the God-fearing, there are gardens in nearness to their God with rivers flowing through them where they shall live forever with pure spouses and the goodwill of God...' The only true religion in God's sight is complete submission to God. [3, 14-19]

One verse refers specifically to something beyond anything the mind can imagine:

God has promised the believers, both men and women, gardens through which rivers flow, wherein they will abide, and fine dwelling places in gardens of eternity. But the good pleasure of God is greater still. That is the supreme achievement. [9, 72]

Here, what cannot be indicated in words and only hinted at as 'the good pleasure of God', is said to be the supreme achievement. One can appreciate the guidance and comfort such verses could give to someone who has grown up with or into the teachings of the Quran and is seeking to draw nearer to Truth, remembering always that God and the infinite are beyond any ideas that can be formed in the mind.

Something more follows from what is repeatedly said in the Quran—that God knows what is in our hearts, that is, our true motives, whatever we may say or do outwardly. Everything that happens in our mind then is known and revealed to God. It follows from this that God is the inner light that illumines the mind, and that God is the one who knows our thoughts from within. Thoughts and experiences come into the mind; impulses to pursue our individual pleasures and interests arise

in the mind; the understanding that it would be better to act morally according to the universal good, also appears in the mind. We have the feeling called conscience that we are divided against our deeper self if we do not act morally. All this is illumined equally and known from within, by God. Thus God is the true light and knower in us. Here again we have reached the mystic idea found in all traditions that God is our true and higher self.

The critical point here is that this does not mean that our mind or anything individualised about us is God; everything limited in the mind is precisely what is not God, and what is not our true Self. Again, we have reached the limit of reason and language, and the sincere seeker will proceed with the utmost respect and self-restraint. In the Quran is a well-known verse on the presence of God within:

We created man—We know the promptings of his soul, and are closer to him than his jugular vein... [50, 16]

The seeker knows that God, supreme Truth, is a reality and a power infinitely greater than the individual. And it is also understood that what keeps us away from a full realization of this reality are the defects of our own hearts. It is the shreds of insincerity and reservation and clinging to limited objectives that prevent us from giving ourselves wholly and solely to Reality.

The Quran emphasizes that God knows entirely our inner world; when we make sincere efforts, anything can be resolved. Anything we hold back from God, anywhere that we give the recognition due to God to anything else, precisely this will keep us from the paradise of no distance from God.

Another feature of Islamic mysticism of which the roots are found in the Quran is the importance of remembering God.

Remember your Lord deep in your very soul, in all humility and awe, without raising your voice, morning and evening—do not be one of the heedless. [7, 205]

Those who believe and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of God—surely in the remembrance of God hearts can find comfort. [13, 28]

I have chosen you. So listen to what is being revealed. I am God. There is no deity save Me; so worship Me alone, and say your prayers in My remembrance. [20, 13-14]

In the teachings of the Islamic mystics, sometimes collectively known as the Sufis, we find that two fundamental practices are to remember God, and to depend entirely on God. Sometimes this remembering takes the form of repeating, or chanting together, His name and verses about Him, but essentially remembrance of God is to be practised at all times. Standing on this basis, the main challenge is to deal with the instabilities and disturbances of the lower mind. The foundations of all this are found expressed in the Quran with a force that still does literally change the world, outwardly and inwardly. A dedicated seeker in the Islamic tradition may open the Quran and find words like these, speaking directly to the heart:

Thus We have sent among you a Messenger of your own to recite Our revelations to you, purify you and teach you the Book and wisdom, and to teach you what you did not know. So remember Me; I will remember you. Be thankful to Me and do not be ungrateful. [2, 151-2]

Finally, we might conclude with the 35th verse of chapter 24, widely known as The Verse of Light. Among the mystics who have reflected at length on this is Al Ghazzali.

God is the light of the heavens and the earth.  
His light may be compared to a niche containing a lamp,  
the lamp inside a crystal of star-like brilliance  
lit from a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west.  
The [luminous] oil is as if ready to burn  
without [fire] even touching it.  
Light upon light;  
God guides to His light whom He will.  
God draws such comparisons for mankind;  
God has full knowledge of everything.

**P.H.**

## Sayings of Saints Universal

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A SELECTION of sayings translated by Hari Prasad Shastri, from the Hindi original compiled by his friend and fellow devotee, Hanuman Prasad Poddar (1892-1971). The original brings together 2,500 prose sayings or short teachings, under the title *Sant V n* —‘speech of the Santas’, a Santa being a person of any faith, country or tradition who is established in a life of truth, goodness, selfless service and inner communion with the invisible, all-pervading reality, realized as the essence of one’s own being and referred to in the text by such words as God, Hari, Rama, etc.

The sayings are presented anonymously with no ordering under themes or religions. They are part of the spiritual heritage of mankind, and in his introduction, H P Poddar tells us they are drawn from several sources, including Hindu, Moslem, Christian, Jewish, Parsi and others.

In these pages we reproduce part of Dr Shastri’s selection. Some of the sayings may seem to counsel a perfection beyond our reach; but their aim is to awaken a potentiality that already exists within us, and should be approached in the spirit of the *Bhagavad Gita* verse: ‘Even a little practice of this teaching brings immense benefit.’

\* \* \*

Let not the defects of the mind, its restlessness and attachment to objects, make you despair. Remember, by the power of worship all such defects are removed.

There are three signs of humility:

- 1 Sweet words in return for abuses.
- 2 Keeping serene and silent in case of anger.
- 3 Keeping the mind tender while dealing with the wicked.

He is a true Guru who helps in the achievement of the feeling of divine love. The disciple must obey the Guru or he will gain nothing.

The sign of a devotee of God is that one's heart, like a candle, ever burns to know God.

The fruit of sin belongs to the one who commits the sin and also to the one who publishes it; do not therefore make known the sins of others.

There is real happiness in controlling the urges of the mind. It is the absence of this delight which makes a man run after joys.

The Lord says: 'They serve Me, who serve the deserted, the fallen and the low.'

Blessed are they who practise compassion. They will receive the compassion of the heavenly Father.

Love even your enemy; this is a great discipline to please God.

Blessed is the one who is abused for doing good to others.

The signs of a saint are that they ignore the evil which they hear of others. They disregard themselves and show joy when others are praised. They cause happiness to others in preference to themselves; they show tenderness to the young and love and respect to the elderly. They never deceive anybody under any circumstances.

There is no greater sinner than the one who deceives others under the cover of religion or who robs others of their wealth, time and energy by teaching false doctrines.

Where have you seen Him? There where I did not exist. I found Him where I myself did not exist.

Self-abnegation is the great secret of love. The chief happiness and good of the lover lies in promoting the good of the object of love.

In the path of God there is restlessness, a keen sense of enquiry into Truth, personal purity, relinquishment of all sins, singing the glory of the supreme Self.

There are two signs of a lover of God: to be equiminded in praise and blame, and to desire nothing in the world from the Lord.

Faith is known by the presence of the following: seeing every object in God; doing all with a view to please God; seeing His finger in joy and in pain, and in every condition to expect good of Him and Him alone.

They are fortunate who see the blessings of God in sorrow.

When can we be said to have offered our being to God? When we have completely forgotten the local self and depend with our whole heart on Him; when we have no other support in the world except God.

The secret of Adhyatma Yoga is conviction of Advaita (non-duality) and the relish of devotion.

O Lord, am I not your child? The father does not try his strength with his child. O Master of the poor, remember your promise in the Gita.

Live in the world—samsara—but do not forget Hari. Repeating the name of Hari with love, treat others with justice. In this way samsara will not bind you.

Do good to others; do not speak ill of anybody. Treat others' women as mothers and sisters. Show compassion to all living beings.

Do not keep your mind impure if you want to have union with God. Do not collect dirt and dust in the form of conceit, pride, idleness, wrong behaviour, and so forth.

Fire be on that artificial behaviour which, appearing to be pure, is filled with taint.

You cannot have God without renouncing all hopes of achievement and ambitions.

Cultivate acquaintance with those who abide in equanimity. They are your relatives and friends. Controversy and arguments are a net; avoid it.

## MAKING THE RIGHT CONNECTION

One of the great aids for pacifying and purifying the mind is the repetition of a holy name—a name denoting ultimate reality in either personal or impersonal form. The practice is often overlooked because of its simplicity, and also due to a certain scepticism which pervades the modern mind, but its efficacy is indicated by Rumi: ‘When the holy name of God comes into the mouth, neither impurity remains nor sorrow.’ For Rumi the pre-eminent name was Allah; for Swami Rama Tirtha it is OM. He tells us: ‘Repetition of the holy name is the one spiritual remedy for all ills. Convert every cell of the brain into a vibrating nucleus of power and peace through such repetition’—be it OM, Jesus, Rama, Krishna or any other suitable name. To repeat such a name is to make a connection with the realm of all perfection. The practice can be done at any time when the mind is free—repeated silently and inwardly with attention. It serves as an armour to the soul, and draws the mind into the spiritual current.

There was once a young monk who felt anxious about the salvation of his father. The father was a miser, whose main thought was to acquire and retain money. The monk sought the advice of his abbot, who said: ‘Ask him to come and see me.’ The old man came, and the abbot said, ‘I want you to begin to recite the holy name, and I will give you a penny for every time you do it. Come each evening and tell me how many pennies are owing, and I will pay you on the spot.’

‘What an easy way of accumulating money,’ thought the miserly old man. He now began to spend his spare time in this new occupation. Every evening he went to the monastery to collect his due until, suddenly, the visits ceased. ‘Go and see if your father is ill’, said the abbot. But he was not ill. The old man had become so absorbed in reciting the name of the Lord that he could no longer keep count, and so he could not come to claim the money. When the abbot heard what had happened, he advised the young monk to do nothing more, but just to wait. One day, sure enough, the old man arrived at the monastery returning all the money he had accepted from the abbot, and more in gratitude for the great blessing it had brought him.

G.C.

## MEDITATION PRACTICE

*A recent session led by the Warden at Shanti Sadan*

We may find ourselves being asked why we turn to meditation practice. All who meditate regularly know that time given to meditation helps meet various needs concerned, particularly, with our inner life—the state of our mind.

There is the need for relief—relief from whatever at the moment is making us feel limited, heavy, confused, frightened or fatigued—in other words, relief from whatever is preventing us from being our normal relaxed self.

Instead of tolerating unresistingly or suffering passively these negative energies that arise in us, in meditation we step back and re-direct the unhelpful currents of thought. We do this by withdrawing more deeply into ourselves, to get beneath the surface tension into that realm of our being where these disturbances have no power over us.

Another need meditation fulfils is our need to merge ourselves with the positive energy of creative peace. This contact with the deeper peace within is like inner food. It not only relieves, but nourishes and strengthens. This too is a great gift of meditation practice. This peace—*shanti*—is not an idea manufactured in our mind. It is a reality which has its source in our true Self. The *Katha Upanishad* refers to this deeper Self as ‘the Self of peace’—the shanta-atman—shanta or shanti meaning peace, and atman meaning higher Self. This Self of peace is not a deprived or dulled state of mind. On the contrary, it is taught as the highest of all, above intellect in its most expanded form.

We are led, in turn, to another need meditation fulfils—the need for expansion of consciousness. In the world, human beings seek to enlarge themselves and expand their consciousness in many ways—through education, achievement, entertainment, relationships, religion, art, sport, and so on. The fact that we are always reaching for, and welcoming, such experiences in the world suggests that our present consciousness is limited and incomplete. We want to rectify this shortcoming of our experience. But lasting fulfilment, leading to the end of our restlessness, continues to elude us—until we turn within.

Meditation leads us out of the circle of limitations and restrictive thoughts, into a depth of our being which not only transcends the activities of the mind, but which is free from limitations of any kind. This conception of a true and free Self is not a creation of our imagination. It is based on something deeper and much truer than the passing thoughts.

Thus, meditation ‘opens doors’. The ideas we meditate on help to stir deeper facets of our mind, and reveal a dimension of our being which is normally ignored as we go about our lives. This deeper aspect of our nature—whether we call it the transcendent, the infinite, the spiritual—holds the key to our happiness and liberation. It should not be ignored, but rather should claim priority, and be at the forefront of the life skills we are expected to develop. For if all else in the world fails us, this dimension of being will uphold us. There is a short poem from the Zen tradition:

Your own self has nowhere to hide.  
When the worlds are destroyed,  
it is not destroyed.

Our set of practices may be viewed as a means to relieve our mind from the limitations of restrictive thinking, to connect it with the deeper peace of our own being, and to expand our consciousness so that we realize that our innermost Self or ‘I’ is the source of the highest meaning and value. If we do these practices, they will serve to open inner doors to the higher consciousness.

This consciousness is an ever present abode of tranquillity and true wisdom. Communion with our deeper nature will uphold us at times when all else is being challenged. Even when our life is running smoothly, this higher awareness will be to us a light of inner progress and enlightenment.

### 1. Inner Preparation

Approach the meditation with reverence and calmness. Feel that you are in the presence of the divine, within and around you. Mentally bow to that invisible power.

### 2. Breathing Practice

Breathe slowly, drawing up the in-breath as if from the navel to the spot between the eyebrows. With each in-breath say silently: ‘Peace’, with each out-breath, ‘Patience’. Do this 21 times.

Peace and patience are qualities we already have. They are part of our human endowment, part of the higher phase of our being, expressions of the innate wisdom of our mind when it is functioning correctly. But their root is in something deeper than the mind. For peace and patience mirror the nature of our innermost Self. Our true Self is never agitated, ever at peace. But this innate wisdom is often forgotten, eclipsed or ignored, as we dedicate our attention and energy to the pursuit of our intentions in this world. When this happens, we sometimes lose perspective and get too identified with things that are transient. Instead of meeting our frustrations and disappointments with peace and patience, we may find ourselves agitated, angry or depressed.

The practice is reminding us of our higher nature. Our peaceful patient self is in harmony with our true identity. So let us now apply our concentration to what really matters, the restoration of our mind’s peace and boundless patience.

### 3. Visualization: The Lotus in the Heart

Bring your attention to the ‘heart centre’. When you can fix your mind there at will, visualize a lotus of bluish colour at this spot, and rest your attention on it.\*

In this practice, the visualization is to focus on a lotus flower situated at the centre of the upper part of the body. The lotus is not only an image of beauty, but it is also a symbol of purity and of the inner unfoldment of consciousness. It points to something that is already present in our heart—something that is full of potentiality and richness. And this potentiality will be unfolded and released within us as we pursue our practices.

\* A picture of a lotus is shown on page 192.

Rest the mind on this image. Look at it interiorly, imagining that the petals are gently astir and unfolding. Devote five minutes to this practice.

#### 4. Meditation on a Text

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

The meditation text impresses on our mind our essential identity—our ultimate selfhood—reality itself. What is real in ourselves and in the universe is one and the same being and consciousness. It underlies and reveals our thoughts, like a sun which never sets. This I is not the individualised ego, for the individualised ego is itself an appearance in the mind, a certain kind of thought. This conception of Self may be accepted by some people in faith, coupled with reverence and humility. Others will need to question it, study it, go into it deeply through its presentation in the philosophy called Vedanta. But during the meditation period, this reflective analysis is not applied; rather, we affirm and trust, and something deeper within us will respond. Our own experience will confirm that we are looking in the right direction and taking the right steps. Spend about seven minutes focused on the text.

#### 5 Closing Offering

It is not hard to appreciate that if this teaching of peace, patience and quest for truth and beauty in one's own being were followed by the whole of humanity, there would be no need for armies, weapons, police or prisons. Conflict between people cannot occur if the human mind is steeped in peace and patience.

But humanity at large is not our responsibility. Our responsibility is guardianship of the kingdom of our own mind. And when we cultivate within ourselves these great thoughts, we create an influence that penetrates and helps the Whole.

So let us close our meditation session by spreading this great influence far and wide, through consciously sending out thoughts of goodwill to all.

### AN ALLEGORY—THE PRINCESS AND THE LOTUS

There was a princess who lived in a stately palace and had all that was needed to please. Her youth and beauty shone like a candle flame and she attracted princes from many lands who came to live in her court. She was well educated, wrote poetry, and her charm was enhanced by her life of harmony, her pure and tranquil thoughts and by cherishing in her mind the reflection of the image of the supreme Beauty.

Philosophically inclined, the princess was not proud, and did not place too high a premium on her physical charms. She knew that such charms are fleeting. Though she had an enriched mind, her ideal was how to confer blessings on others.

She was yet hardly twenty. Every Friday afternoon she would go to her balcony, and occupy a bejewelled seat, sitting with ease and dignity, charming the hearts of those who came to see her. Her body radiated peace, light and fragrance. Her life had been so pure that those who came to woo her felt ashamed of themselves if they were smitten with any coarse desire or passion.

Once a merchant from Persia brought a few flowers in pots. From them she selected a lotus. It was of a bluish colour. Once it was established in her private pond, she meditated on it and acquired light from it. As the lotus grew, so did her fondness. Morning and evening she came to see her lotus. She wrote verses about it, and gave up all enjoyments except the joy of gazing at the lotus. Sometimes she felt that the lotus also loved her.

One morning when she came to the pond, she found the lotus had disappeared. The pond was like a ring which had lost its precious stone, a miser who had lost a hoard of gold, a heart that has become tired of loving and now takes to sensualism. She stood stunned, looking all around, but nowhere did she find her lotus. She said: 'Has the wind stolen it? Has the dew spirited you away, O my lotus? Does the nightingale know anything about this? Sing, blackbird, if you are aware of the thief! O zephyrs, you did not keep guard over my lotus!'

She began to sicken and her charm faded. She lost interest in poetry, music, and even in her personal appearance. Her hair, glossy and



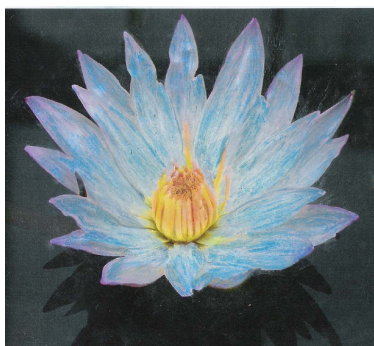
beautiful, was left uncombed. She could only sigh: 'Lotus, lotus, my lotus!'

Her father, the king, offered to provide another lotus from the same part of Persia, but she said: 'No, it cannot be my lotus.' She began to pine, her vitality was slowly ebbing away, like a pond drying up under the rays of the hot sun. The king consulted many wise men, doctors, astrologers and others, but they were powerless.

One day a traveller came and offered to cure the princess. She was persuaded to give him an audience, and when they were together she found that—he was the lotus, She took him into her chamber where they sat together, and after a few hours, the king felt anxious for her safety. When he went in, he found that there was neither the princess nor the stranger, but only a lotus floating in the crystal pond.

Who knows the secret? Solve this riddle, O Reader. There is a secret hidden in it.

**H.P.S.**



## SHANTI SADAN NEWS

Public meetings devoted to meditation practice were held at Shanti Sadan on Tuesday evenings throughout July, August and September, and these have been well attended. A presentation given at one of these sessions is included in this issue, and a recording of a recent session is available on the Internet. There has also been a further expansion of the Shanti Sadan literature available online, including the e-book edition of our latest publication, *Living Beyond Fear*.

The summer months may have allowed at least some of our readers a little respite from the worldly cares, perhaps granting a few more precious hours in which to deepen our understanding through meditation, reflection and self study, aided by some well-chosen writings. From the point of view of self-development, the most helpful writings are by those established in true identification—who know directly and with certainty that the true Self is not the mind, but the great principle underlying both mind and matter, and is one in all. Writings that spring from this enlightened standpoint can impart something of their own depth of wisdom to the receptive reader. Such writings may be discovered in all the great traditions, the criterion being the level of self the writer is identified with. Those familiar with the books and classical translations produced by the founder of Shanti Sadan, Hari Prasad Shastri, may agree that these works fall into this truth-bearing category. Meanwhile, we are grateful that, sixty years after his passing, there are unpublished writings and reflections, which continue to enrich the pages of this journal.