Exploring human consciousness on the path to perfection

Daniel R. Toms

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EXPLORING HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS:
ON THE PATH TO PERFECTION

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State College
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Psychology and Philosophy

by
Daniel R. Toms
June 1983
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ON THE PATH TO PERFECTION

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Approved by:
Instant Karma's gonna get you...
A Breath—
   Connects;
selfless filled dreams
and morning awakens;

Why, I have always been
where sleep and waking meet;

A leaf suspended,
A silent scream,
and enter the Gateless Gate;

No-thing, Everything,
perceiver and perceived,
all join hands to celebrate,
having crossed the great divide;

Now the kettle whistles,
water boils on the stove,
the taste of tea and honey,
and there is nothing more to know...
   Daniel Toms
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v
A path is formed by walking on it.
Chung Tsu

Divine inspiration calls forth these writings and human effort brings them into being. They originate from the glimpsing of another possibility, another way of seeing and experiencing this phenomenon we come to call life, this mystery we come to identify as existence. The aspiring to these very words began back on a warm spring morning many years ago. It was in 1963 that I first realized there was more to my life than what met my eyes. At this time I caught my first glimpse into that boundless, wordless realm which lies just beyond temporal and spatial existence. It was then that I became aware of the beginningless and endless nature which exists eternally and continually beckons for our return. It was here that I first heard my call to return home.

To recall that early, nonsecular experience, the details come to mind most vividly. It was a quiet, somnial morning on which the event took place. I had arrived at school a little earlier than usual and had perhaps ten or fifteen minutes to wait before my second grade class would begin. I remembering sensing, though unwittingly, that this morning was somehow different than other mornings. I remember paying particularly close attention to the weeds and flowers that aligned the playground. The birds seemed to be
singing louder and the sweet blossom fragrance seemed to hang thicker on the warm April air. The hazy morning sun created a dreamy surrealistic atmosphere of which I openly welcomed and gladly felt a part. The only thought I recall entertaining was that of arriving to school a few minutes early, for I was paper monitor that week. All else just joyfully blended into the enveloping sense of being eight years old, without worry or concern. Life was something that could simply happen and come about in quite a natural fashion.

Before having to attend to my paper monitor chores, I remember deciding to spend my remaining time on the playground swinging. As I began to swing, the back and forth motion quickly relaxed my body. My head gently swayed to and fro with carefree abandon in the warm morning breeze. The natural force of the swing's movement caressed and soothed both my body and mind, allowing me to let go of all sense of self, all sense of being and boundary. I then suddenly found myself enlarging or expanding into the whole area around me. It was as if the sky or the space around me had opened up into another region of existence, into another dimension lacking space-time locality. I was struck with the sensation of being in two places simultaneously and then nowhere, all at once. My head felt as if it was stripped of its weight and there seemed to be no more sense of boundary between me and my surroundings. My awareness then stretched into another world, a world fused in sparkling
blue light, and then that awareness became aware of itself. I then had the overwhelming sensation that I was awareness itself.

Although this experience lasted only momentarily, it was of an eternal-like pausing. For an instant the whole world seemed to stop rotating. I was then quickly brought back to the playground by the fear of falling out of the swing. More in awe than frightened, I could only sit in the swing and reflect upon this perplexing but momentous event. Through the power of the experience I had known it to be real, but I did not know how I had experienced it or where the experience had come from. I only remember being in an incredibly euphoric space the rest of the day and sensing that I had happened upon something profound.

Although this early experience had left a deep impression on my memory, I did not consciously seek to learn more about it until many years later. As I reflect back over my life, however, I strongly feel as though I have been drawn to certain situations and experiences that have caused me to seek answers, not only to that experience, but also the answers as to why I am here on this earth at all. I have since sought to learn more about myself and my existence, and the relationship between the two. This search has caused me to question and explore many facets of my life, both externally and from within. In this way I have had to challenge the seemingly apparent and scrutinize the not so apparent. Thus I have learned from both aspects and
collated my findings into a much broader and more meaningful whole. Although the discoveries I've made are undisputed truths as I see and experience them, I would caution that they not be accepted as truths by others on any grounds other than those which originate from within. I say this because when objective knowledge is passed on from one person to another, and it is not thoroughly checked against the reliability and verifiability of personal experience, it often times lacks the necessary fortitude and forbearance that enables us to truly come to know ourselves as conscious human beings. When we accept something on the sole criteria that, "Someone said it was so," we often deny a vital part of our human functioning. We deny ourselves the opportunity to learn and grow in the understanding of who we are. We essentially deny ourselves the opportunity to learn from our own insights and mistakes. Only by thoroughly checking and testing objective knowledge against experience can that knowledge become internalized understanding, can it become for us, living truth, living faith. For truth is not based on preconception or hearsay, but rather sees both sides of any question and then, in any particular situation, knows it to be right or wrong, true or false. Mere belief, however, is the taking of unanalyzed words very seriously, and usually because a parent or authority figure believed them to be true. Often we begin to base our whole life on these beliefs and preconceptions without checking them out for ourselves. Although the knowledge passed on from one to
another may indeed be true and accurate, if we do not check it out through our own experience, we might be misinterpreting its intended meaning. In short, by accepting something on blind belief, we are not taking full responsibility for our own thoughts and actions. Not taking full responsibility for our life means we may have to suffer the consequences of our own errors, along with the mistakes and errors of others. And when it comes to suffering, I think that one stack of mistakes is more than enough to endure and learn from.

'Two people in the Land of Fools were talking. The first said: "I'm no idiot, I can multiply numbers!" The second said: "I don't believe it!" "I bet you this silver coin that I can," said the first. "Go ahead then, let's hear you," said the second. "Here you are" said the first man. "Two and two are ninety-nine!" "Fair enough, here's your money!"'

Sufi Teaching Story
INTRODUCTION: THE PATH BECKONS

My mind is receding,
my eyes are bleeding,
my Heart is leading there...

Any impartial observer must recognize the fact that there are major obstacles that prevent a sound scientific exploration of the full range and dimension of human consciousness. It is a problem that is inherent in the subject matter itself. The components of human consciousness are exceedingly difficult to study in a dispassionate and verifiable way without falling into a subjective bias of the very nature of "consciousness" itself. We are forever faced with the objective fact that the human mind, both conscious and unconscious, is such an intangible and fluid entity, that it persistently eludes intellectual grasp and scientific study. Because of the difficulty in studying the "inner processes" of the mind objectively, some are led to believe that the hope of developing a scientific exploration of consciousness is ultimately an unfulfillable aspiration.

Because of the dubious attitude held toward the scientific understanding of human consciousness, the self-directed development of the faculties of the inner life have been almost entirely neglected in the modern study of psychology. The fundamental reason for this neglect, it would seem, is that the disciplines of personal psychological development have mainly been carried through within the frames of reference of various religious or philosophical ideologies. Those
who seek to find the objective "mechanisms" of the psyche feel estranged with such methods of inquiry. They tend to react against them emotionally, classify them as "spiritual" and dismiss them as non-scientific. Thus, in the name of science, a whole uncharted body of information is disregarded. Under the guise of science, the field of psychology is deprived of knowledge that can contribute greatly to the task of understanding the dynamics of the inner life of man.

It was with this purpose in mind, the task of understanding this "inner" nature of man, that I undertook this project. Although these writings are not without a personal bias, they are nevertheless geared to appeal to our mature understanding; not merely to our intellectual understanding, but to our intuitive understanding as well. Their design is to provide an alternative to the familiar "strict sense" form of investigation and to perhaps help us better formulate a more complete understanding of our inner processes and outer functioning.

* * * * *

Throughout history, individuals have been beset by the feeling that they do not know who or what they are. There has always been an impending unknowing as to the true nature of our worldly existence. Some simply explain it away as mystery while others try to make sense of it all. I happened to fall into the latter category. As far back as I can remember I have always tried to piece together parts of the cosmological puzzle. When I was young I would sometimes hear of a person
going off somewhere to "find themselves," to discover who they really were. I, in my youthfulness, thought this rather foolish and imagined the answer to be plain and obvious: "I am simply me." Only later did I come to learn that my simplistic answer lacked any real inquiry, for I did not know who the "real" me was. Feeling impelled to know this real me, I sought ways to learn more about myself. As the psychological understanding of myself grew, I soon came to see that in order to truly know this self, a fee, an unseen price would have to be paid. In order to know the real me entailed a giving up or letting go of all the seemingly important images and preconceptions I held of myself, and letting what was left to bubble up into conscious awareness. It required a type of dying or ego death in order to allow a new light to emerge. Simply stated, it required a burning away of the opaque imaginings of who I thought myself to be.

From my prior study and practice in Western religion, I knew this dying process, in terms of Christianity, to be called a "born again" experience. From this rebirth experience it is known that the Christian comes to know his connection with Spirit, his relation to the Divine. When he is able to sufficiently surrender his ego, that apparent control of his life, over to Christ, he then feels the living Spirit of Christ guiding him throughout his life's difficulties. His life then takes on new meaning and added strength because his life now has a direction, a goal, and a purpose for enduring hardships and difficulties. And, as
Western scripture records, eternal reward is his who has given up his own burden, his own life, and has taken up a new cross for Christ's sake.

He who has a why to live can bear with almost any how. Nietzsche

Through an in-depth inquiry into Eastern philosophy, I also came to find that Eastern mystics likewise describe a similar type of dying and rebirth experience. This process, often called enlightenment, similarly depicts a letting go of the small or pseudo self in order to allow for emergence of the spiritual or transcendent Self. This experience also implies a coming into and embracing one's true "being" beyond the limited illusory sense of a separate identity. Terms such as "Oneness," "Unity," and "Harmony" characterize this hallowed state. Both Eastern and Western spiritual experience strongly emphasize the new brilliance and vigor with which one then sees and experiences this mysterious and masterful creation called life.

Because my knowledge of spiritual and mystical matters were, for the most part, intellectual, I began to feel a strong urge to know, first hand, of this ego dying experience. In order to truly know, and to learn from my own experience, I began to pay that price of surrender. I began to purify my mind, body, and soul. I led, or as closely as I could, approximated a Christian, Buddhist, and
Hindu's lifestyle. I was baptized by submersion, I practiced austere disciplines and meditations, and performed stringent yogic postures. I filled myself with songs of devotion as my heart swelled with the singing and chanting of praises to God. Through contemplation and one-pointed concentration I trained my mind to reach beyond fixed categories of thought. I likewise pushed my senses beyond their normal boundaries. Through deprivation and consciousness expanding agents I explored the vast regions of dreams, imagination, hallucination, and astral manifestation. Over the course of this intense pursuit I was drawn into many strangely new and magical territories. At times I experienced fright beyond description while at other times I was awe-struck into ecstasy. The indescribable encounters within the uncharted regions of mind and soul truly widened my eye of understanding into breath-taking wonder.

These writings are the sharing of my mystical experiences and discoveries. They are also my attempt at finding that common ground between both forms of Eastern and Western religious and transcendent experience, and telling how these forms complement rather than polarize understanding. Furthermore, they are my attempt to tell how, through the process of "knocking to receive," a more meaningful and joyous journey through life can be attained from any level of experience we find ourselves existing on now.

To effect this undertaking I will explore the many
avenues of epistemological, metaphysical, and cosmological inquiry. I will investigate the meaning of "consciousness" and examine its physical, mental, and philosophical corollaries. I will also explore the dynamics of physical "reality" and inspect the strategies on which we base and maintain our view of the world. I will then survey the various methods and techniques of how to approach a state of experience free from worldly attachment. I will focus on the nature of a "Perfected" state of experience and attempt to tell how, in all honest efforts, to achieve this Perfection. I will likewise discuss the various obstacles and experiences which often result from having undertaken such a lofty pursuit, and then culminate with what one may actually find at the end of the trodden path.

*       *       *       *       *

I will try to communicate the discoveries of my own self-exploration as best as I am now seeing and experiencing them. I share these writings with the hope that they may shed some light on each of us, from our own particular level of understanding. I hope that these writings may help us to perhaps feel a little better about ourselves and our lives. It is said that if the message is pure enough, it can be communicated in such a way that we all hear it, in a way we most need to hear it. May the love contained within these words be resonant enough to vibrate within those spaces within our hearts where we all need it the most. May the universal love which bonds us together as brothers and sisters
spark and unite our souls into the One-Soul of eternal freedom. Thadeous Golas so beautifully stated, "Love is the highest and holiest action because it always contains that which is not love within itself, it always and ever moves to include the unloving."¹ I hope you will find these word vibrations pulsating with love and that you will enjoy the journey; our journey on the Path to Perfection.

* * * * *

It is love that gathers,
And love that falls,
And love that delusion shatters all.
There the sunbeams shine so brightly,
Thru the shadows of ignorance;

And there lays the call beyond it all,
To return in every single word,
And learn: that nothing ever was created without a purpose,
And ignorance is the choice not to know
And so— across the sand we go...  

Verlag
'A stream, from its source in far-off mountains, passing through every kind and description of countryside, at last reached the sands of the desert. Just as it had crossed every other barrier, the stream tried to cross this one, but found that as fast as it ran into the sand, its waters disappeared.

It was convinced, however, that its destiny was to cross this desert, and yet there was no way. Now a hidden voice, coming from the desert itself, whispered: "The wind crosses the desert, and so can the stream."

The stream objected that it was dashing itself against the sand, and only getting absorbed; that the wind could fly, and this was why it could cross a desert.

"By hurtling in your accustomed way you cannot get across. You will either disappear or become a marsh. You must allow the wind to carry you over to your destination. You must allow yourself to be absorbed in the wind."'

Hurtling ourselves against the sands of time, in our accustomed way, as this Sufi story denotes, is what prevents us from crossing the desert of the seeming separateness between us and the source of our being, the source of our creation. We cannot escape from becoming absorbed into the sands of worldly existence if we continue to hold on to a limited view of ourselves. Only by allowing ourselves to be absorbed in the wind, into the vast, limitless realm beyond both space and time, can we then cross and join hands with our eternal nature, beyond relative existence, beyond both desert and wind. Only then will we truly cross the desert and reach our destiny, will we traverse the length of our path and reach our Perfection.

* * * * *

8
Though we do not like to admit it, a basic fact of life reveals that we are all very much creatures of habit. Once we grow accustomed to living our life in a certain way, we continue to think and act in very familiar ways. Our daily affairs normally include systematic routines, such that we eat, sleep, work and relax in habitual patterns. The strength of our mind ties us to our habits and makes us merge with them so that it becomes impossible to tell any difference between us and our habits. Becoming used to these habits, it becomes very difficult to break out of them, whether they be thoughts or actions. Once we are molded into these behavior and thought patterns, we become bound by them. We severely limit the range of possibilities available to us in perceiving or acting upon our environment.

To an ass, a thistle is a delicious fruit; The ass eats the thistle. It remains an ass. 
Habib el Ajami Sufi Saint

The modern day mystic Ouspensky told us that he too found the chief difficulty for most of us was to realize that we had actually seen or heard new things, that is, things we have never before heard or experienced. He said that our basic tendency is to translate what we see and hear into our own habitual language and perceptions. Because we freeze our cognitive fields of functioning in order to protect ourselves, in order to keep things familiar, we usually deny or resist new experiences from entering our awareness. But in order to learn how to cross the desert of
habit, and to begin to break out of our accustomed behaviors, we need to learn how to open ourselves up to new understanding. And we can begin opening ourselves by understanding how our psychic functioning operates.

From the works of Ornstein (1972) and others over the past few years, it is now known that the human mind is capable of two kinds of functioning processes; that it contains two modes of consciousness. These modes, often termed the rational and the intuitive, are also known to be traditionally associated with science and religious experience. Here in the West, however, the intuitive, mystical type of knowing is often devalued and suppressed in favor of rational, scientific knowledge. With greater emphasis on technological enjoyment and advancement, our rational processes are often utilized to a much greater extent.

Culturally considered, a primary Western view of the world is perceived in terms of underlying form or fundamental structure. Because rational understanding belongs to the realm of the intellect, it tends to apprehend the world externally, as a collection of things (objects or matter) existing in space. Our intellect deals with the world by means of discrete units, capable of being counted, measured, divided, compared and categorized. The intellect's primary function is to discriminate and turn the chaos of given experience into a set of manageable symbols. When these symbols correspond closely to aspects in the external world, then there is science. Mathematics and physics are
two examples of tools our intellect uses to turn symbols into workable, understandable meaning. With our intellect operating under linear sequence and systematic order, the world is thus perceived to be fundamentally stable. It appears to consist of "mass" elements that can be manipulated and molded into a higher and more advanced technology.

The Yaqui Indian, don Juan, known from the anthropological exploits of Carlos Castaneda (1968), also gave a definition of this form of knowing, this rationality. He called it the "tonal" (pronounced toh-na'hl) and simply said that it is everything we can say about ourselves and our world. He said that it is everything we can name. "Anything we have a word for is the tonal," don Juan explained. "The tonal is the organizer of the world...The tonal makes sense out of these words on the page. Without it, these lines and curves would have no meaning other than being existing phenomena...The tonal is everything we know, and that includes not only us as persons, but everything in our world." Don Juan concluded saying that the tonal is properly understood as "anything that meets the eye."²

The other mode of consciousness, intuitive understanding, sees the world primarily in terms of immediate appearance. Feelings and inspirations, imagination and creativity predominate over fact and theory. Intuitive understanding is the process whereby we know something within, but we cannot accurately describe how the knowing takes place. This is so because intuitive knowing refers to
processes, events, and conditions rather than external objects. For example, it is much easier to describe a book or a swimming pool than it is the act of reading or swimming. Objects have a seemingly more apparent location in space and time and can thus be labeled more accurately. Their characteristics are more readily agreed upon. Processes and conditions, however, often have no clear-cut beginning or end, making them difficult to describe with space-time symbols such as words or numbers. Thus it becomes increasingly difficult to convey a meaningful account when intuitive understanding is experienced.

When our mind is engaged in creativity, logic and sequential development are only utilized up to a point. When our intuitive processes take over, a non-linear, non-intellectual type of development occurs. This type of knowing is sometimes referred to as lateral knowing or lateral expansion. The growth of this knowledge does not move forward like a ball in flight, but expands sideways like a ball enlarging in flight. This is knowledge that bubbles up from within us and is from a wholly unexpected direction. It is from a direction that is not even understood as a direction until it forces itself upon us. This type of knowing allowed Albert Einstein to make his famous statement, "I didn't arrive at my understanding of the fundamental laws of the universe through my rational mind alone." This type of understanding also led don Juan to say, "Our mistake is to believe that the only perception
worthy of acknowledgement is what goes through our reason."³
Don Juan referred to this intuitive type of knowing as part of the "nagual" (pronounced nah-wa'hl) and said that it is from that part of us for which there is no description: no words, no names, and no feelings. He said that although the nagual exists, it exists outside of our rational knowing that it exists. So for us, it is here within this nagual, within the depths of this intuitive consciousness, where we may find sufficient wind to blow us across the desert of our habits, and move us closer towards our Perfection.

* k k k k

To help move us along in our understanding, it may also be helpful to know how consciousness is defined from both an Eastern and Western perspective. A typical Western psychological definition describes consciousness as the act or process of being aware, particularly of our bodily condition and surroundings. Other descriptions identify consciousness as awareness, awakeness, understanding, and even being alive. Consciousness, from a Western viewpoint, is perhaps best understood to be self-awareness, or the experience of knowing that we are having the experience of knowing. The Western philosopher John Locke defined it as, "The perception of what passes in a man's own mind." From this definition, then, consciousness would include all the information we recall from memory, from dreams, from emotion and sense stimuli, from the random and problem-solving thoughts that pass through our mind, and from the general
musing over our environment as we see and experience it. Western definition makes little or no distinction between consciousness and conscious awareness.

An Eastern definition of consciousness, on the contrary, is found to be much more holistic in nature. All internal and external forms of substance and energy, whether conscious or unconscious, are known to exist within and encompass one category, that of consciousness. Simply stated, everything is considered to be consciousness whether it is known or unknown, seen or unseen. All things and events, whether they are perceived or not, are known to be interrelated, connected, and are understood to be but different aspects or manifestations of the same ultimate source. The process of expanding awareness from an Eastern viewpoint is to come to the basic understanding that everything is consciousness, that there is nothing other than consciousness.

An Eastern view of the world is also found to be more "organic" than a typical Western view. For example, an Eastern mystic would say that our tendency to divide the perceived world into individual and separate things, and to experience ourselves as isolated egos, separate beings in this world, is illusion. He would say that this illusion comes from our measuring and categorizing mentality, and is the source of all of our problems and sufferings. In Buddhist philosophy this state is called "avidya" meaning "ignorance," and is seen as the state of a disturbed mind
which has to be overcome.

When the mind is disturbed, the multiplicity of things is produced, but when the mind is quieted, the multiplicity of things disappears.  

Ashvaghosha

Although the various schools of Eastern mysticism differ in subtle details, they all emphasize the basic unity of the universe. This unity, in fact, is the central feature of their teachings. The highest aim for an Eastern seeker of knowledge, whether Buddhist, Sufi, Hindu, or Taoist, is to become aware of the unity and mutual interrelationship of all things, to transcend the notion of an isolated individual self, and to become identified with the Ultimate Reality, the Supreme Consciousness. The emergence of this awareness becomes not only an intellectual knowing, but an experience which involves one's whole being. For this reason, most Eastern philosophies are essentially religious or mystical philosophies in their ultimate nature. The enlightening or transcendent experience is known to lift us out of our habitual confines and place us in the arms of Divine union. The winds of expanding consciousness then blow away all traces of separateness, leaving in its place a still pervasive knowing of everything that ever was, and everything that is to come.
CHAPTER TWO: GOD CONTRACTS INTO PHILOSOPHY

'Once there were two brothers, one of whom possessed knowledge into the vast and untold secrets of the universe. This brother lived his life humbly, carrying out his days engaged in selfless action working at a fruit stand near their house. The younger brother, desiring also to attain mystical secrets, tried to learn from his brother, but found that the close relation somehow acted as a barrier to his learning. Because of his intense desire for knowledge, he decided to go off and seek this knowledge elsewhere. For many years he traveled from place to place and from teacher to teacher, but still he found he did not yet know what he had set out to learn. Discouraged, he returned to his house. Wanting to forget all the time spent in useless seeking, he decided to go to his brother's fruit stand and buy a delicious mango. Arriving at the fruit stand, he greeted his brother and said, "Please give me the best mango you've got." His brother, radiating joy, looked him straight in the eyes and said, "My dear brother, they are all the best." At that moment, the younger brother was enlightened.'

From an absolute perspective, they are all the best, there is only One, everything is God. But then, how did this sense of duality begin in the first place? To understand this, we must go back to the roots of Western philosophy and science, to the first period of Greek philosophy.

In the sixth century B.C., there existed a culture where science, philosophy, and religion were not separated. The early pioneers of this period were of the Milesian school in Ionia. They were not concerned with drawing distinctions between science, philosophy or religion, but only to discover the essential nature or real constitution of things, which they called "physis." The Milesians, who were called "hylozoists" or "those who think matter is alive," saw no distinction between animate and inanimate
objects, between spirit and matter. In fact, they did not even have a word for matter since they saw all forms of existence as manifestations of the "physis" endowed with life and spirituality.\(^2\)

This monotheistic view of the Milesians, which explained the nature of the world as a manifestation of one single thing, also inspired and gave birth to the philosophy of Heraclitus of Ephesus. Heraclitus believed in a world of perpetual change. He believed the Immortal Principle, the essential nature of everything, to be an eternal "becoming." Heraclitus believed that everything in the universe was in constant flux, continual movement. For him, all substance appearing static in nature was based on deception, and his universal principle to represent this condition was fire; a symbol for the continuous flow and change of all things. To substantiate his view, Heraclitus taught that all changes in the world arise from the dynamic and cyclic interplay of opposites, and he saw any pair of opposites as a unity. He held that this unity, which contains and transcends all opposing forces, was the essential nature of all things, and he called this essence the "Logos."\(^3\)

The split of this unity began with the emerging philosophy of the Eleatic school, which assumed a Divine Principle standing above and guiding all men. This principle was first identified with the unity of the universe, but was later seen as an intelligent and personal
God who stands above the world and directs it. Jesus was later to become identified as the direct manifestation of this personal principle (He came in His image), and "His image" is still understood as the physical form rather than the omnipotent and omnipresent Consciousness behind all physical forms. The thought of God as a heavenly manifested physical Father continued to flourish and led, ultimately, to the separation of spirit and matter and to a dualism which became characteristic of Western philosophy.

This dualistic direction evolved further when it was taken up by Parmenides of Elea. Parmenides was in strong opposition to Heraclitus. He considered the Immortal Principle to ultimately be fixed and changeless, while any perceived worldly change was regarded as mere illusions of the senses. Parmenides believed that matter was the fundamental component of the world and as such, formed the basic building blocks of which everything else consisted. He also acknowledged Spirit, the other half of the dualistic division, but said that this principle belonged to the spiritual world and was thus not subject to the laws of the material world. The rational mode of knowing became prevalent and therefore took precedence over any esoteric, intuitive type of inquiry. The material world could be scientifically analyzed by logical investigation, while the spiritual world was left to be dealt with by the church. With the Western method of acquiring knowledge being primarily derived from the intellect, Parmenides'
dualistic division was, and still is, perpetually reinforced and substantiated. We come to believe that spiritual knowledge is only to be found in church, and that this knowledge is something separate and distinct from what is all around us. We divide the perceived world up into logical categories and then come to experience life in terms of these categories, in terms of difference and multiplicity. Most of us, in fact, view the world from a state of mind where life consists of single, unrelated events. Life is seen and experienced as separate units, each with no relation to the other. There is our work, our leisure, and our family and social commitments. We divide our lives into compartments, much like we come to know the world around us. We likewise categorize and label the various complexions of nature, and then come to know these aspects as analogous to their label. When our mind receives an image of "tree," for example, our intellect simply identifies it as a tree and then perhaps adds another descriptive name: oak, palm, pine, etc. In this way, all the shapes, forms, and various aspects that make up our physical world, including ourselves, become known as being synonymous with their discriminating label, and these labels are in turn experienced as separate causes of creation. Our mind has habituated and been conditioned to outward appearance for so long, we fail to see the spirituality, the divinity, that lies just beneath and within this appearance. We fail to see that "they are all the best," that everything is indeed God.
When we collimate with the cosmic process, however, when we tune into our intuitive channels, we then come to know all phenomena and experience to be intimately connected and derived from the same source. An analogy to this connectedness is to think of the "Source" from which all creation arises, as a lump of clay. Although from this one lump of clay many individual pots are made, the essential nature of all the pots is still clay. All the various objects, individuals, and happenings within the universe, including the universe, are formed out of this clay, out of God. But since we have forgotten our essential nature, and the essential nature of all things, we have come to perceive everything in the world as separate and distinct from its source, from our source.

A Hindu myth also addressed itself to the one sovereign Source. It told how God, or the Supreme Self, looked upon all life as a form of divine play. But since He Himself was all there was, He had no one separate to play with. God, therefore, of His own volition, forgot His true nature and reduced Himself to individuals and objects. He assumed the various limitations of the world and contracted all of His divine powers. For His play, He limited His power of omnipotence into the agency of individual souls. He reduced His power of omniscience into limited knowledge, as did He contract His completeness, eternal existence, and all pervasiveness. He accepted the limitation of self-consciousness, giving rise to limited, individual
While God exists in a contracted state, He, as individuals, remains unaware of His Perfection. But for the sake of divine sport, He takes on the roles and masks of individuals, becoming involved in exciting and terrifying adventures. Dividing into subject and object, and existing in an intellectually perceived dual world of mind and matter, He plays the cosmic game of hide-and-seek with Himself, all the time forgetting who He really is. Eventually however, He awakens from His many dreams and fantasies and remembers His true identity, the one and eternal Absolute Self of the cosmos, who is never born and never dies.

The Eastern philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism offers evidence to support this myth, contending that any universal effect cannot be different from its cause. All aspects of worldly existence are said to spring forth from the same ultimate Source. The whole matter perceived world is understood to be an aspect of divine consciousness, another form of itself, in the same way that a web spun by a spider is a part of its own substance, in another form. Within this system of philosophy, the process of a physically manifested aspect of consciousness is called "abhasa," meaning "a shining forth." This "manifestation" is founded on the principle that the Ultimate Source is beyond both change and changelessness and always remains transcendent and undiminished, while all change in the world takes place on the surface of consciousness. Just as a wave appears on the surface of the
ocean and yet its appearance is still water, so it is that all worldly creation and dissolution is considered to be nothing other than consciousness. Kashmir Shaivism likewise states that for all worldly change to appear within consciousness, this change must be perceived. For change to be perceived implies that there must be a perceiver, or in other words, a subject and object. Consciousness, then, only in its changing (appearance) aspect becomes visible to itself as subject and object, while in its Ultimate condition remains beyond both states of motion and rest.\(^6\)

Plato, it seems, also knew of the one indivisible Reality which contains and yet transcends all manifest and unmanifest being. In his Dialogues, Plato was able to resolve the differences between Heraclitus and Parmenides by pointing directly to this Reality.\(^7\) Both of the cosmological schools of Heraclitus and Parmenides believed they upheld Immortal Truth, with Heraclitus insisting the Immortal Principle to be change and motion, while Parmenides considered Reality to be static and motionless. In order to resolve these opposing views, Plato said that Immortal Truth could not just be change, nor could it just be changeless being. He said that both of these Principles coexist as Immortal Truths, but they are subordinate to Truth Itself, which includes and yet is beyond both Principles.

Plato explained that both change and changelessness coexist as universal Ideas and Appearances. He said that universal Ideas, which are inherent within nature, are
changeless, while Appearance, which manifests itself physically, is constantly changing. To illustrate, Plato separated "horseness" from "horse," saying that horseness is real, fixed, and unmoving (like Jung's archetypes), while a horse is but changing transitory phenomena. Horseness is Plato's pure Idea and the horse we see and ride on is a collection of changing forms of Appearances. Still, Plato knew both of these universal Ideas and Appearances to be but a subsidiary of the Absolute Truth, which was never created and will never die. He knew that this Absolute Principle divides into Ideas and Appearances for the purpose of divine play, but in its ultimate sense, contains all transitory existence within itself.

* * * * *

"One went to the door of the Beloved and knocked. A voice asked: "Who is there?" He answered, "It is I." The voice said: "There is no room here for me and thee!" The door was shut.

After a year of solitude and deprivation the man returned to the door of the Beloved. He knocked.

A voice from within asked: "Who is there?" The man said: "It is Thou." The door was opened for him."8

Sufi Saint

* * * * *

The basis of the Eastern philosophies, and Hinduism in particular, is the idea that the multitude of things and events around us are but different aspects and manifestations of the same Ultimate Reality. This Reality, call "Brahman" in Hinduism, is the unifying concept which gives Hinduism its monotheistic character, in spite of the seeming worship
of numerous gods and deities. At first glance it is easy to confuse Hinduism's many images with polytheism and its vast array of icons and idolatrous. Many, in fact, make the mistake of thinking that the Hindu gods and goddesses are representative of deities separate from the One Source, and are therefore opposed to and in contradiction to the Christian One God, the Almighty. A closer look at Hinduism, however, will reveal that all the various gods and goddesses are properly understood as but different manifestations of the Divine Source. A true Hindu would be the first to admit that if indeed all of Hinduism's symbols and several thousand images of God were valued as ends in themselves, they would usurp God's place. This is not their intent. Rightfully understood, their purpose is to introduce our heart to what they represent. They have only been given different names and different forms to help aid us in our understanding of what is beyond both name and form. For example, Shakti and Kundalini, who are sometimes represented in human form as goddesses, signify the subtle spiritual energies that pervade the whole cosmos. Genesha, represented in form as an elephant-faced god, symbolizes the remover of obstacles on one's spiritual quest to higher consciousness. Similarly, Dhan Laxmi and Saraswati are the representations of spiritual wealth and learning, respectively. Hindu scriptures make clear the fact that all of these various gods and goddesses are but reflections of the one and only Supreme God. Because we as humans often need to be reminded of what is
ultimately image-less, God in His infinite glory has granted us these various manifestations of Himself, though not without one small but significant warning: "I (alone) am the Lord thy God,...Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:2-3). Village priests in India frequently open their temple worship with the following beloved invocation:

O Lord, forgive three sins that are due to my human limitations:
Thou are everywhere, but I worship you here;
Thou are without form, but I worship you in these forms;
Thou needest no praise, yet I offer you these prayers and salutations.
Lord, forgive three sins that are due to my human limitations.9

* * * * *

'Once upon a time, a highly revered holy man was inspiring his students with the notion that "all is God," that there is nothing other than God. One particular student left the teaching hall with this new insight, with the understanding that he and everything is God.

Walking into the street, the student saw a herd of elephants coming toward him. He told himself, "I have nothing to fear, for I am God, the lead elephant is God, and God would not harm God." Just then, the elephant herder interrupted his musing by shouting, "Get out of the way, you idiot!" The lead elephant then hit the student with his trunk, throwing him to the side of the road.

Later, the student asked his teacher why the incident occurred, if God is indeed everything. The holy man responded: "Why did you fail to heed the word of God telling you to get out of the way?"

Buddhist Teaching Story
I saw a child
  carrying a light.
I asked him where
  he had brought it from?
He put it out and said:
  'Now you tell me
where it has gone?'
  Hanan of Basra
Sufi Saint

When the flame of a candle is extinguished, where
does the light go? Where can it go? To open our eye of
understanding as to where the light goes, and to know what
really pervades and permeates our surroundings, we need to
focus the lens of our understanding to a subatomic level.
We need to apprehend the paradoxical simplicity on which
the foundation of our physical world is built.

Firstly, we naturally think of our world, the floor
on which we stand and the chair on which we sit, as being
solid. We naturally assume that the substance surrounding
us consists, for the most part, of solidity or solid matter.
However, if we were to subject our floor and chair to an
electron microscope, we would see that they are not as solid
as they appear. In fact, they are really a whole lot of
particles perpetually moving about in space, with big gaps
of space in between them. When we break these particles
down to their smallest units of energy, the photon for ex-
ample, we also find that they are in free movement through-
out all objects. Sometimes these photons may be a part of
the floor, sometimes they may be a part of the chair, and
sometimes they are a part of us. There is this total interchange of energy always taking place within and around us. All of these particle interactions give rise to the stable structures which we see and experience as our material world. Our whole universe is engaged in endless motion and activity, which is but a continual cosmic dance of energy.

Through the pioneering efforts of Ernest Rutherford's work with atoms, he was able to show that, instead of being hard and indestructible, atoms consist of vast regions of space in which extremely small particles move at very high velocities. The subatomic units of matter were found to be very abstract entities which have a dual aspect. Depending on how they are looked at, they appear sometimes as particles and sometimes as waves. In Rutherford's mind, it did not seem possible that something could be, at the same time, a particle, i.e., an entity confined to a specific volume, and a wave, which is spread out over a large region of space. This contradiction eventually led to one of the biggest breakthroughs in modern physics: the formulation of quantum theory.¹

The contradiction between particle and wave brought new light to the whole concept of the reality of matter. On the subatomic level it was found that matter does not exist with certainty at definite places, but rather shows "tendencies to exist." In the formalism of quantum theory, these tendencies are expressed as probabilities and are associated with mathematical quantities which take the form
of waves. They are not known as "real" three-dimensional waves, like sound waves, but rather are called "probability waves," abstract mathematical quantities with all the characteristic properties of waves. These wave-like properties are then related to the probabilities of finding particles at particular points in space, at particular times. This is why particles can also be waves at the same time. At any one time they take on the appearance of both qualities.\(^2\)

Quantum theory, it turned out, essentially demolished the classical concepts of solid objects. At the subatomic level, the solid material objects of classical physics dissolve into wave-like patterns of probabilities, and these patterns, ultimately, do not represent probabilities of things, but rather probabilities of interconnections. Physics, by way of quantum theory, reveals a basic oneness of the universe. It shows that the world cannot be decomposed into independently existing smallest units. As we penetrate matter, nature does not reveal any isolated "basic building blocks," but rather appears as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole.\(^3\)

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One function of our intellect is to present the continuous flux of energy in the guise of static, discrete objects. When we perceive a sensory quality like a table, for example, our visual apparatus is condensing trillions of vibrations into one stable appearance. Our mind immediately interprets this as a table located in a certain region of
space. But the table itself has no such simple location. Energy vibrations stream out indefinitely and interpenetrate with all the other vibrations in our physical world. From the total flux and exchange of energy, our intellect "carves" out individual things and happenings which we experience as sensory stimuli. What we see as solid is not really solid at all. Things just appear solid because of the frequency of wavelengths that our eyes are capable of perceiving and our intellect is capable of knowing. In their true nature, all matter and sense data are but pulsations of energy in a cosmic dance of life.

We can think of our lives as existing as part of a universal cosmic motion picture. Our intellect works much like a movie camera does when taking pictures. Because of the impossibility of our intellect to comprehend the constant motion of the universe, however, movement must be constructed in terms of our intellect's capacity to process this movement. This is accomplished by way of a static series of images. For example, the experience of ourselves relating to other things in our world is a momentary discrimination, a fleeting thought. When we generate these fleeting thoughts fast enough, we create the illusion that our lives have continuity and solidity. Our very earthly existence can be viewed in much the same way as a movie, because the individual film frames of our life are played so quickly, they generate the illusion of continual movement. Just as
cinematic images appear to be real, but are only combinations of light and shade, so is this worldly variety also a delusive seeming. God has written His own script in which we, the actors, play out the roles of our own lives. Appearing temporarily true to our five sense perceptions, the transitory scenes of our lives are cast on the screen of our consciousness. And, what we come to identify as "our" reality is but a sequence of passing images shown against the backdrop of the one true Reality.

Because our intellect processes all movement in static images, the world does not yield to us directly. The description of movement we perceive from our senses stands in-between and hides the Real Reality from us. We are actually always one step removed from Real Reality because our experience of the world is always just a recollection of our experience. We are perennially recollecting the instant that has just happened, that has just passed. We recollect and recollect continually, while being just a millisecond removed from the eternal Present. We cannot, for example, be aware that we have seen a tree until after we have seen the tree. Therefore, between the instant of vision and the instant of awareness, there is a small time lag. Because the past exists only in our memory, the tree which we are aware of intellectually, because of this time lag, is also always in the past and is therefore, in a sense, unreal. Any intellectually conceived object or thought is always in the past and is likewise an illusion. All
perceptual reality is in the past and is therefore, not Real. Real Reality is always the moment of vision before the intellectualization takes place. All else is but a transitory movie, a passing show. This is why it is said that in order to experience Real Reality, we must learn to go beyond our intellect. We must learn to surrender the thought that our rational mind is the sole means to attaining noteworthy knowledge.

* * * * *

Life's carnival of images dance by me, as I watch the parading show; In-between two images comes a clearing, remembering He who Is that knows. Daniel Toms
CHAPTER FOUR: THE PATH OF BALANCE

Awareness lifts the vail
of separate systems;
All differentiation melts in one
to form a single whole;
Mind and matter merge
into one vibration;
And erase the space between
Body and Soul.

Universal Unity
Daniel Toms

Heraclitus, we recall, taught that all changes in
the world arise from the dynamic and cyclic interplay of
opposites, and as such, form a unity. The Taoists of Chinese
philosophy likewise see all changes in nature as manifesta-
tions of the interplay between polar opposites, which they
call "yin" and "yang." They, too, believe that any pair of
opposites constitute a polar relationship where each of the
two poles are dynamically linked to one another. For our
Western minds, this idea of an implicit unity of all opposing
forces is difficult to grasp. It seems most paradoxical that
experiences and values which have always been believed to be
contrary, could be aspects of the same thing.

The principal characteristic of Chinese philosophy,
the "Tao," which means "the Way," is the cyclic nature of
motion and change. "Returning is the motion of the Tao," said Lao Tzu, and "Going far means returning." The idea be-
hind Tao is that all developments in nature, those of the
physical world as well as those of our human situations,
show cyclic patterns of coming and going, of expansion and
contraction. It is believed that whenever a situation develops to its extreme, it is bound to turn around and become its opposite. It is this basic belief that gives the Chinese Taoists courage and perseverance in times of distress, and also makes them cautious and modest in times of success.¹

The dynamic character of this motion and change, represented by yin and yang, is illustrated by the ancient Chinese symbol called "T'ai-chi T'u" or "Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate."

This diagram is a symmetric arrangement of the shaded, receptive yin, and the bright, forceful yang, but the symmetry is not static. It is a rotational symmetry suggesting a continuous cyclic movement.²

The yang returns cyclically to its beginning; the yin attains its maximum and gives place to the yang.

Kuei Ku Tzu

The two dots in the diagram symbolize the idea that each time one of the two forces reaches its extreme, it contains in itself already the seed of its opposite. The Chinese fable of a farmer's runaway horse illustrates this cyclic nature:

'One day a farmer's horse ran away, which the farmer
regarded as yin or misfortune. Soon however, the horse returned with a herd of wild horses, which the farmer considered yang, or good fortune, because he gained many new horses and realized a positive aspect to the initial act of his horse running away.

The next day, the farmer's son was thrown while riding one of the wild horses. Unfortunately, his leg was broken in the fall. This caused the farmer to once again rethink the initial act of his horse running away. Again he saw it as yin (misfortune), for he thought the boy would never have broken his leg had the horse not run away in the first place.

The next day, a roving conscription unit from the army was passing by looking for recruits. Because of the boy's broken leg, they rejected him for military service. Once again the initial act of the horse running away appeared to the farmer as yang (good fortune). In short, the event of the farmer's horse running away contained both elements of yin and yang, making either element only relatively true depending on the time sequence.'

Chinese Teaching Story

Within Chinese philosophy, it is said that we encounter difficulty in our life when we side with any one opposite and ignore its polar aspect. A Taoist would tell us that we need to transcend the realm of intellectual concepts which, at any one time, represents one side of any polar pair. By transcending opposites, he would say, we can become aware of the relativity and unitive relationship of all opposites. In practical terms, this means knowing that when we emphasize a positive, we are at the same time creating a negative. By siding with any one position, we also deny its opposite side. In fact, just by the very act of focusing our attention on any one concept, we create its opposite. As Lao Tzu said, "When all in the world understand beauty to be beautiful, then ugliness exists; when all understand goodness to be good, then evil exists."
When the Chinese mind of Tao came in contact with Indian thought, in the form of Buddhism, a special kind of spiritual discipline arose. Around the turn of the 13th century, Japan cultivated these two philosophies under the name of Zen. Zen, which is understood as the very essence of life itself, teaches that when we merge all pairs of opposites within ourselves, we merge with the universe and realize our true identity. It tells that, although we live in a supposed world of opposites: good and bad, loss and gain, pleasure and pain, just beneath this level of opposition lies a sea of tranquility in which all things are complimentary rather than contradictory. Zen tells us we can then realize that good and evil, pleasure and pain, life and death, are not absolute experiences belonging to different categories, but are merely two sides of the same reality, extreme parts of a single whole.

Don Juan once spoke to Carlos on the nature of opposites saying, "From the moment we become all tonal (rational), we begin making pairs. We sense our two sides, but we always represent them with items on the tonal. We say that the two parts of us are the soul and body. Or mind and matter. Or good and evil. God or Satan. We never realize, however, that we are merely pairing things on the tonal, very much like pairing coffee and tea, or bread and tortillas, or chili and mustard. I tell you, we are weird animals. We get carried away in our madness and believe ourselves to be making perfect sense."
If we are able to stand back sufficiently far enough to observe the cause and effect relationship in our experiences, we can see that what is happening to us is merely a swing of alternating conditions. We can see that we are just swinging back and forth like pendulums. Because we generally insist on thinking of ourselves as only good and kind individuals, our pendulum is most always skewed to one side. If, on the other hand, we have abandoned our morals and function solely by our animal instincts, our pendulum may be skewed to the other extreme. We may see ourselves, or be looked upon by others, as being bad or evil individuals. Perhaps though for most of us, our pendulum alternates back and forth between these two extremes. At any given time we may see ourselves as manifesting either "good" or "bad" qualities. The goal of a yogic or disciplined life, however, is to reach a point that is midway between our conceptually conceived categories of good and bad, right and wrong. It is to reach the point that is right in the middle of our pendulum's swing.

Physics has shown us that the exchange of energy resulting from the collision of any two polar pairs will always seek to achieve a state of balance. Yogic science is similarly directed toward achieving this same balance. Yogic discipline is directed toward the space in-between polar extremes, the space where all opposites maintain an equilibrium. To reach this midpoint is to reach what is sometimes referred to as "zero consciousness," or that space.
where all opposites are balanced and contained. By starting with a "wholeness," perhaps it will be easier to illustrate the process of balancing and containing opposites.

From a wholeness, out of the bosom of the Infinite Source, there emerged two halves: a realm of light and a realm of darkness. Although both of these halves complete the whole, our tendency, for the most part, is to try and augment the light and suppress the dark. We try to block out any evil images that exist within our consciousness, while at the same time we want to illumine our sense of righteousness. From the other extreme, a so-called "wicked" or "evil" person has accepted the reality of darkness existing within himself, though his drawback is that he has become attached to this evil aspect. In much the same way, many of us get attached to the polar opposite of evil, which is goodness. We become attached to a righteous image of ourselves while at the same time we deny our "yin" side. In either case, we deny the fact that the other extreme also exists equally within our consciousness.

Much of the contemporary Western mentality, it seems, wants to either trample evil underfoot or else succumb to it and enjoy its limited fruits. When we seek to stamp out evil, however, this suggests that there has not as yet been a resolving or understanding of evil existing within our own mind. Because of this denial, every evil that is manifested before us can be said to be there because we refuse to conceive of it being a part of our own nature. Most of us with
good intentions are, in fact, trying to eliminate the evil we see around us. The feeling arises within us which says, "If I fight evil on the outside, it will not get to my inside." Thus the seduction of evil lies precisely in the fact that it involves us trying to eliminate it or deny that it also exists within ourselves. Evil continues to play a major role in our lives when we refuse to take responsibility for it. True salvation from evil is brought about only by accepting its reality as a half of our own true nature, and by not acting on it to feed it energy. If we would only acknowledge and accept the fact that evil exists within us, without becoming attached to its fruits, it would eventually vanish from our conscious awareness, and we would no longer come into contact with it.

To be "whole" means that we must be willing to conceive of, to contain within ourselves, that which is "other than" what we normally think, feel, and act upon. Being whole means consciously knowing that when we emphasize a positive, we are at the same time creating a negative. It means knowing that whenever we choose an ideal of knowledge, we must also accept the ignorance that is other than that knowledge. When we emphasize an ideal of holiness, we must live with the sin that is its companion. When we side with an extreme of pleasure, we must accept the responsibility for having created its opposite, pain. Whenever we deny containing any polar extreme, then there is a contraction of awareness and we become dense and remain fixed within our-
selves. And since we have no control over what we have denied, all of the denied aspects of our life enter into our awareness. So when we deny evil, we are then forced to live in a world of sin, suffering, and ignorance.

Only when we remain constantly open and unresisting to negatives are we not compelled to dwell upon them. If we know and accept the fact that ugliness is always within us, we are then free to create beauty. If we know that ignorance is always within us, then we are free to emphasize intelligence. All potential opposites exist equally within each of us. All opposites equally exist within the sinner and the saint, for both are but polar manifestations of a divine unity. One main difference, however, is that the saint has learned to contain both "good" and "bad" within himself, while the sinner is still stuck on the extreme of "bad." The sinner has not yet chosen to consciously balance himself with the "good" aspect which also exists equally within himself.

Nothing that enters our awareness ever needs to be rejected or categorized, but only accepted as part of the omnipotent plan: death as well as life, sin as well as holiness, wisdom as well as folly. In fact, if there was no ignorance, there would be no wisdom. Everything is necessary; everything needs only our agreement, our acceptance, our loving understanding, and then nothing can harm us. We can then look upon all the negatives in our life as a teaching, as a reminder not to resist them in our mind. Only in
this way will we truly learn to love every aspect of God's creation. Only then will we experience our divinity and truly be glad to belong to this prolific and most perfect process.

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Whether it is described in Chinese philosophy as "Tao," in Hinduism as "Brahman," in Buddhism as "Dharmakaya," in Sufism as "The Path," in Christianity as "becoming Perfect," or simply stated as Zen, the fundamental direction of all these paths is to pass beyond the world of opposites, a world built up by our intellectual distinctions. And, both the pursuit and the goal of these paths is to realize the spiritual world of nondistinction, which is Absolute Perfection.

Zen endeavors to help us along on our path to Perfection by continually pointing in this absolute direction. It tells us very softly that, "Things are as they are, the coldness of ice and the sound of rain, the fall of leaves and the silence of the sky. These ultimate things, never to be questioned, or if questioned, never to be explained. When we know them, our relations to them, their uses and misuses, their associated pleasures and pains are all forgotten."

From paradox to paradox, not being anti or pro, by holding no opinions, the knower becomes the known;

Neither objective nor subjective, the transcendence of space and time, no more longing, no more loathing, and All is yours and mine;
Nothing to be lacking,
nothing in excess,
with passivity there is movement,
with activity there is rest;

Neither grasping nor rejecting,
the singer becomes the song,
bringing the mind to one-point,
coalesces right and wrong;

From darkness comes enlightening,
as in the merging of yin and yang,
in poverty there are riches,
in losing there is gain;

By now you must have guessed it,
the awakening amidst the nap,
the sound of silent thunder,
sometimes called the One Hand Clap.
Paradox to Paradox
Daniel Toms
CHAPTER FIVE: EGO BIRTH- THE BIRTH OF SEPARATENESS

Who is the reader of these words? Who are we that understand their meaning?

To understand how our sense of individual identity arises, and learn how our separateness from our true source begins, we must look to the development and maintenance of what we call "I" or "ego." This ego principle, derived from the Latin and Greek words for "I" or "self," is considered to be the root cause of the seeming separation between us and God. The birth of ego takes place when we begin to be aware of existing within body boundaries, and when an awareness of our individual self arises.

At the moment we take our first breath of life, we are known to exist in a natural state of being, a state that is devoid of any clear sense of individual existence. We remain in this unrestrained natural state until the age of one and a half or two. At this point a "mine-ness," or the first strands of ego start to develop. As we continue to grow, we become more and more identified with this mine-ness and our subjective conceptualizing begins; I see, I taste, I feel. As we gradually become more accustomed to this individual self, a subtle sense of power develops, and with it, an added feeling of dependency. The poet-philosopher Wordsworth spoke of this beginning development saying, "Heaven lies about us in our infancy, and as we grow to man-hood we gradually forget it." Don Juan likewise addressed
our commencing formation when he said, "At the time of birth and for a while after, we are all nagual. We sense then, that in order to function we need a counterpart to what we have. The tonal is missing and that gives us, from the very beginning, a feeling of incompleteness. Then the tonal (ego) starts to develop and it becomes utterly important to our functioning, so important that it opaques the shine of the nagual, it overwhelms it. From the moment we become all tonal we do nothing else but increment that old feeling of incompleteness which accompanies us from the moment of our birth, and which tells us constantly that there is another part to give us completeness."

As the seed of our ego continues to ripen, we enjoy the natural cultivation of this newly emerging sense as something separate, someone unique. After a while, however, we begin to be shaken from our carefree unfoldment. At certain times a gap or space occurs in our experience of self, and we momentarily slip back into our natural state, free from individuality. At these times a suspicion arises which says, "Suppose there is no solid me?" Because this possibility scares us, we endeavor to hold on more tightly to our individual identity. What initially seems like a natural condition of development now becomes a fight for survival. The fear of not existing as an individual entity produces an abstract paranoia and becomes a very real and constant threat to us.

To help ward off this threat and to assure ourselves
that we do exist as a separate entity, we try to confirm our solidity by projecting it to the outside world. To accomplish this we seek to keep ourselves busy. We endeavor to keep our attention focused outward as much as possible. Feeling the solidity of something seemingly outside ourselves reassures us that we, too, are a solid entity as well.

Around the age of three and a half or four, we have an enormously rich collection of things going on within us. Because there are so many feelings, sights, and sounds occurring, we begin to categorize and name them. This is the development of our intellect. Because all these stimuli are impinging upon us, we begin to select certain reinforced aspects from all the various images and noises. From all of these stimuli we select, and this selected awareness is what makes up our perception of the world. Robert Pirsig said of this selection process: "We take a handful of sand from the endless landscape of awareness around us and call that handful of sand the world."²

Through this selection process we also come to define our own self-image. We determine who we are and how we see ourselves reflected, for the most part, by what we disagree with. At this particular stage of our ego development, we perceive difference rather than similarity. We come to know ourselves through the comparisons we make with others, and we identify others mostly by what we think is wrong with them. We exercise our judgmental mentality to criticize, and we criticize most what we fear exists within ourselves.
We keep looking and comparing until we think we know who we are not, and then what is left we call "me."

If you want to know what he's like—
reverse what his opponents say.
Chinese Proverb

* * * * *

The development of ego is often likened to that of a prison. With each self-conscious absorption, every "I am doing" and "I am experiencing," we unknowingly erect a barrier. As we grow more accustomed to our ego, to our sense of separate identity, we construct more and more bars and eventually close ourselves in.

Buddhist scripture describes six different ego domains in which we entangle and delude ourselves while making ourselves prisoners. These states of experience are referred to as ego "realms," in the sense that we dwell within a particular version of reality. Within each realm we are driven by certain wants and desires, which in turn color and influence our daily perception. We grasp on to familiar surroundings and desires so we do not have to deal with the uncertainty as to who we are and why we are here. We desperately cling to our habits because they provide safe ground for us. They provide us with a safe means of occupying ourselves. Because we are afraid to give up our security, we resist stepping into more expansive levels of experience. The very thought of existing without our ego frightens us, so we prefer to stay within the safe bound-
aries of our prison. The familiar uncertainty and the gross comforts of ego keeps us feeling satisfied, thus we continue to construct bars to make our prison cell more complete.

With the aid of Chogyam Trungpa's expert description of the six ego realms, I have outlined some of the dominant characteristics that accompany each particular realm. These realms, from where our limited experience and perceptions take root, have appropriately been termed: the human realm, the animal realm, the neurotic realm, the hell realm, the asuras realm, and the realm of the gods. These realms are predominately emotional attitudes we hold towards ourselves and our surroundings. To give these attitudes validity, we reinforce them with conceptual explanations and rationalizations. As human beings we often experience emotions from many of these different realms over the course of a day. However, our psychology is usually firmly rooted within one particular realm. Our own realm of experience predominates our perception and provides us with our own unique style of relating to the world. By continually feeding and maintaining our separateness, we do not have to face our fundamental uncertainty, our ultimate fear that we may not exist as a separate mass-molded being.

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Passion is known to be the major feature with which we occupy ourselves when our view of the world is rooted in the human realm. With ordinary passion, there is a grasping, a trying to gain or hold on to a desire. Passion in
the human realm, however, is an intelligent kind of grasping in which our reasoning mind is geared toward the creation of happiness. Although we want lasting pleasure, there is a very acute sense of separateness between pleasurable objects and us as the experiencer of the objects. This feeling of separateness results in a sense of loss and incompleteness, and causes us to dwell on the "good-old days" when life was imagined to be more fulfilling.

The human realm also involves a high degree of selectivity and fussiness. There is a discerning sense of having our own ideology and style, and rejecting things that are not our style. Almost obsessively, we feel we must have the right balance in everything. We tend to be very quick to criticize those who do not meet our standards.

This human realm mentality likewise places a strong emphasis on collecting various kinds of information and trivia. Our intellect is always very active as a result of having collected so many details. This mentality would make for an excellent game show contestant; however, the epitome of this realm is to be stuck in, what Trungpa called, "a huge traffic jam of discursive thought." We become so busy thinking, we cannot really learn anything of real importance at all. Still, the essence of this realm is to achieve some high ideal. There is the ever grasping of new ideas, new strategies, quotations from books, crossword puzzles, on and on to where our mind becomes completely full of thought. This storehouse of information is recorded
in our subconscious mind and plays back continually, keeping us slaves to its incessant chatter.

Blindness to our way of behaving and to how others see us is most characteristic of the animal realm. This realm refers to an animal quality of mind, a mentality that stubbornly pushes forward towards predetermined goals.

The animal realm mentality is known to be very serious. In fact, as Trungpa states, it turns humor into a serious occupation. Self-consciously trying to create a friendly environment, when in this realm we will try to crack jokes or be intimate or clever. However, underneath this friendly facade we do not really smile or laugh, but just behave. We look directly ahead as if wearing blinders, continually trying to adjust situations to make them conform to our expectations.

The ignorance of this animal realm, as Trungpa also points out, comes from a deadly serious and fixed mentality. From this version of reality we have a certain style of relating to ourselves, and we refuse to see that style from other points of view. We completely ignore other possibilities. If someone criticizes or challenges our behavior, we find a way of justifying ourselves. We find a rationale to keep up our pride. If attacked, we will automatically find an excuse. We will invent all kinds of excuses to prove to ourselves that we are doing the right thing.

In the neurotic realm we are primarily preoccupied
with the process of consuming. Fundamentally we feel poor and we are unable to keep up the pretense of being what we would like to be. Whatever we have is used as proof for the validity of our pride, our worth, but it is never enough. There is always some sense of inadequacy.

While in this neurotic realm, everything that appears in our life is regarded as something to consume. Whether it is friendship, wealth, clothes, sex, power, whatever, in this realm we want to absorb it completely. However, we cannot adequately determine which actions are right for us and which are wrong, or what is pure and what is impure. In Trungpa's words, "We combine both sin and virtue and eat them, just as a child puts whatever he finds into his mouth without knowing whether it is good or bad for him." Because we want to hold on to things so tightly, we begin to lose ourselves within them. We get so immersed in our object of desire, we lose our sense of self, though this loss does not originate out of awareness, but out of fear and feelings of incompleteness. With our consuming mentality, even the fulfilling of desires is not enough. We must continue to look for something else in which to engross ourselves. And because we lose our sense of self, we feel unsure of who we are if we do not have something more to consume.

In an effort to keep ourselves engrossed, we constantly hunger for new entertainment, new desire. But the more we want, as Trungpa says, the more we realize what we cannot get. It thus becomes very painful for us to be
suspended in unfulfilled desire, continually searching for satisfaction. Even when we achieve our goal, there is the frustration of needing something else. As soon as we fulfill one desire, there is that empty sense of needing something more. Either way, we are bound by frustration, for we are never truly satisfied.

The hell realm is pervaded by aggression. When we are in this realm our anger turns our speech into a "shower of scorpions" and makes our actions as "jagged as a sawblade." Our aggression, in fact, is based on such a perpetual condition of anger that we begin to lose track of who we are aiming our aggression at. There is a continual uncertainty and confusion in this realm. We build up a whole environment of aggression to such a point that finally, even when we feel slightly cooler about our anger, the environment around us seems to throw more aggression at us.

Trungpa notes that the aggression inherent in this hell realm does not seem to be our aggression, but rather seems to permeate the whole space around us. There is therefore a feeling of being squeezed and suffocated. There is no space in which to breathe or act, so our life feels overwhelming. Our aggression becomes so intense that, even when we hurt someone to satisfy this aggression, we achieve only a small degree of appeasement. The aggression still lingers and cleaves to our soul.

The dominant characteristic of the asuras realm is
paranoia. An asura is one who is known to have a certain intelligence above the normal human realm of functioning. But if one tries to help an asura mentality, he will interpret this action as an attempt to infiltrate his territory. Asuras are very cautious and suspicious of other people's motives. They regard life situations as games, but only in the sense of there being an opponent and their self. They are exceedingly preoccupied with comparsion and are constantly dealing with "them" versus "me." All players and angles are regarded as being a possible threat or a potential plot.

The asuras realm is also associated with lofty pursuits and speeding about. There is an impending feeling of wanting to achieve everything on the spot, and there is a constant effort to attain something higher and greater. To do this, though, the asura must watch out for every possible pitfall. Because the asura acts on a false kind of spontaneity, there is no time to prepare, no time to get ready to put actions into practice. He just acts on impulse, and with a defensive form of pride.

In the realm of the gods, it is understood that, in terms of expanding consciousness, there has already been much growth. Day to day experience in this realm is, for the most part, very enjoyable. There is also a firm sense of being comfortably situated in either a highly developed spiritual or worldly state. However, the fundamental
occupation in this realm is a form of mental fixation based on ego. The more we enhance our pleasurable state, the more bondage around our ego we create.

Before seeing how this "gods mentality" relates to spirituality, we should first have a clear understanding of what meditation is. Chogyam Trungpa tells us that meditation, rightly understood, is not a matter of trying to achieve ecstasy, spiritual bliss or tranquility, nor is it attempting to become a "better" person. He, in fact, said that achievement oriented goals are but ego based and are therefore, a sort of "spiritual materialism." Trungpa stated that right meditation is simply the creation of a space in which we are able to expose our ego and undo our neurotic games, our self-deceptions, and our hidden hopes and fears.

In the realm of the gods, our spiritual practice is based on self-consciousness. It is what Trungpa referred to as spiritual materialism because we are trying to achieve something. We, in fact, alternate between hope and fear; the hope of achieving a higher state of bliss, and fear that we will not achieve it. Sometimes we think we are going to break into a realm of eternal bliss, and other times we think we will succumb to wonted desire. The alternation between these two extremes produces enormous tension because our spirituality is based upon ego gain.

After so much alternating back and forth, Trungpa points out that we eventually begin to lose the reference points to our hope and fear. We start to lose track of
where we are and what we are doing. Our ego, in a sense, loses track of its intelligence. We then begin to make ourselves comfortable and make the best of our situation. Our spiritual practice, which was first an adventure, then a struggle, now becomes a vacation. Halfway to attaining real spirituality, we give in to ego comfort. We become content with our ego pleasures and being where we are, which makes it very difficult to make any further progress in stepping out of ego bondage.

The realm of the gods, as Trungpa says, is not particularly painful in itself. The pain comes from the eventual disillusionment of thinking we have achieved a continually pleasurable state, either spiritual or worldly. But sooner or later something shakes us and we realize that what we have achieved is not going to last forever. Our pleasure then starts to become more irregular and the thought of maintenance again reappears in our mind. At this point we may try to push ourselves back into a pleasurable state, but it will seem that more and more situations bring irritations. At some stage, then, we will begin to lose faith in the continuity of our pleasure-oriented state. We will feel that we have somehow been cheated, and the whole process will become profoundly disappointing. We will then have a choice of working to end ego preoccupation or switching into another style of relating to the world, into another ego realm. This is what some Eastern traditions call "samsara," which literally means
"continual circle." It is the continuous vicious cycle of ego's confirmation of existence. One confirmation leads to another and so on. It is the ocean of ego confusion that spins around us again and again without end.

* * * * *

If the ego were to have no expectations, there would then be nothing to disappoint.

Huston Smith

Egotism is the anesthetic that dulls the pain of stupidity.

Frank Leahy
CHAPTER SIX: ENERGY CENTERS- CHAKRAS

Having an understanding of how our ego develops, and how it pertains to a particular version of reality, the next question is how to get out of ego preoccupation. First, however, we need to know how the psychic energy within us actuates certain behavioral and perceptual fields of motivation.

Ancient Eastern scriptures record seven focal points of psychic energy within our bodies. These points, called "chakras," are associated with different vibrational expressions of this energy. Each energy center corresponds with a particular form of energy, from the first which works with a gross form, to the seventh which works with our psychic energy in its finest form. Certain attributes can also be related to each specific chakra, helping to define the dominant concerns of an individual whose primary energy expressions are located at a particular level.

The first chakra, which is understood to be seated at the bottom of the spine, is characteristically connected with survival concerns. If most of our psychic energy is concentrated at this chakra location, our basic motivation is to protect and secure ourselves. Basic needs such as food, water, clothing and shelter dominate our field of perception. We constantly labor to maintain a workable system and we try to, above all, be able to survive and function normally in society. Although we all must contend with survival needs to some extent, it is only when we be-
come obsessed with obtaining and maintaining these needs that our energy is most prevalent at this particular energy level.

Energy centered in the second chakra primarily motivates us towards sexual concerns: sexual desire, sexual conquest, and sensual gratification. A second chakra person, who Freud devoted most of his life's research to, sees most everything as being sexual in nature. Everything is thought of as having sexual implications and or sexual possibilities. Members of the opposite sex are seen in terms of sexual and pleasure objects, while thoughts and fantasies become obsessed with sexual desire. Libidinal impulses seem to be out of our control as they rage on, turning everything into fuel for their consumption. With this sex mentality being perpetuated by the society in which we live, second chakra obsession usually exists in high degree among most of us of Western upbringing. It is a rare occasion when we can turn on the television or look around in our daily lives and not see some form of sexual situation unfolding. Ram Dass, the Western holy man, put these second chakra preoccupations into perspective by relating them to the Bible. He reminds us that when scripture says, "Thou shalt not lust," it is really saying, "Thou shalt not get stuck at the second chakra."

The third chakra's energy is principally involved in power and mastery; power over the environment as well as over our fellow human beings. The psychologist Alfred Adler,
whose personality theory closely corresponds to the behavior typical of this chakra, saw the dispersion of energy used for power as a form of compensation. He believed that a person who was using their energy for the service of power and mastery was compensating for feelings of inadequacy. With most energy fixated at this chakra, there is usually an underlying "empire builder" mentality which wants to be in charge. Here we want to be the "top-dog" so we can manipulate others for our own personal gain. These feelings eventually begin to pervade all aspects of our life. Even sexual pursuit becomes a form of psychological domination geared toward personal triumph.

For most of us here in the West, the greater amount of our psychic energy is firmly rooted in these first three chakras. Our whole society is mainly built up around survival, sexual, and power oriented interests. Though we may sense that there are more "lasting" concerns, still we find it difficult to override our strong habit patterns. Our habits have become so firmly planted, they seem almost impossible to break. Furthermore, because our habits are reinforced by the vibrations of our culture, we do not necessarily even see any reason to change or alter these habits. Most everything we see and hear seems to reinforce a sense of "normality" for having certain needs with regards to sex and power. It seems that some sort of revelation or enlightening vision must occur before we can awaken to the fact that higher and more lasting interests even do exist.
The fourth chakra, located around the heart region, is the first energy center to have a transcendent nature. When our energy becomes centralized at this vibration center, romantic love begins to change into a compassionate kind of love. As more and more energy stabilizes at this chakra, there is less and less interest in possessing or feeling the need to be possessed. The Western mystic, St. John of the Cross, described the process wherein romantic love is divinely converted into an unconditional, compassionate love: "When the love of God grows in the soul, romantic love becomes cold and is forgotten, for as the two are contrary to one another, not only does the one not aid the other, but the one which predominates quenches and confounds the other, and becomes strengthened in itself." Although in certain cases romantic love can expand into a more compassionate feeling for our fellow man, there is usually a greater concern for pleasing one's partner and fulfilling desire than there is for the more holistic interests concerning humanity.

The fourth chakra level is also directly related to the rebirth experience in Christianity. When a Christian gives his life over to Christ, his spiritual energy then pierces this heart center, and he experiences an "opening of the heart." To open up our hearts essentially means that we now begin to perceive others in terms of similarity. Our experience shifts so that we begin to see beyond color of skin, age, sex, body, and status. Though we still see others as separate individuals, we now begin experiencing a feeling
of unity with one another. The "us" versus "them" polarization begins to melt down to where we sense that we are just different manifestations of the same unitive Source. We sense that we are all of God.

The fifth chakra, centered around the throat region, is where we start turning all of our energy inward. When most of our energy is vibrating here, our only concern is to make spiritual progress. We want to break through the bonds that keep us feeling separate. In the fourth chakra, and even more so here in the fifth, we are becoming less and less preoccupied with our ego. If, however, we are functioning from the ego "realm of the gods," and our spiritual practice is based on self-conscious achievement, then our ego can use this spiritual pursuit as a last-ditch effort to try and maintain a separate identity.

When fifth chakra vibrations begin to pervade our being, they produce strong feelings of devotion. Here we become true devotees, disciples, and warriors on the spiritual path. St. John of the Cross described this process of fifth chakra devotion: "We must love with great strength and with all our desires and powers, both of spirit and sense, focused on nothing but union with God. For this reason David said to God to the end that he might receive the strength of the love of this union, 'I will keep my strength for Thee,'" or, as St. John interprets, "I will keep the entire capacity of my faculties employed in aught else than Thyself."² With our energy permeating this chakra, every
action, thought, and feeling is an offering to God so that we may turn our full attention upon entering into divine union. The first commandment of the Bible likewise reflects this devotion: "Thou shalt love thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind, with all thy soul and with all thy strength" (Matthew 22:37-40). Sri Yukteswar, the exulted Guru and teacher of Yogananda, also addressed this devotion by describing a devotee's one-pointed affection: "A true devotee is finally freed from all instinctive compulsions. He transforms his need for human affection into aspiration for God alone—a love solitary because omnipresent; present in all places at the same time." Don Juan, also in reference to fifth chakra devotion said, "The life of a warrior cannot possibly be cold and lonely and without feelings, because it is based on his affection, his devotion, his dedication to his beloved."  

With one-pointed focus of energy between the eye-brows, the sixth chakra is pierced, and with it comes a very subtle form of energy vibration and expanded understanding. This chakra is commonly referred to as the "opening of the third eye." A Bible reference, Luke 11:34, describes this one-pointed understanding: "The light of the body is the eye; therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body is also full of light." During deep meditation this single or spiritual eye becomes visible within the central part of the forehead. This omniscient eye radiates from the light of creation in its subtlest form.
To pierce this sixth chakra is to have broken attachment to subjective perception. Here we stand back sufficiently far enough to gain what is called "cosmic perspective." We begin to see the most basic laws of the universe in operation everywhere. It is what Plato referred to as "Pure Ideas;" the universal images and archetypal forms of creation. One who has sufficiently entered sixth chakra vibration is in communion with these cosmic thought forms; these thoughts out of which all else becomes manifest. In this chakra we have, in a sense, left our gross physical body. We are no longer identified with our body, or do we identify with our personality. We have at last broken the ego identification of "me" and "my." We have become totally identified with cosmic understanding.

The seventh and final chakra, the top chakra, is where we merge back into our true Source, back into the One, totally. Piercing the seventh chakra is the process whereby we return to who we are, before we were. God, or the Source of All, can be thought of as being analogous to the vast ocean, and we as individual human beings are like the mist, the raindrops that hover just beyond this ocean. When we finally shed our identity as raindrops, as individuals, and let go of all resistance, we can then merge back into this ocean, back into our own true nature. The sage Sivananda described this one experience which is beyond all experience, that of a fully realized being:
I am ever free. I alone am. I am taintless, spaceless, timeless. The world appears like a mirage within me.
I am infinite, imperishable, self-luminous, self-contained. I know neither pleasure nor pain, neither joy nor sorrow, neither happiness nor misery.
I am beginningless. I am endless. I am decayless. I am birthless. I am deathless.
I am tranquil. I am pure transcendental knowledge. I am above good and evil, virtue and vice.
I am one. I go nowhere. I come from nowhere. I abide in myself. I pervade the entire universe. I am all-permeating and interpenetrating.
I am the Absolute. I am non-dual. I am pure wisdom. I am pure consciousness.
I am the limitless, infinite ocean of Consciousness. The wind of mind produces the waves of the worlds. I am beyond the reach of the mind, intellect, and senses.
I am unattached. I am the silent Witness. Free from subject and object am I. The one taintless transcendental Truth am I.
I am supreme peace and silence. There is neither space nor time in me. I am Infinity.

The awakening of these higher energy centers is the real goal of yoga and meditation. Most Western scholars and interpreters of literary passages, however, fail to understand that many literary accounts contain subtle insight into higher planes of consciousness. In Revelation of the New Testament, for example, there contains symbolic explanations of the yogic science. In his book, Autobiography of a Yogi, Yogananda points out that many passages in Revelation are in direct reference to the seven cerebro-spinal energy centers in our body. In Revelation 1:20, for example, when the voice of God speaks of "the seven stars"
and "the seven churches," Yogananda disclosed that these symbols actually refer to the seven chakras and the seven primordial footpaths that unlock and reveal the mystery of our true identity as Spirit.⁶

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Upon the journey of awakening, comes a time to cry, a time to sing;
Piercing the subtle stages of energy, entering the darkness and learning to see;
Chakra One and we learn to survive, food, water, air, hey we're alive;
Chakra Two and we learn about sex, reproduction, gratification, what could be next;
Chakra Three and who can we be? All our energy goes to power and mastery;
With Chakra Four comes an end to the fight, loving compassion, a glimpse of the Light;
Chakra Five's message is "Thy Will Be Done," so all our energy goes towards the One;
Chakra Six opens the Third Eye, wisdom of oneness, an end to me and my;
Chakra Seven brings the great synaptic surge, Enlightenment, Union, the final mystic merge;
Now all cosmic energy is freely dispersed, balance and harmony with the whole universe.

Chakra Chime
Daniel Toms
CHAPTER SEVEN: EGO PRIDE- A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

Have you ever tried to show a misguided man that his vision is narrow? He may listen to you in appearance, but for the sake of his own self-esteem (pride), he will reject what you mean, if not what you say.

Sufi Saying

In order to free ourselves from ego realm preoccupation and to advance our psychic energy up to the higher vibratory levels, we must learn more about our ego. We must learn the various tricks and ploys it will utilize in order to keep us subdued and deluded in worldly pursuits.

At the core of ego lies its most heavily guarded and protected source: pride. It is pride that gives our ego its strength to continue surviving. Most of ego's strategies and manipulations are geared around maintaining this central feature. One method our ego will use to maintain this pride is to keep us believing we are important. To this end our ego will demand to be noticed. This vie for attention is subtly conveyed in a Zen teaching story:

'In an unknown valley hidden deep within the hills of a far-off Eastern land, there lies a quaint and somewhat picturesque Zen monestary. With its inhabitants attired in their zendo robes, the monks selflessly carry out their daily duties. With heads shaved and black robes, the monks give the appearance of soldier ants faithfully attending to their humble abode.

One night after zazen (sitting meditation), one of the monks, named Chi-ke, asked three of his fellow companions if they would care to join him for a purifying five day vow of silence. After a customary pause of indecision, almost always evidenced by first year Zen
students, especially when asked to consider added austeri-
ty, the three agreed to accept the undertaking.

It was understood and promptly arranged that the
four would take their meals in silence, attend to their
chores in silence, and carry out all monistic activities
without verbal exchange. Also arranged in advance was
the use of a special meditation room where the four
could gather for their long evening hours of quiet con-
templation. In this room they would be accommodated
only by a small pillow and a rather antique oil-burning
lamp.

Over the first three days and nights, the monks
passed their time in serene quietude. Not a single word
had been uttered between them.

In the early evening of the fourth and final night,
the monks settled in for a warm enveloping night of
flickering meditation amidst the oil-burning lamp. Before
they became immersed in meditation, however, the flame of
the lamp, lacking the needed oil to sustain it, withdrew
to a faint flicker before completely extinguishing itself.
With this, Chi-ke, considering himself the oldest and
wisest, and imagining himself to be in charge of the
proceedings, angrily questioned, "Who's the muffin brain
who forgot to fill the lamp with oil?" In defense of the
abuse, even though it was his responsibility to fill the
lamp, Ni-Pei retaliated, "Who are you calling muffin brain,
marble head?" The third monk, acting to restore order
cautioned, "We are not supposed to be talking!" Hearing
this, the fourth monk, smiling and with tongue slipping
down.exclaimed, "I'm the only one that did not speak!"

This story demonstrates how ego will subtly sneak up
on us to keep itself, us, on center stage, in the spotlight
and recognized. The more attention it draws, the more it
reassures us that we are somebody special. Thinking that we
are special, however, becomes a barrier to learning anything
of real importance. It leads us to have a high opinion of
ourselves. Along with the accompanied vanity, this high
evaluation isolates us from the higher, more expansive states
of being.

'One day a man reproached Bayazid, the great Sufi
mystic of the ninth century. The man told Bayazid that
he had fasted and prayed for thirty years, but had not yet found the inner joy that he, Bayazid had described. Bayazid proceeded to tell this man that he could prescribe the remedy to remove the obstacles which were keeping him from the joy, however, he added that he (the man) would not be able to carry out the prescribed cure.

"Please tell me, for I will try anything," pleaded the would be illuminate. Bayazid then said, "Because your vanity is a barrier to you, you must go to the barber and have your respectable beard shaved. Remove all your clothes and put a girdle around yourself. Fill a nosebag with walnuts and suspend it from your neck. Go to the market-place and call out: 'A walnut will I give anybody who will strike me on the back of the neck.' Then continue on to the justices' session so that they may see you."

"But I cannot do that!" cried the man. "Please tell me something else that will work as well." "This is the first move and the only one," said Bayazid, "but I had already told you that you would not do it, so you cannot be cured." 2

Although we are not expected to hang a nosebag full of walnuts around our neck, the point made is that our ego can build up very strong defenses to keep itself identified with our body and personality. Sometimes it may take more than we realize to strip ourselves from this ego identification.

* * * *

Because ego survival is dependent upon our pride, any internal or external forces which act to threaten this pride often produce anxiety. Our ego is therefore equipped with shields of protection known as defense mechanisms. The purpose of these defensive shields is to reduce anxiety, and their primary method to accomplish this is to deny or distort anything which could harm or weaken ego's survival.

Our ego utilizes three main defenses for self-
protection: repression, fixation, and rationalization. Repression is the process whereby our ego pushes down or denies threatening thoughts and keeps them from becoming conscious. Fixation is ego's refusal to move upward to higher levels of psychological maturation. Rationalization is the process where our ego finds acceptable reasons for unacceptable thoughts or actions. Rationalization is principally used to justify behavior or thoughts that are inconsistent with ethical and or religious beliefs.

When these protective shields are rendered inactive, our ego is left uncovered. The more our ego is revealed, the easier it is to dissolve, and the more it dissolves, the closer we come to either a positive experience of ego death or a negative experience of ego malfunction. If we are consciously ready to end ego strategy, then the more of our ego shields that are destroyed, the closer we come into alignment with our divinity. If, on the other hand, we are not consciously ready to let go of our ego and its shields, but they become inactive anyway, then the Western term for this experience is called "psychosis." Many of those who are in mental hospitals today are people who have lost control of their ego, their center of command, without the knowledge or awareness to deal with experience beyond ego structure. Many of these people become stuck on an "astral" plane of experience, much like most of us have gotten stuck on this physical level of experience. Often the psychotic will deny the existence of this physical plane, while we
ourselves are denying the possibility of other potential levels of experience. Being stuck in this way essentially makes us no better off than the psychotic. Both of us are still bound by limited experience. Only by looking to learn how to go beyond limits do we truly utilize our full potential as human beings. Only in this way can we turn our own personal brand of psychosis into eternal freedom.

Another method our ego will utilize to camouflage itself is to have us believe we are in control and doing something. Ego thrives on uplifting itself and taking credit, especially when credit is not due it. A Sufi story illustrates:

'Not far down the road lived a man who was a stranger to no one. One day in mid-afternoon, this man, named Hanan, misplaced his wrist-watch. Because it was his only method of telling time, Hanan searched everywhere to find it. Having last seen the watch in his bedroom, he combed the area, looking for it on the dresser, under his bed, and in all his pant and coat pockets. But still he could not locate the watch.

Being raised in a traditional religious family, Hanan decided to ask for divine assistance in finding the watch. Hanan proceeded to kneel in front of his bed, and while closing his eyes and praying, he said, "God, please help me find my wrist-watch. I will surely miss my appointment if I do not find it."

Upon opening his eyes, Hanan discovered his watch sitting on his bed before him. Without a moments hesitation, Hanan quickly closed his eyes again, and, looking up towards the ceiling said, "Never mind God, I found it myself."'

One of the most subtle maneuvers our ego will employ to ensure survival is to let others know that it is very spiritual. This form of ego pride is called "spiritual
pride. Here we want to convey to others just how spiritual we are. We will often times display our holiness by pointing out to others the errors of their ways. Having sided with righteousness, there is an ego satisfaction of wanting to change others with our spiritual beliefs. St. John of the Cross comments on this form of pride: "And hence there comes to them likewise a certain desire, which is somewhat vain, and at times very vain, to speak of spiritual things in the presence of others, and sometimes even to teach such things rather than to learn them." Rather than acting as a model and from a humbleness, which signifies true spiritual attainment, we think that we are always teaching and lifting others out of their ignorance. We become most prideful when our spiritual advice appears to accomplish this. We reinforce our ego for having done something to be proud of and thus strengthen the belief that we are indeed self-important.

Whoever has in his heart even so much as a rice-grain of pride, cannot enter into paradise.

Muhamnad
CHAPTER EIGHT: EGO DISMANTLING- MANTRA

Although our ego is made out to be a nemesis, we do not want to section off this aspect of our functioning and label it "the enemy." Although we want to dissolve its processes, we want to do it very quietly. We want to begin with a very simple way of dealing with thoughts, not dealing with them in the sense of quieting them down or changing their quality, but rather observing them pass by to reveal their transparent quality.

Thoughts are known to operate on a three step process: creation, sustenance, and dissolution. They are being born, maintained, and let go of continually. This process, which occurs at such a rapid pace, is rarely even noticed by us. When we think of a song we have heard, for example, our remembering is "thought creation." When we hold the song in our thoughts and play it over again in our mind, we sustain its existence. When we finally get tired of the song or forget it, it then once again dissolves out of immediate awareness. This three-fold process spins on and on while keeping us slaves to its unceasing gyrations.

Don Juan once told Carlos that our main problem of getting stuck within ourselves is due to the fact that we maintain our perceived world by our internal dialogue. He said that we choose our paths through life as we talk to ourselves, and thus we repeat the same choices over and over until the day we die. "We keep repeating the same choices
because we keep repeating the same internal talk over and over." Don Juan made it clear, however, that a warrior (an aspirant who endeavors to break ego identification) is aware of this process and takes strides to stop his internal talk. Carlos questioned, "How can I stop talking to myself?" "First of all you must use your ears to take some of the burden from your eyes," don Juan instructed. "We have been using our eyes to judge the world since the time we were born. We talk to others and to ourselves mainly about what we see. A warrior is aware of that and listens to the world; he listens to the sounds of the world. The world is such and such or so and so only because we tell ourselves that that is the way it is. If we stop telling ourselves that the world is so and so, the world will stop being so and so. A warrior is aware that the world will change as soon as he stops talking to himself."^2

Our undisciplined mind and random thought processes may be thought of as being neurotic. Our thoughts can be considered neurotic in the sense that they are very irregular and are forever changing direction. We jump from one thought to the next, from planning our day, to a memory, to a fantasy, to money concerns, and so on. One thought triggers another thought and then another and another. We repeat this process day in and day out, being only dimly aware of the chaotic nature in which our mind operates. In order to stop this neurotic process and to cease talking to ourselves, we need to pull our awareness back to where we can
begin to watch or witness this creation, sustenance, and dissolution of thoughts. By learning to watch our thoughts form and then dissipate, we can take the neurotic quality out of them. With added attention and concentration we can eventually bring all of our internal dialogue under our control.

As we begin to watch our thoughts come and go, we also need to make an effort not to judge them. We should try to see all of our thoughts as simple phenomena, whether they are pious, evil, sexual, domestic, or whatever. We should not relate to them as belonging to a particular category, as being good or bad, right or wrong, for when we relate to our thoughts obsessively, we then feed them energy. By categorizing and feeding our thoughts energy, they then become very powerful and continue to bid for attention; and they need this energy and attention to survive.

* * * *

The next step in dealing with thoughts is to create a constant wave to run through the choppy waters of our mind. A consciously added component, called a "mantra," is very beneficial as a device to focus attention, steady thoughts, and increase awareness. By focusing on a constant, on a particular sound wave, for example, we can more readily watch our thoughts pass by. We can more easily observe our thoughts drift by like clouds in the sky. With the aid of mantra practice, our mind becomes calmer as our thoughts begin to sit quietly. Our thoughts begin to lose their power.
to demand our attention. Mantra thus becomes an excellent device to help us break our identification with embedded habits and ego preoccupation. But just as important as concentrating our mind, is what we concentrate it on. Although we can essentially focus our mind on anything, only certain word and sound vibrations qualify as mantra. A true mantra will connect us with the Divine, with the higher vibratory levels of consciousness. As a result of this sacred connection, it helps free us from our worldly attachments.

The repetition of mantra sounds and phrases has a two-fold significance. Firstly, almost all mantra sounds were derived from the Sanskrit alphabet, with the main emphasis on the vibrational quality of the sound. Many mantras were, in fact, specially designed to work with a particular chakra or vibratory plane of consciousness. Therefore, there are "power" mantras to help strengthen our will, "love" mantras to open our heart, and "meditation" mantras to calm our mind. Although there are many mantras to choose from, it is best, if possible, to repeat a mantra given by a Guru: a sixth or seventh chakra being. To repeat a mantra given by a highly evolved being is to repeat a "live" or "conscious" mantra. This means that the mantra is endowed with, and vibrates with, this being's sixth or seventh chakra energy. Such a mantra has the power to quickly free us from our ego by cutting through all of our existing attachments. One such "live" mantra is "Om Namah Shivaya," which was bestowed by the sovereign Guru Swami
Muktananda Paramahamsa. It means "I bow to Shiva." Shiva represents our own true Self, that inner bliss and boundless love which exists eternally within each of us. Other examples of mantra are "Om," "Ram," and "Aum," the one basic sound of creation, the sound out of which all other sounds originate. Another very powerful Tibetan mantra is "Aum Mani Padme Hum" (pronounced Ah-owm Mah-nay Pahd-may Hoom), which means, "The All is a precious jewel in the lotus flower which blooms in my heart." An example of a Christian mantra is the "Hail Mary." These mantras, when repeated, continue to vibrate past our thoughts and beyond our mind, perpetually drawing us closer to the goal of all mantras: to our Perfection.

The second reason mantra repetition is heavily stressed is because, when we are busy repeating divine sounds, we cannot be entirely preoccupied with ourselves. The more we focus our attention on mantra, the less time we have for strategizing ego enhancements or dwelling on things that we cannot change. A problem with mantra repetition, however, is that we can "Om" ourselves downward as well as upwards; down into the no-thought of idiocy, or up into the no-thought of pure awareness. If we imagine that some mysterious force will lift us out of the quagmire of our difficulties by simply repeating a word or phrase over and over, then we are deluding ourselves. If our focus is on the quantity rather than the quality of the sound, then the technique becomes obsessive rather than inspiring. If the repeated word or
phrase is used as a means to escape any negative thoughts or interactions with unpleasant situations, then its use cuts off our awareness and creativity of how to better handle our life situations.

When used correctly, mantra repetition should not force thoughts from our awareness, but should create an added awareness into our inner processes. With the aid of mantra, we learn not to act compulsively because we learn to see and feel all sides of our thoughts and feelings. When mantra is used correctly, it creates an open meditative space where we can more easily see and hear what it is we should do next. When mantra is used to provide added room and space, then the vibrational quality allows us to take a much more even and balanced approach to anything that confronts us. The mantra vibration essentially sweeps away all of our doubts and negativities and provides us with a clear vision of the divine.

It should also be noted that the biblical reference (Matthew 6:7) to vain repetitions: "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking," is referring to unconcentrated, mechanical prayer that lacks awareness and devotional quality. Vain repetitions are often of the nature of petitioning God to grant us this or that, or to free us from this or that. Mantra repetition, however, is a technique used to produce quite the opposite effect. The goal of mantra is to quiet the fluctuations of the mind that usually
thinks it needs this or that. Mantra helps strengthen us so that we can better face life's challenging situations rather than trying to escape from them. Vain repetitions bind our soul while mantra spreads our wings of understanding. Mantra helps us to merge and become one with what we really need. It lifts and carries us along the way to our true home, to our true Perfection.

* * * * *

One of the most frequently used methods of repeating mantra, called "Japa" in Hinduism, is repeating the name of God over and over. This method finds a close parallel to one of the classics of Russian Orthodoxy, The Way of a Pilgrim. This book is the story of an unnamed peasant whose first and only concern is to fulfill the biblical injunction "to pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). The story finds the seeker wandering through Russia and Siberia with only a knapsack of dried bread for food and the charity of men for shelter. While consulting many "authorities" of spiritual knowledge, he continually comes away empty-hearted. Eventually, however, he meets a holy man who teaches him to pray with a constant uninterrupted calling upon the divine name of Christ. Using "The Jesus Prayer" (Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me) as a mantra, the holy man instructs him to place the name of Christ on his lips, in his heart, and in his soul, at all times, even in his sleep. He trains him until he can repeat the prayer more than 12,000 times a day without strain. In this way,
the mantra soon moves from his mind to a genuine place in his heart. The prayer becomes a constant warming presence within him that brings a "bubbling joy." To "keep the name of the Lord spinning in the midst of all activities" is the Hindu predication of the same point. If we can divert our attention away from worldly concerns long enough to remember to repeat a non-verbal mantra, eventually these sacred sounds will soak down into the essence of our being, turning our totality towards the Divine.

* * * * *

I do not feel that I am walking at all. I am only aware of the fact that I am saying the prayer. When bitter cold pierces me, I begin to say the prayer more earnestly and I quickly get warm all over. When hunger begins to overcome me I call more often on the name of Jesus and I forget my wish for food... The one thing I wish for is to be alone, and all by myself to pray without ceasing; and doing this I am filled with joy...

If the enemy cannot turn us from prayer by means of vain thoughts and sinful ideas, then he brings back into our minds good things... so that in one way or another he may lure us away from prayer, which is a thing he cannot bear. It is called 'a theft from the right hand side'...

He taught me therefore not to admit during times of prayer even the most lofty of spiritual thoughts. And if I saw that in the course of the day, time had been spent more in improving thought and talk than in actual prayer of the heart, then I was to think of it as a loss of the sense of proportion or a sign of spiritual greed...

Everywhere, wherever you may find yourself, you can set up an alter to God in your mind by means of prayer.

Way of a Pilgrim

* * * * *

Our thoughts become a prison, keep us bound in earthly time, to soar up through the heavens, these walls we'll have to climb;
To escape from this thought prison, requires a special key, a connecting key called mantra, can be turned to set us free;

Now every prison needs security, to keep the captives locked inside, likewise the guard of this thought prison, patrols the walls with pride;

The guard's name is Ego, and his job has become his life, his favorite weapon is a thought, which binds just like a knot;

Guard Ego craves sense pleasure, thus creating thoughts of desire, this way he keeps us prisoner, and makes the walls much higher;

So to make our mind one-pointed, not looking to our front or back, mantra penetrates the thought forms, and slowly the walls begin to crack;

Now guard Ego starts to falter, identity with thoughts begin to disappear, with continued mantra repetition, escape draws very near;

We watch the thoughts pass by us, constantly observing them come and go, less desiring this or that, life becomes an endless flow;

No more worrying about the future, past only a memory, by being in the moment, escape is here, we're free;

Now the walls are all but crumbled, guard Ego dead and gone, life just blissful awareness, and existence beyond—Beyond.

Thought Prison
Daniel Toms
CHAPTER NINE: THE WORD—CREATION MANIFESTS

To better understand the dynamics of mantra and the significance of sound itself, we must go back to the beginning: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...All things were made by Him and without Him was not any thing made" (John 1:1-3). All creation may be thought of as emanating from the Creative Word, or in Hindu scripture, "Aum," the cosmic vibratory power behind all atomic and subatomic energies. Cosmic vibration is known to be the force that holds the material world into stable elements. Just as our thoughts exist on the three-step process of creation, sustenance, and dissolution, the Aum vibration that reverberates throughout the entire universe (the "Word" or "voice of many waters" of the Bible) also has these three manifestations or "gunas." It is said that each time we utter a word, we put into operation one of these three qualities of Aum. When our words are spoken with clear realization and deep concentration, they then have a materializing value. By our words we can engage a universal quality of bringing something into physical existence, maintaining an already manifested aspect, or dissolving something out of material existence. Because our words carry with them the power to create or destroy, change or sustain, we are strongly urged to always carefully consider our words before we speak. This power behind our words is the lawful reason why all scriptures profess that we al-
ways speak the truth. "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men speak, they shall give account thereof...For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:36-37).

No surgeon can treat the wounds of the tongue.
Chinese Proverb

Sound also has a direct effect on our mind's vibratory rate. It has the ability to alter our vibrational and perceptual experience. When our thoughts are random and chaotic, for example, we are not "in rhythm" with the Aum vibration. The result of this discord is to decrease or slow down our mind's vibratory rate. When our mind's vibratory rate is slow, events around us seem to happen fast. Because we receive fewer messages from our environment, we feel more of a need to exert control. When our outward experience is perceived to be happening very quickly, there is a heightened sense of ambivalence that surrounds us. We feel unsteady and unsure of ourselves and our experience perpetuates this discord.

When our mind is vibrating fast, through the aid of mantra, for example, we get more messages back from our environment. Our mind is able to process the messages it receives at a much quicker rate. The more messages we receive, the slower the events around us appear to be happening. Thus there is more of a feeling of equilibrium between ourselves and our experience. Everything appears to happen
deeper, slower, and be more in tune with the natural order of things.

This creative Aum vibration which externalizes all creation is fully expounded upon in the "Vedas," the sacred scriptures of India. To help clarify this universal process, God, as referred to in His threefold nature as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is described in terms of "Sat," "Tat," and "Aum" in Hindu scripture.¹ God as Father is understood to be "Absolute" and "Unmanifested," and as such is known to exist beyond gross intellectual understanding. The Father, or Sat, is known to be the beginningless and endless process which includes and yet is beyond all vibratory creation.

God as Son, known as Tat in Hindu, is understood to be analogous to Christ Consciousness, or the fourth chakra manifestation that exists within vibratory creation. Tat, or Christ Consciousness, reveals itself as pure impartial love and is considered to be the "only begotten" or sole reflection of the Uncreated Infinite Father. The outward expression of this omnipresent Christ Consciousness, its true witness, and the "Beginning of creation" (Revelation 3:14), is Aum; the Word or Holy Spirit, the invisible divine power and sole causative and activating force that upholds all creation through vibration. This Aum force is also referred to as the blissful "Comforter" in the Bible. This vibratory force works as the power to heal, gives constant guidance through difficulties, speaks and interprets (the speaking of tongues), and brings all spiritual things to our remembrance.
"The Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said to you" (John 14:26).

Here in the West, because we are so entangled and enslaved by our habits, we are led to believe that Jesus was the only man who was the Son of God. "Christ was uniquely created," we reason, "so how can we, mere imperfect mortals emulate Him?" But, in truth, all of us have been divinely created and must someday follow Christ's command: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Although we have temporarily forgotten our egoless state of Perfection, this does not mean that we must continue to be oblivious to its existence. Through the free will that our Father has granted us, we can aspire to the loftiest of heavens or plunge to the deepest of hells. We can expand into blissful unity or contract into ignorance and evil. We are all sons of God, all our own saviors, all our own messiahs. We need only to supply the effort to direct ourselves toward Perfection in order to manifest Perfection in our lives. Only then will we realize that we have always been sons of God. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1).

Yogananda tells us that his Guru, Sri Yukteswar, also elaborated on the point of us being sons of God: "Theologians
have misinterpreted Christ's words in such passages as 'I am
the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the
Father but by me (John 14:6).’ Jesus meant never that he
was the sole Son of God,” Sri Yukteswar explained, "but that
no man can attain the unqualified Absolute, the transcendent
Father beyond creation, until he has first manifested the
'Son' or activating Christ Consciousness within creation.
Jesus, who had achieved entire oneness with that Christ
Consciousness, identified himself with it insomuch as his
own ego had long since been dissolved." Yogananda simply
added that we need to constantly "work on ourselves" to ob-
tain the inner stillness necessary to truly know God, and to
know ourselves as sons of this Absolute Principle.

Be still and know that I am God.
Psalms 46:10

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The most basic Eastern premise holds that the uni-
iverse is made up of one kind of entity, one all inclusive
vibration. We, as part of this universe, are also known to
exist as aspects of this same One Vibration. Under this
premise, we all start out as being equal in nature. This
unity is reflected in the Bible when Jesus says, "Verily,
verily, I say unto you. The servant is not greater than
his lord, neither he that is sent greater than he that sent
him" (John 13:16). Existing as equal beings in a natural
unmanifested state, our existence is known to be of the
highest vibrational awareness, or pure space, without any
attachment or resistance. On this level, we have a complete freedom of experience and consciousness. Existing in this expanded space is a readiness to be fully aware of anything possible or conceivable.\(^3\)

From this highest state of equality, there also exists varying degrees of descending vibrational levels, each having the illusory quality of opposites: of greater or lesser love, intelligence, power, etc. The further away we move from the highest vibratory level, the more denseness, contractedness, and the less awareness exists on that level.

Within this vibratory framework, the basic function of each of us is to expand or contract awareness. Existing as equal beings, with a complete freedom to choose or deny any experience, on any level of consciousness, we also have the free will to choose to contract to any lesser level of consciousness. By moving to a lesser vibrational level, however, means that we exist in a vibrationally less aware state. Any vibrational level lower than the highest level would then manifest as a state of contraction. The cause of this contraction would be due to the fact that the space of total expansion exists as being completely unresisting and completely irresistible. If we choose to move down to a lower level than complete expansion (usually to experience astral and physical pleasures), then a decrease in vibration propels us away from complete expansion. The experience of being propelled is due to the density existant in the lower vibrational level and manifests as a feeling of separateness.
When we are in a totally contracted state, we are like a mass particle of energy, squeezed and imploded. To the degree that we are contracted, we narrow our range of sharing a vibrational space with others. Contraction is thus felt as separateness, loneliness, and generally feeling cut off from the flow of life. When we experience expansion, however, because expansion is permeative, we merge into the vibrations of other expanded beings. Expansion is thus felt as added awareness, comprehension, insight, love, and unity. The more expanded we become, the more oneness we feel with all of life. At the higher levels of expansion, we have no resistance to any vibrations or interactions of other beings. When we are alternating between expansion and contraction, we can feel our energy manifesting as either growth, trying to get unstuck from a particular vibrational level, or tension, being squeezed into a narrow and limited space.

Since all conceivable levels and experiences exist as part of the One Vibration, as manifestations of the Source, when we withdraw from a willingness to accept or remember our true nature of Oneness, we confine ourselves to a lower vibrational level. By denying that any possible aspect of the One is also a part of our true nature, we cause a resistance within ourselves. Because denied vibrations become dense, they cause a resistance between our natural unrestrained state of being and the lesser vibrational level at which we are temporarily stabilized. When we continue to resist vibrations, because of their density, they are
compelled to manifest physically in their denied form. On a practical level, for example, let's say we imagine ourselves to be incapable of making any errors at our job. To deny this possibility on the conceptual (thought) level, withdraws our vibrations down to the mass (physical) level. With mass vibrations being even denser than conceptual vibrations, the mass is then compelled to take form of what was denied. On the physical level then, we would be accused, if not actually guilty, of making mistakes.

Thaddeus Golas once said that the best way to keep from having negative things happen to us on the physical level is not to deny any possible experience on the thought level. If we look at undesired events as part of our nature, and if we can absorb them mentally, they will eventually cease to manifest themselves within our physical experience. Golas has a catch-all phrase he suggests we repeat whenever we encounter unpleasantness within our lives. His phrase is, "I wouldn't deny this experience to the One Mind."^4

Within this metaphysical framework, all states of consciousness are known to always be available to us. We essentially activate our own level of reality, our own level of experience, by our denied or accepted vibrations. It can be said that we are all existing, right now, on a level that has the most love and understanding that we are capable of accepting. In fact, we always have the experiences and perceptions appropriate to our vibrational level.

Because we have been given the freedom to do and
become whatever we desire, and because of the inherent power within our words and thoughts, we essentially create our own world by holding on to desires in our mind. Swami Muktananda once said, "Where our thinking is, there will be our experience." But, as previously mentioned, it is also our resistance to thoughts that can manifest them physically. Our life experience can therefore be thought of as being perpetuated by the things we want, and by the things which we have denied letting go. We actually attract into our lives what we have resisted in the past and what we need to learn not to resist in the future. Cosmic law will always allow us to return to a state of irresistibility, but because all cosmic laws are just, it is only ourselves who are the sole cause of our life resistance and negativity. Nobody ever really does anything to us. We are never innocent victims in life's seemingly random sequence of misfortunes. In one way or another, we are always getting exactly what we ourselves have created.

Within our existing "karmic" predicament (karma meaning both the action and the results that our actions bring), every activity we perform brings with it certain consequences. Our present life circumstance is the result of both our present and past actions. It should be noted, however, that negative karma is not really "paying for" what we did in the past. Rather, we are constantly being confronted by the kinds of experiences that we withdrew from in the past. Negative karma is only existing vibrations which serve to teach
us to love more and resist less. It is only our failure to love enough that creates our impure thoughts and negative actions. It is this failure to love, this failure to accept anything within our life experience as part of the omnipotent plan, which causes us to contract into mass vibrations. The more loving we are, the purer our karma becomes and the more expanded our vibrations become. The more we love, the more we expand into finer vibrations and the closer we come into alignment with our Perfection. If we continue to have loving thoughts, and we look calmly at undesirable events, absorb them and love ourselves for disliking them, all traces of our resisting karma will burn away and we will continue going higher and higher.

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As a man sows, so shall he reap; or again, sow a thought and reap an act, sow an act and reap a habit, sow a habit and reap a character, sow a character and reap a destiny.  

   Proverb

Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another because love covers a multitude of sins (karma).

   1 Peter 4:8
Understanding some of the expanded rules of the universe also includes understanding the cosmic law of reincarnation. This law states, in effect, that because we are separate entities, i.e., individual human beings, we will keep taking on bodies here on earth until we have broken identification with our separateness. The law implies that we will keep taking new births to work out our worldly attachments and desires in order to eventually finish with these desires. Only after we are no longer controlled by our desires will we then sever the karmic chain that binds us to the birth-death cycle. Only then, when we have sufficiently broken all attachment to this physical plane, will we no longer require a physical birth.

Early in the sixth century, Western Church Fathers initially accepted reincarnation into their Christian doctrine. The doctrine was first declared a heresy, however, in 553 A.D. by the Second Council of Constantinople. In light of the lack of theological support, the Council opted to disregard their previous principle endowment and to go with a more concrete system of belief. Although there were numerous Church representatives who understood many of the implications of the incarnational cycle, still, as a whole, they felt this doctrine afforded man too ample a stage of time to encourage him to strive for immediate salvation. They felt that most people would not utilize their time to
seek God. As it turns out, however, most people have not utilized their "one lifetime" to seek God anyway, but rather use their time enjoying this world that has been so uniquely granted unto them. Most time, it seems, is spent in pleasure and enjoyment in a "worldly" sense. As a result, the rhythmic incarnational cycle demands that we continue to take on births and experience deaths until we consciously attain to a state of non-attachment, until we are free from worldly desire.

* * * *

Universal Consciousness, the Self, the Tao, God, all represent Perfection: perfect balance and the divine interrelationship of all that is seen and unseen. A tree is perfect, a river is perfect, as are the sky, stars, and planets embodiments of this Perfection. We too, as man and woman, are created in the image of this Perfection. But then, emanating from the Garden of Eden, from our own unitive Perfection comes a bite of the apple, comes an impulse of desire, and suddenly there is separateness. We are wearing clothes (fig leaves) and God is asking us, "Who told you that you were naked?" Shame is born out of our own self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is born out of the experience of ourselves as individual beings, as a duality, as subject and object, as the experiencer and that which is experienced.¹

After leaving our state of Perfection, we then spend our first few lifetimes attempting to solidify, protect, and
increase the pleasure and power of ourselves as separate beings. We endeavor to maintain control of, and attain gratification from, our surroundings. We manipulate God's Will into our own will, and continue to see and define ourselves as separate individual gods. We adopt the strategy that "more is better" and we fill up our time gratifying our desires. We keep ourselves occupied so as not to get bored or frightened, and the more we seize, the more satisfied we feel.

In our first few lifetimes as separate, sentient beings, when we experience death, we are so caught up in the attachment to our body and senses, we deny our death and exist in a state of suffering confusion. We remain in this dense, confused state until we are sent back into the next round of physical birth and death. After a few of these birth-death trips, we start to learn from our suffering and eventually begin to realize our predicament. We begin to sense that there is more to our existence than mere worldly pleasure and inevitable worldly pain. And, as we become more conscious, we begin to understand more of the meaning of our being here. As we gain more awareness through ego dissolution, instead of remaining in a state of suffering confusion between births, we begin to gain entry into higher astral spheres. Here we start to see what our next birth has to do from a karmic point of view. We begin to understand that karmic law requires that every one of our human desires find ultimate fulfillment, and that our non-spiritual
desires are what keeps us spinning on the reincarnational wheel of birth, death, suffering, and separateness.

Attaining to a higher level of awareness, while we await our next birth, we intuitively know what desires still need to be worked out. We then design our next earthly lifetime in such a way as to work through our remaining attachments. As we design our birth, we consider what we need. "Well, I need to be born mentally retarded in order to break my deeply embedded attachment to my rational mind," we may think. Perhaps as we design our life we say, "When I'm thirty my lower body will be paralyzed to help put an end to my lustful pursuits," or "I'll get married and have seven children in order to work out my desire for a family." "Let's see, I'll have my first child when I'm eighteen"...etc. We design our life all the way through up to how we will die (this is how enlightened beings know the moment of their physical death). We similarly choose the parents that are best suited to provide us with what we need to learn and work on. When everything is set, we dive in, the veil is lowered, and we are born.

Having acquired a certain degree of awareness, suddenly, during one lifetime there is an instant when the illusory veil of separateness momentarily parts for us. Although this veil is itself only an illusion, most of the time our karma is so heavy we cannot see through it. If we do see through the veil before we are ready to accept
what we see, we will deny the experience and push it away. Similarly, if someone is talking of higher levels of existence while we are still deeply embedded in mass reality, we will not believe what they say. As Ram Dass said, "Mystical experiences can really screw up the apple cart when we have built up our whole life around being somebody and then we see that that is not who we are." We do not want to know of anything that may conflict with our pleasures, let alone our conceptual beliefs of who we are and what we are doing here.

In his book The Only Dance There Is, Ram Dass noted that our veiled situation of separateness is very akin to what Plato was referring to in his classic Cave metaphor. Plato told about people who were chained up in a cave for so long, they knew only of their shadows cast by a fire on the opposite side of the cave. They had built up a whole culture and belief system around their shadows because that was all they could see. Then one day one of the members of the cave happened to get free of his chains. At this point he stepped out of the mouth of the cave and, for the first time, he saw the sun shining, the birds singing, and the tall green trees swaying in the warm morning breeze. He became so excited with this discovery, he went rushing back into the cave and said, "I hate to tell you this but, things are not the way they seem." Then, after listening to him describe what he had seen, all the other members of the cave stoned him to death. They stoned him because they did not
want to know of other possibilities. This was Plato's main point. They were all so attached to fulfilling their reflected desires within the cave, they did not want to hear of any expanded experiences or alternative possibilities that would conflict with their habitual existence.

Once we have seen through the veil of our separateness, and know we have seen, in the words of Ram Dass we "can never totally go back to sleep again." We will then intuitively know that this physical plane is just a training school for us. We will know that it is only a place to pick up the necessary prerequisites for a much higher interest. We will begin to feel motivated to meditate and repeat mantra because we will know that these help us to thin the veil and remember more of the total cosmological picture. Even though, through the eyes of the majority of the world our meditating appears to be a waste of time, and we are often referred to as "foolish," our added insight will afford us the wisdom to humbly accept this foolish title and to continue "wasting our time" to Eternity.

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In reference to the Darwinian creation controversy, one need not find conflict in understanding the relationship between evolutionary creation and its corresponding time coordinates. When the Bible states, for example, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1), this does not invalidate the evolutionary
cycle of all sentient and insentient things. If we can pause and free our mind from its conceptual limitations, we will see that a seven day creative cycle, in terms of man's time, holds only a relative significance in relation to God's time. In 2 Peter 3:8, the relativity of time is revealed: "But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The mystical Sufis demonstrated their knowledge of the relativity of time in a teaching story:

'A Sultan of Egypt, it is related, called a conference of learned men, and very soon—as is usually the case—a dispute arose. The subject was the night flight of the Prophet Mohammed. It is said that on that occasion the Prophet was taken from his bed up to the celestial spheres. During this period he saw paradise and hell, conferred with God ninety thousand times, had many other experiences—and was returned to his room while his bed was still warm. A pot of water which had been overturned by the flight and spilled was still not empty when the Prophet returned.

Some held that this was possible by a different measurement of time. The Sultan claimed that it was impossible.

The sages said that all things were possible to divine power. This did not satisfy the king.

The news of this conflict came at length to the Sufi Shahabudin, who immediately presented himself at Court. To demonstrate the relativity of worldly time, the sheikh had the disbelieving Sultan place his head in a vessel of water for a moment. As soon as he had done so, the Sultan found himself alone on a deserted seashore, a place which he did not know.

Over the course of seven years the Sultan had to survive and toil in this new land. He was dependent upon the charity of woodcutters for his meals until he met and eventually married a beautiful courtisan. During his seven year stay, the courtisan also bore him seven strong sons. But the Sultan's fast and pleasurable living also caused him to squander all his wife's patrimony. In order to provide for his seven sons, the Sultan had to work as a porter, carrying terribly heavy loads, sixteen
hours a day.

At the end of seven years time, the Sultan, distraught with his life's burden, returned to the seashore where he found the very spot from which he had emerged seven years before. After saying some prayers, he started to wash in the water when he suddenly and dramatically found himself back with the vessel of water and the dervish sheikh.

Upon his return, the Sufi master said to the Sultan, "What seemed like seven years of exile was only a moment since you put your head in the water. It is not whether a thing has happened or not which is the important element. What is, however, important, is the significance of the happening. In your case, there was no significance. In the case of the Prophet, there was significance in the happening."'5

* * * * *

Look at the grain of pepper and at the size of the sneeze.

Chinese Proverb
CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE DIVINE PLAY—SHIVA DANCES ON

The whole cosmos can be understood to be nothing but divine "lila," the divine play of God. As stated in Revelation 4:11, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things and for thy pleasure they are and were created." In the Hindu tradition, this cosmic play of God is represented by the image of Shiva-Nataraja, the "Lord of the Dance." Indian artists of the tenth century have personified God's cosmic dance in magnificent bronze sculptures of dancing figures. These figures are endowed with four arms whose superbly balanced and yet dynamic gestures express the rhythm and unity of all life. The Shiva figure represents the divine play in all the worlds, in all the mass, energy and space vibrations. Surrounded by a luminous halo fringed with the symbols of fire, Shiva is seen dancing the dance of Nature, of endless becoming and passing away. Shiva's dance symbolizes the great rhythmic process of creation and destruction, of death and rebirth, and the eternal life-death rhythm which goes on in endless cycles.¹

This dance represents the dance of the ages, between all time and no time. Shiva dances between the here, the nowhere, and the everywhere. He fills the universe and, in the ultimate sense, is the universe. He is the child of the heavens and is the natural Order of All Things. His toys are galaxies, His playground is infinite space, and
between each finger and toe, the interval is a trillion light years across. Shiva, the Absolute Godhead, is at play among the stars and in the atoms. He is at play within everything, every sentient creature and insentient object, and His play is for play's sake only.

As Shiva's playground becomes conscious and finite, the dance floor becomes capable of suffering. The dance floor of time turns into a relative floor of ignorance and pain. The rhythm of time churns out a melody of destruction and death. Amidst the ignorance and pain, however, Shiva only dances. His dance is a dance impartial to death and life, of all evils as well as all goods. Shiva contains both creation and destruction within Himself and, in His hands He holds the fate of all mankind.

In His uppermost right hand, Shiva holds the drum that summons being out of non-being: the primal sound of creation. When Shiva first banged the drum, the earth formed as a cosmic idea. When Shiva quickened the beat, atomic energy came into being. By the rhythm of His beat, the earth's atoms were coordinated into a sense-perceived solid sphere. All of the earth's molecules are held together by Shiva's primordial Aum sound.

In His uppermost left hand, Shiva contains a tongue of flame by which all that has been created is forthwith destroyed. When Shiva waves the flame beneath the earth, all the earth's atoms will once again be transformed into energy. Atomic energy will then return to its original
source: back into Consciousness, back into God, and the earth idea will disappear from objectivity.

The balance of Shiva's upper two hands represents the dynamic balance of creation and destruction. This balance is also further accentuated by Shiva's detached face in the center of the two hands. Shiva dances to the beat of pain, fear, and desolation, and to the rhythm of pleasure, happiness, and health. He skips into cancer and death and He jumps out into love, laughter, and into the fullness of life. For Shiva-Nataraja, it is all play, and the play is an end in itself. He dances because He dances, and the dancing is His infinite and eternal bliss. For us who are caught in the throngs of relative time, however, there is no bliss. There is only the oscillation between pleasure and pain in a life that is too long to bear, but too short to miss.

Shiva holds the drum that calls the world into existence in one hand and carries the destroying fire of creation in another. Life and death, order and disintegration are held impartially. But Shiva also has another pair of arms. His lower right hand is raised and the palm is turned outward. This gesture signifies, "Do not be afraid, it is All Right." Shiva illustrates that it is "All Right" with His lower left hand. With it He is pointing down to His feet. He has His right foot planted squarely on the horrible little subhuman creature: the demon Muyalaka. Muyalaka is the embodiment of ignorance, the manifestation
of greedy, possessive selfhood. Shiva is trampling this little monster down under His right foot. Shiva, however, does not point to His right foot, but rather He points His finger towards the left foot, the foot that is, as He dances, in the act of rising from the ground. It is this left foot, this dancing defiance of the force of gravity, the force of attachment, which He draws to attention. It is this symbol of letting go, this freedom from ignorance, which must be relinquished before Perfection is attained. Shiva's dance shows us not only sorrow, but also freedom from sorrow. He shows us that we need to release our self in order to experience our Self. We need to cease being what we think we are and become that which we are: Perfect!

* * * * *

Dancing blood upon His feet,
Shiva's drum pounds the beat,
A pirouette and life behold,
timeless phase of breath unfolds;

Illusion in step, confusion cadent,
A silhouette world torn and faded,
The rich and strong are flying high,
the poor and crippled asking why,
Ballroom queen plays her pawn,
and Shiva dances on;

Walk the tightrope, balance, fall,
just let go, remember all,
Hallowed sounding, Shiva's name,
all the vibrations become the same;

The burning feared fusion, the illumined glow,
and Shiva's dancing is to know,
To play the scale with end in sight,
then merge with Shiva into Light;
To laugh in harmony or die in discord, 
are but pulsating movements of the Lord, 
With rhythmic movement of arms and hands, 
comes feast or famine to all the lands;

Soaring spirit, the cast is shed, 
and Shiva dances on our head, 
Living, dying, to save, to kill, 
and Shiva dances still;

This eternal born jewel from life beyond, 
is the music of the song, 
Creating, preserving, destroying all, 
but Lord Shiva does not fall. 

Shiva Dance 
Daniel Toms
CHAPTER TWELVE: MOTIVATION FOR MAYA

The word "motivation" was derived from the Latin term "motivus," meaning "to move." Here in the West, human motivation is generally understood in terms of bodily and socially oriented needs. Psychologists who see human beings as primarily biological in nature, for example, understand motivation in terms of bodily survival and biological drives. Our need for food, shelter, and air, along with sexual urges, is understood as the impetus to that which motivates us to maintain earthly survival. Scientists who view humans primarily as social insist that our major motives revolve around interpersonal interactions. They see our need for companionship, love, and interpersonal communication as vital to our survival.

The Eastern tradition, contrary to both of these Western views, sees biological and social needs as by-products of motivation. Biological and social oriented needs are understood to be but a result of desires and attachments. An Eastern mystic would say that, without desire and attachment, there would be no motivation. Our desire for various experiences and achievements is seen as the sole motivating force behind all of our worldly actions.

From a typical Western viewpoint, it is possible to imagine ourselves extracted from social motives, like the need for human affection and communication. Monastery living, for example, often requires one to take a vow of
silence and to devote one's life solely to spiritual fulfillment. But to imagine extracting ourselves from certain biological concerns, like food and air for instance, is difficult to comprehend. Nevertheless, there are many documented and verified cases around the world of people who have survived without the use of what we would consider essential for human survival. During a three year stay in India, Ram Dass told of people he met who made a "total shambles" of our Western models of health. He told of a man with whom he studied whose total intake of food for fifteen years consisted of two glasses of goat milk per day. "He had more energy than I had and certainly more than most people I had ever met," Ram Dass told. "He slept roughly two hours a night and we'd go up to a mountain— he'd be running up and I'd be trying to kind of pull myself along. He weighed ninety pounds. Totally exquisite in his movements. Two glasses of milk a day."1

Ram Dass also reported many documented instances in India of beings who are buried alive for periods of a year or two. He told of how one man was asked how he breathed. The man said, "My cells had enough oxygen to keep my brain and my heart muscle alive, and that was all that was necessary."2 The yogi who had said this had spent a year under the earth in a box. While he was underground, ants had somehow entered the box, and, while he was in trance, had eaten away part of his arm. As Ram Dass suggests, this event certainly sheds a new light on biological needs, let
alone social concerns.

The Eastern schools of thought also tell of a close interconnection which exists between our motivation and our suffering. In fact, our motivation is postulated to be directly proportional to our suffering. Suffering is said to result from our difficulty in facing the basic fact of life: that everything around us is transitory. Suffering arises because we attach ourselves to the forms of our motivation, that is, to the objects of our desire. We cling to, and try holding on to, these fixed forms whether they be things, events, people or ideas. These fixed forms, in Eastern terminology, are called "maya." Maya, which literally means "the measurer," is understood to be the illusion in creation by which various limitations and divisions are apparently present in the Immeasurable Absolute. Maya, however, does not mean that the world is an illusion, as is often wrongly stated. Rather, the illusion lies in our point of view. By thinking that the structures, events, and ideas which surround us are realities of nature, instead of realizing they are but concepts of our measuring and categorizing mind, we become deluded. Maya is the illusion of mistaking these concepts for reality, of confusing the map with the territory, so to speak. One such Buddhist teaching story depicts the essence of maya:

'Once upon a time, a holy man taught a powerful
The old Testament prophets called maya by the name of Satan (literally in Hebrew, "the Adversary"). Satan is exemplified as the one who leads us away from our Perfection and into temptation. From an Eastern perspective, Satan is but the "Cosmic Magician" who in our mind, produces a multiplicity of forms in order to hide from us the One Formless Truth. Satan endlessly endeavors to keep us motivated towards, and attached to, the various seductions of this world. His sole purpose is to divert us from Spirit to matter, from One to many. If Satan fails to divert us, he dissolves out of existence, so his only hope for survival is to keep us attached to this transitory existence.

In the Bible, Revelation 18:3-8, Satan as maya is also described as the Universal Tempstress: "For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies...Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues." As a nation, we have literally lost ourselves in worldly desire, insomuch as we have merged and
become one with our desire. Christ beckons us to "come out" of the illusion, to wake up and free ourselves from worldly attachment.

Maya is likewise picturesquely described as a devil by Christ. In James 4:17, sin is defined as knowing the right thing to do and not doing it. Therefore, in 1 John 3:8, Christ says, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil." That is, the manifestation of Christ Consciousness within ourselves destroys the illusion of maya or the "works of the devil." When our eyes are fixed upon similarity rather than difference, when our heart is open to love and not to anger, when our intent is to free ourselves from desire, not to create more attachment, then the "works of the devil" dissolves along with our sin and worldly suffering.

* * * * *

The battlefield of illusion, takes its toll like a summoning bell, enticing all to pay homage, to the resurrecting of a living hell;

The raging soldiers of maya, armed with lust, anger, and deceit, mask themselves to appear harmless, thus skillful to avoid defeat;

Entering the hearts of the many, offering wealth, desire, and fame, disguised as the horn of plenty, keeping the captives naive to the game;
But maya has one weakness,
an assult with a loving gun,
constant attention, prayers, and devotion,
offered to the all-pervading One;

Then surrendered delusion starts to stagger,
true nature thus begins to shine,
an end to the separateness of samsara,
and the victory of life becomes Divine.

The War of Maya
Daniel Toms
CHAPTER THIRTEEN: SUFFERING AND THE END OF SUFFERING

Wandering, whirling,
blown by karmic wind,
servant of sensation,
worshipper of sin;

Drinking hardened water,
breathing solid air,
absorbing earthly suffering,
pupils constricted in a stare;

Enough of terestial torment,
bring an end to this despair,
I beckon for forgiveness,
strip me of this fear;

A flash of immortal impulse,
retention of breath,
a rush of understanding,
a glimpse of birth and death;

Out of the mist of darkness,
a thousand voices far and near,
a revelatory vision shouting,
"what you seek is Here;"

Eyes twinkle in the twilight,
mind awakens from the game,
the slaying of the shadow,
heaven and earth become the same.

The Subtle Suicide
Daniel Toms

* * * * *

The cries of human suffering can be heard echoing throughout the ages. Like a dark ominous cloud, the shadow of suffering hangs over each of us from the moment of our birth. Although we enter this world in an unfulfilled state, we need not exit in the same manner. Just as we learn to care for ourselves, so can we learn how to abandon our self-created suffering. Early Buddhist scripture addressed this problem of suffering and described a remedy
of how to alleviate its pain.

Dating back to the sixth century B.C., the history of Buddhist religion has been based mainly on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha. The term "Buddha" itself is often mistaken for a proper name. It is actually a title which means "one who knows" or "one who exemplifies a certain level of understanding." Siddhartha Gautama, the original Buddha, had searched for a way to overcome the suffering and limitations he saw as an inevitable part of human life. After deep and prolonged meditation beneath a bodhi tree, Gautama became the Buddha; he experienced a profound inner transformation that altered his entire perspective of life. When Gautama came out from under the tree he returned to his house. There he outlined to his family and friends the essential characteristics of human suffering. By way of the "Four Noble Truths," he outlined the cause of suffering, and told how one could become free from its effects.

The first "Truth" which the Buddha elucidated was that "all is suffering." Because of our "rational" orientation here in the West, a statement which considers "all" to be suffering may seem a bit presumptuous. We might think to ourselves, "If last night's date was suffering, then I hope my suffering never ends." What the Buddha was referring to, however, was that all aspects of life have within them elements of suffering. Birth, death, old age, and sickness all contain elements of suffering. Not getting what we want
and getting what we do not want may also contain suffering. The two remaining categories of getting what we want and not getting what we do not want also contain suffering, in a delayed sense, because they are in time. Existing in time means that everything is limited, everything here on earth, including ourselves, is temporary. Eventually we have to do without, which produces suffering.

The second Noble Truth said that the cause of all our suffering is "craving." Most of us are unable to accept this world as it is because we are so caught up in our pursuit of happiness. We are constantly looking for something with which to occupy or fulfill ourselves. We are always expecting that the future will bring something greater, higher, or more fulfilling. We are rarely satisfied (for very long anyway) because the enjoyment of fulfilled desires is always tempered by the realization that our enjoyment is only temporary. Our life basically consists of endless preparation: for family life, love affairs, or various entertainments. There is, and there will always be, in a worldly sense, something more to want. Roger Waters captured the essence of our craving pursuits with his lyrics:

And you run and you run to catch up with the sun, but its sinking
And racing around to come up behind you again
The sun is the same in a relative way, but your older
And shorter of breath and one day closer to death

Our craving mentality keeps us on the "Ferris wheel" of pleasure and pain, and in turn binds us to our suffering.
The Buddha's third "Truth" states that if we eliminate our craving, then our suffering will extinguish. In other words, if we do not want anything, we will not suffer. Don Juan addressed the problem of our craving when he said, "What makes us unhappy is to want. Yet if we would learn to cut our wants to nothing, the smallest thing we'd get would be a true gift."² Don Juan added, "Only a warrior can survive. A warrior knows that he is waiting and what he is waiting for; and while he waits he wants nothing and thus whatever little thing he gets is more than he can take. If he needs to eat he finds a way, because he is not hungry; if something hurts his body he finds a way to stop it, because he is not in pain. To be hungry or to be in pain means that a man has abandoned himself and is no longer a warrior; and the forces of his hunger and pain will destroy him."³ Becoming a warrior, a true disciple on the path to Perfection means that we must learn how not to want. And, no longer wanting means no longer being attached to, or controlled by, our desires, or believing that our happiness depends on fulfilling certain desires.

The Buddha's fourth Noble Truth tells of the ingredients required in order to learn not to want. This "Truth" is called the Eightfold Path. It is, essentially, a guide on procedures of how to extract ourselves from our attachments. "I show you sorrow," the Buddha said, "and I show you the ending of sorrow." The Eightfold Path teaches us to be in the present moment, constantly, and it teaches
us to let go of our preconceived ideas of what we think should be. The eight points of the path are: right understanding, right intention, right speech, right discipline, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right absorption.⁴

When the Buddha talked about having right understanding and right speech and so forth, he did not mean right as opposed to wrong. A right versus wrong view is to deal with the world in terms of fixed ideas. Viewing the world in terms of opposing views—good or bad, right or wrong—happens only when we become attached to a judgmental mentality. This was not the Buddha's intent. Although the judgmental concepts of right and wrong exist within our mind, they exist only in terms of relative reality. When we are attached to this relative reality, our understanding and speech become limited. Though we must accept judgmental thoughts as part of our nature, we want to remain free of their binding influence. For example, when someone whom we know is walking towards us, we do not want to freeze the situation; we do not want to freeze ourselves and the space in which this person is walking. When we are attached to a judgmental mentality, we either identify this person as a friend, who is liked, or an enemy, who is disliked. The person is therefore automatically walking through a frozen situation of fixed ideas: this or that. This is what the Buddha called "wrong understanding" or "wrong view." It is a conceptualized
view which is imperfect because we are not seeing the situation as it is. Only when we do not prejudge a situation, when we are not seeing friend or enemy, are we seeing with right understanding.

The second aspect of the Buddha's Path, right intention, simply means not being inclined towards anything other than what is. We need not involve ourselves in the idea that life could be beautiful or that life could be painful. The Buddha tells us that life is both painful and pleasurable. This is, in fact, the "rightness" quality about life. There is no need to reduce or intensify life situations, nor is there a need to pursue or avoid them. Pleasure as it is, pain as it is; these are the absolute qualities of right intention.

According to the ancient "rishis," (rishis meaning "the ones who led straight-forward lives") one third, more or less, of all the pain and suffering we must endure in our lives is unavoidable. It is the sorrow inherent within the human condition, the price we must pay for being sentient and self-conscious beings. The rishis also tell us, however, that the remaining two-thirds of all pain and suffering is homeade, self-created, and as far as the universe is concerned, unnecessary. It is precisely this two-thirds of suffering that the Eightfold Path aims to extinguish.

The third aspect of the Path is right speech. In Sanskrit, the word for speech is "vac," which means "word"
or "logos." It implies perfect communication, an impartation which says, "It is so," rather than "I think it is so."

Right speech is simple, direct, and true. There is no room in it for indecision or deception. When something is not known, it is stated as simply and directly as, "I do not know." The general rule which the Buddha outlined was to speak true and direct, and only when asked or when the situation warrants it.

The fourth aspect, right discipline, is not aimed at self-improvement. Self-improved discipline is when we give up all kinds of pleasurable things in order to make ourselves a "better person." This type of discipline, the Buddha told, only serves to inflate our ego. It reassures us that we, as individuals, can do something with our lives. Right discipline, on the other hand, is a complete discipline. It serves to strip us of our ego expectations and complications. Right discipline is the simplifying of our lives without involving ourselves with fancy reasons for doing so. It is simplifying our life by first asking ourselves honestly, if what we are doing is what we need to be doing. If it is not, then we simply give it up. The simpler the process is, the less danger there is for us to develop righteous reasons for self-discipline. Right discipline is just having a simple relationship with life in general. Anything we need to do is done with a lightness and directness that does not add new complications into our life situation.
Either you do it like it's a big weight on you or you do it as part of the dance.  

Ram Dass

The fifth point of the Path is right livelihood. Right livelihood means making money by working, but without attachment. Money is known to be "green energy," and any energy with which we come into contact brings its own vibrations. For example, if we are making money in a dishonest or exploitative manner, then that money becomes binding. It means we are attached to the money through our desire for it. Right livelihood, though, is doing honest work without being attached to the fruits of the work. In the Bhagavad-Gita, the Holy Book of India, Krishna, the Indian saint who spread divine understanding in the East much like Jesus did here in the West said, "You have the right to work, but for the work's sake only. Desire for the fruits of work must never be your motive for working." Right livelihood then is working with the understanding that work is divine service. It is service to God. It is just performing our job to the best of our ability and allowing the money we make provide for our survival. In this way, we do not have to take care of money, money, or more to the point God, takes care of us.

The sixth aspect of the Path is right effort. By our present karmic and existing life circumstance, we are required to act upon our environment. We are, however, free to make a choice between two different methods of performing
actions. Generally, most of us act with attachment, that is, with fear and desire. We have a desire for a certain outcome, and we fear that this result will not be obtained. Attached action binds us to our worldly pursuits: to the continual doing of more action. Right effort, the other way of performing action, is without fear and without desire. Christian mystics called this effort "holy indifference" and Hindus "non-attachment." Both names, however, are slightly misleading, for they suggest a coldness and lack of enthusiasm. Without right understanding, both of these could be confused with fatalism, although a fatalist simply does not care. He feels that he will get what is coming to him, so why even make an effort. But the doer of non-attached action understands that the effort is itself the means to the end. The effort becomes an act of devotion and becomes its own reward. All work becomes equally and vitally important. It is only the results of work, i.e., success or failure, praise or blame, large income or small income, to which we remain indifferent. We simply do what we do and offer the fruits to God. All effort then becomes divine service. A quote from the Bhagavad-Gita says, "Even he with the worst of karma who works for me alone, quickly loses the effects of his past bad actions. Becoming a high-souled being, he soon attains perennial peace. Know this for certain: he who makes me his only goal and is devoted to me, free from attachment, and without hatred towards any creature—that man shall enter into Me."
The seventh point on the Buddha's Path is right mindfulness. Mindfulness is the process whereby we see into our individual life situations clearly and precisely. Right mindfulness, however, does not simply mean being aware. Rather, awareness can be thought of as the result of mindfulness. Mindfulness provides us room to recognize our restlessness and passion and so forth, and awareness reassures us that we do not have to do anything with them. Through the practice of concentration, mindfulness and awareness work together to bring acceptance and spaciousness into our living situation.

The last aspect of the Eightfold Path is right absorption. Right absorption is being completely and thoroughly involved in all of our living situations, as well as in our sitting meditation. In meditation, the technique of "just sitting" and "somebody sitting" becomes indistinct. Right absorption is involvement in a totally non-dualistic sense. Both our meditation and we as meditator begin to blend into one. We are no longer identifying ourselves as somebody meditating or somebody doing something.

As our absorption progresses, this same sense of oneness starts to pervade our whole life. Our life begins to become a living meditation itself. Because the process of meditation starts to occur automatically, all of our life's actions become skillful. This means that we lose inhibition and are no longer afraid to "be." Our life
becomes a spontaneous, creative network of divine play to
be experienced, learned from, and let go of. We then
accept ourselves as being warriors and live life accordingly.

Right absorption also removes any lingering doubts
from our mind. If our absorption wanes, however, and doubt
arises, fear can then work on us until our actions become un-
stable. Therefore, as warriors, our concentration must be
unbending and our actions fearless, in that there is no worry
as to failure, embarrassment, or consequence. If not, our
Perfection will remain a conceptual ideal only. This is why
don Juan found it necessary to say to Carlos, "When a man
decides to do something, he must go all the way, but he must
take responsibility for what he does. No matter what he
does, he must know first why he is doing it, and then he
must proceed with his actions without having doubts or
remorse about them. To assume the responsibility of one's
decisions means that one is ready to die for them." This
is right absorption!

* * * * *

To break the cycle of suffering,
Buddha gave his Eightfold Path,
To traverse its length unceasing,
brings immersion in Brahman's eternal Bath;

Right Livelihood, Belief and Action,
and the wheel of birth and death is spun,
The path starts getting clearer,
the final journey has begun;

Right Speech, Thought and Exertion,
ignites the cosmic cleansing fire,
The blaze consumes impurities, and brings an end to craving desire;

Right Remembrance and Meditation, causes the cycle of suffering to cease, The wheel of birth and death is broken, enter the House of Eternal Peace.

The Path to Peace
Daniel Toms
PART II

On the road to nowhere,
Following a trail as obscure as the sun,
On a path to a place with no face,
Where time is eternity's game;

Going to where we are free from freedom,
Going to where we alone are,
Going to where nothing ever gathers,
Where no voices ever call;

As we travel and as we stand,
As we encompass every land,
We are going, we are coming—

Across the sand,
We are coming thru...
We are going thru...
CHAPTER FOURTEEN: MAKING A SPIRITUAL START

Turn upon the winding stairs,
Past the door that isn't there,
You have come, you know not where,
Passing through time;

Walk along—the Narrow Road,
Where the ghost gives up his mind,
You can catch the threads of time,
Crossing the Line.

Stomu Yamastha

In order to taste the nectar of our own divinity, we must make a spiritual start. Lao-tzu said, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." Gautama, the Buddha said, "Let no man think lightly of good, saying in his heart, 'It will not come nigh me.' By the falling of waterdrops a pot is filled; the wise man becomes full of good, even if he gathers it little by little." We will become full of good if we take the necessary steps, though the spiritual path demands that we put forth the right kind of effort.

'One day a young man, not so different than ourselves, decided to make a supreme effort to attain to spiritual knowledge. Viewing himself as one who possessed patience and a strong will, he vowed to sit underneath an aging oak tree until he acquired mystical insight.

After three days of restless sitting, there suddenly appeared, as a divine answer for his efforts, a highly revered spiritual being. This "wise one," who possessed insight into the very "nature of things," stopped in front of the young seeker.

The seeker asked of the master, "O great Sage, you who can see into the past and future, please tell me how long I must sit and wait underneath this tree before I become enlightened?"

The master calmly gazed at the seeker and softly
said, "The leaves of the oak tree must turn brown and fall fifteen times before you can be called an enlightened one."

Having received these words of wisdom, the young seeker thanked the master and bid him farewell.

The next day, as the young man pondered the thought of sitting there for fifteen years, the more restless he found himself becoming. He then thought to himself, "If the leaves must turn brown and fall fifteen times, I'll just return here under the tree on the fifteenth year. In the mean time, I've got some exciting living to get to."

When it comes to disciplining ourselves, most of us are not unlike this young seeker. We want the fruit, but we do not want to plant and maintain the orchard. Though we would like to pursue our spirituality, we usually find that our lifestyle acts as a barrier. Being controlled by habits and stuck in desire, our wanting to advance spiritually is more of a wanting to want to advance. Conceptually, we would like to purify ourselves, but we lack the initiative. We realize that this world is fleeting, but still we do not call upon the inner strength necessary to detach ourselves from its seductions.

Robert Pirsig pinpointed the basic problem when it comes to pursuing our spirituality. He used an allegory of a physical mountain for the spiritual one that stands before each of us. He told how it seems that most of us stand in sight of the spiritual mountains all of our lives, but never really enter them. We become content to listen to what others who have been there have to say about treading the path, but we choose to refrain from undergoing the hardships ourselves. We either think that, like the young
seeker in the story, we can do as we please and then reap the fruits later, or we think that the spiritual path is much too difficult for us to tread. Zen, however, tells us that the spiritual path itself is neither difficult nor easy to tread, but rather it is in our thoughts where we find the difficulty or ease in approaching spirituality. "We think it easy and it is not; we suppose it to be difficult, and it is not. The ease or difficulty is entirely in our fancy. But this fancy too is included in the vastness of the activity of the Great Way and forms an essential part of it."³

Another problem with developing a spiritual attitude is that it is very different from our habitual way of thinking. Because most everything around us reinforces the illusion that this physical reality is "where it's at," we are constantly being pulled toward sensual enhancement. Our senses attract us to the world while our intuition urges us to follow a spiritual path. Part of us listens to the Word of God which says, "For all that is in the world, the lusts of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts..." (1 John 2:16-17). Another part of us sees an attractive member of the opposite sex and our imagination runs wild with desire. We either try walking two paths that are in conflict with one another, or we abandon our spirituality all together. We may fool ourselves into
thinking we are on a spiritual path to keep ourselves feeling safe and secure, or we may allow our lust to have full control over us. We may be afraid to learn more about our spirituality because we are afraid to grow and assume the greater responsibility that goes with growth.

You cannot hit two targets with one arrow.
Chinese Proverb

If we are indeed ready to make a spiritual start, then enough time has already elapsed for us to have fulfilled our lower chakra desires: "For the time already is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries" (1 Peter 4:3). Although the time may be sufficient for us to have carried out these desires, we may still have a large amount of energy invested in them. When we try to extricate ourselves from these desires, we may find that we are continually being drawn back into their seduction. At this point we should remember that much of the spiritual journey consists of continually "falling on our faces." When we do succumb to desire, however, we need only get up, brush ourselves off, and then once again center ourselves. We need not waste our time feeling guilty or unworthy, for these will do just that: waste our time. The time spent wallowing in self-pity can be better used in making ourselves stronger so we will not
give in to temptation in the future.

At first whenever I fell back into sin I used to weep and rage against myself and God for having suffered it. Afterwards it was as much as I could dare ask, "Why has thou rolled me again in the mud, 0 my playfellow?" Then even that came to my mind to seem too bold and presumptuous; I could only get up in silence, look at Him out of the corner of my eye and clean myself.

Aurobindo

In order to make ourselves stronger in our spiritual endeavors, we need to choose and develop a method of spiritual practice. In order to choose a path that is right for us, don Juan suggests we first ask ourselves if the path has a heart. "If it does," don Juan explained, "the path is good; if it doesn't, it is of no use. One path makes for a joyful journey; as long as you follow it, and are one with it. The other will make you curse your life. One makes you strong; the other weakens you."4

Many of us may not realize that there are a wide variety of meditative and purificatory practices to choose from. We often come to identify spirituality, in general, with traditional religious experience or extremist fanaticism. These, however, only serve to limit our understanding. Within the realm of practice which helps us to gain inner freedom, the choice of methods are actually quite diverse. There are many methods available that concentrate specifically on our own individual make-up and personality.

First, when choosing a practice, we should shop
around to see which method best fits our own unique needs. We should try and choose a method which will utilize our natural tendencies and will therefore reinforce a positive attitude. If we are athletic, for example, a motionless form of meditation may initially be a constant struggle against our body. Instead, a moving meditation like T'ai Chi or Sufi whirling may be more appropriate. If we are somewhat emotional in nature, we may be drawn to singing or chanting as a developing form of meditative practice. We may also find Hatha yoga postures, Zen walking exercises, or the discipline of martial art movements very helpful in quieting our body and mind. Various church services and experiences which vibrate with the "Spirit of Christ" can be very purifying as well. In fact, any method which helps us to let go of the obsessiveness of habit patterns can be used as a purifying or meditative technique.

Whichever procedure or practice we choose, concentration is the root skill that underlies all methods. Concentration teaches us to keep our mind fixed on a specific task or object, and allows us to let distractions go by. In reference to the method of sitting meditation, Swami Muktananda once said, "The mind should not wander outside the present moment; rather it should stop within the boundaries of the moment and become completely still there. If, in the name of meditation you merely sit somewhere with your eyes closed and allow your mind to wander all over town, you are simply wasting your time."
The skill of concentration is simple in definition but takes great patience to develop in practice. One way to begin developing concentration is to pick some object or sound and focus attention on it for a certain length of time. When we find our mind starting to wander, we can simply acknowledge the distraction and then gently return its focus back to our object of concentration. Once we develop even a little concentration—which happens after a relatively short period of time—our other methods of spiritual practice are also enhanced. Through concentration we learn to rise above feeling confined to body-consciousness, and through meditation we learn to rise above being confined to thoughts and desires. We will know that our mind has become concentrated when the idea of time begins to vanish from our thoughts. Because we measure time by the constant repetition of mass level interactions, the more concentrated we are, the more time will pass unnoticed. When we become perfectly concentrated, all time will have the tendency to come and stand in the one present moment.

A system of meditation which will produce the power of concentrating the mind on anything whatsoever is indispensable.

Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrine
Whoever strays from the Path will in no way 
attain to anything worthwhile; even though he 
may enjoy countless pleasures and acquire a pub-
lic reputation which resounds to the heavens.
Ibn El-Aribi
Sufi Saint

Most of us spend our lifetime walking along the path 
that Zen identifies as the "Crooked Way," which is the over-
grieving of inevitable sorrows and over-clinging to joys 
that must eventually cease. We are forever looking beyond 
the present moment: into the future or into the past. 
Traveling the Crooked Way means that we are likely to miss 
a beautiful passage of sunlight through the trees or a pat-
tern of dancing tree-leaf shadows silhouetted against a 
late afternoon wall. It means that we likely miss the sound 
of the tick of a clock or the falling rain, for they are 
drowned out by the turning "wheels" of our intellect. On 
the Crooked path our attention is seldom found resting in 
the present moment. Not having worked at concentrating our 
mind, and being controlled by our habitual thought patterns, 
our awareness is rarely focused in on the here and now. We, 
in fact, tend to reject the here and now, are unhappy with 
it, and want to be somewhere else. Though we want to be 
somewhere else, getting somewhere else brings with it just 
as much unhappiness because "there" is also "here." What 
we are really looking for and what we really want is all 
around us, but we do not want this because it is all around
us. Every step of our life is an effort because we imagine our true happiness to be external and distant. Our labored lives reflect avoidance and endless pursuit, as these lyrics of Jackson Browne suggest:

No matter how fast I run, I can never seem to get away from me.
No matter where I am I can't help feeling I'm just a day away from where I want to be.2

Because we get so involved with our grandiose thoughts and great expectations, it becomes very easy to miss what is going on in the present. How often are we doing one thing and thinking about something else? Our attention is so easily distracted by our wandering thoughts that we often lose concentration to what we are doing or saying in the present moment. A Sufi story illustrates:

'There was once a certain madman (thought mad because he would not conform to consensus reality) who would not take part in congregational prayers.
One Friday evening, after much difficulty, the people of the congregation induced him to attend. But as soon as the leader of the prayer started to recite, the madman began to bellow like an ox.
The people, assuming that he was only reverting to madness, but at the same time desirous of helping him, challenged him afterwards: "Have you no idea of God, that you should make a noise like an animal in the middle of a believing congregation?" But the madman said: "I was only doing what the prayer leader was doing. When he intoned, he was buying an ox, and I spoke like an ox."
When this strange remark was reported to the leader of the prayer, he confessed: "When I was saying, God is Greatest of All, I was in fact thinking about my farm. And when I got to the phrase, Praise to God, I thought that I would buy an ox. It was at that moment that I heard something bellowing."3
When tomorrow comes, think tomorrow's thoughts.
Chinese Proverb

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To truly live in the here and now means that we do not abandon ourselves as human beings. It means that we do not try and hide or escape from unpleasant situations, nor do we grasp or cling to pleasant ones. As each new moment unfolds, we take whatever comes our way and work with it. We try to learn from both our pleasure and pain and try to bring more awareness into our thought processes. Because it is in our thoughts where we hold on to our various clingings, it is these thoughts which keep us removed from the here and now. A Zen story reflects this point:

'Tanzan and Ekido were once traveling together down a muddy road. A heavy rain was still falling. Coming around a bend, they met a lovely girl in a silk kimono and sash, unable to cross the intersection. "Come on girl," said Tanzan at once. Lifting her in his arms, he carried her over the mud.

Ekido did not speak again until that night when they reached a lodging temple. Then he could no longer restrain himself. "We monks don't go near females," he told Tanzan, "especially young and lovely ones. It is dangerous. Why did you do that?"

"I left the girl there," said Tanzan. "Are you still carrying her?"

Because our thoughts are the principal means by which we hold on to desires, Zen tell us that we must look beyond our thoughts in order to truly live in the present. Zen, in the strict sense, tells us that living in the here and now means not choosing, not praising, blaming, liking
or loathing. Day to day Zen manifested, however, means to live choosing, praising, blaming, liking and loathing, but doing them lightly, without attachment. Living, breathing Zen means that we can rejoice with those who are rejoicing, and weep with those who are weeping, but we are not taking either too seriously. Living Zen means we can see God's play within all tears of sorrow and in all laughter of joy. It means that we are welcoming each newly emerging moment with the same patience, understanding, and openness as the next. When we are in the present moment we are not holding on to anything in time, so nothing can cling to us. Life's sorrows as well as life's joys are equally accepted as God's omnipotent plan. We are just fully present in any situation as it occurs. The time we spend working, supporting, and maintaining our existence is the same as the time spent in leisure. There is never any place better to be because everywhere is always right here, and everything is always happening right now.

Ram Dass once delineated a short but potent awareness exercise he said would help keep us in the here and now. At different times during the day, Ram Dass suggested we ask ourselves, "Where am I?" and he reminded us that the answer will always be "here." Next we can ask ourselves, "What time is it?" and the answer will always be "now." Ram Dass recommended we repeat this exercise over and over until we are really hearing it. He said that in this way we will help draw our attention away from habitual thought patterns.
The exercise will assist us in focusing in on each presently existing moment.

The Buddha once told this parable to a small gathering of followers:

'A man traveling across a field encountered a tiger. He fled, the tiger after him. Coming to a precipice, he caught hold of the root of a wild vine and swung himself down over the edge. The tiger sniffed at him from above. Trembling, the man looked down to where far below another tiger was waiting to eat him. Only the vine sustained him. Two mice, one white and one black, little by little started to gnaw away the vine. The man saw a luscious strawberry near him. Grasping the vine with one hand, he plucked the strawberry with the other. How sweet it tasted!'

Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.

Luke 12:37

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NOW BE HERE NOW BE HERE

HERE NOW BE HERE NOW

BE NOW HERE BE
If our spiritual practice progresses and we continue to develop an added awareness into our discursive thought processes, we will begin to relate with our internal energies more directly. We will start to see how various energies operate within us and begin to learn how to transmute these energies into higher, more productive realms of functioning. One such workable energy is the energy manifested through our emotions.

Our emotions are, essentially, a specific form of life energy. This energy, often termed "pran" or "prana" in the East, is considered to be the finest form or the tiniest quantum of energy that underlies the whole physical universe. The pran generated from our emotions is understood as a specific frequency of this cosmic energy, with its frequency differing from other energy forms by its vibrational rate and amplitude. Solids, for example, are pran in a gross form, while light is pran in a finer form. The pran we use for our thoughts and emotions is also a subtle form of energy vibration, though we need to learn how to harness this energy in order to use it to spiritually advance ourselves.

When we begin working with our emotions, we are initially working with an aspect of our intellect. Because our thoughts can focus pran, they can make our emotions very directive and powerful. Our emotional impulses them-
selves pass through a discrete channel of output and thus generate their own separate power supply. Although the energy of emotions start out on the same frequency as that of thoughts, because they function through a separate channel, at any one time they can generate more energy and overpower thoughts. This is why emotional responses are often times irrational. Their upsurge of energy can easily overwhelm our rational thought processes and, in a sense, take them over. At this point our emotions can become frightening and painful because we are not in control of them. During a strong emotional upsurge we may even feel as though we are losing our sanity, our basic center of command.

Emotions cease to be an internal threat or an external problem when we learn to relate fully and thoroughly with them. When we form a relationship with them, we can even transform their energy, their pran, into a finer form of spiritual vibration. The way of working with emotions is to relate with their pranic substance. But, in order to do this, we must first proceed along some prescribed stages of development. We must first learn to see, witness, and handle our emotions.\textsuperscript{1}

Chogyam Trungpa described some of the essential characteristics of working with emotions. In the case of seeing emotions, he said we must first gain a conscious understanding and a working awareness that our emotions have their own channel for development. We must realize that
they can act as though they have a mind of their own. We need to understand that our emotions have the potential to create bountiful joy or hysterical outrage.

Witnessing an emotion involves observing a pulsation of emotional energy as it comes towards us. If someone were to cut in front of us while driving, for example, by witnessing our emotion, we would watch the pulsation of anger starting to rise within us. Witnessing is simply observing this anger impulse occurring. It is becoming mindful of our emotions.

To handle an emotion, as Trungpa states, "we realize that our emotional energy is workable." Having acquired a degree of emotional mindfulness through concentration practice, we are able to conceptually pick up an emotion as if it were something tangible. Here we can actually mentally handle the emotion and see both sides of it. On one side, for example, we can see ourselves getting angry. On the other side, we can see ourselves staying cool and witnessing the whole event take place. Here we are learning to release ourselves from unproductive emotional energy (like anger) and learning to experience it as if it were "nothing special."

Having gained a certain amount of mastery over the preliminary steps of seeing, witnessing, and handling emotions, we are then ready to transmute emotional energy into spiritual energy. The usual problem in dealing with our emotions, Trungpa points out, is when a strong impulse arises, we often feel challenged or taken over by it. Often
we react against the emotion for fear that the force might become too much for us to handle. Transmutation of emotional energy, however, is not a matter of rejecting or suppressing the basic emotional qualities. Rather, it is becoming one with them. Transmutation involves going through our fear by letting ourselves fully experience and give into the emotional upsurge completely. By allowing ourselves to experience an emotion fully, we begin to go toward the emotion rather than just letting the emotional energy come toward us. In this way the most powerful emotional energies become manageable because there is nothing left to frighten us or to take us over. There is nothing to take us over because we are not putting up any resistance to the energy. And, if there is no resistance, then a sense of balance can occur. This balance in turn creates a more harmonious fusion between our pranic frequency and our environment. Our emotional energy is therefore transmuted into vibrations that are more spiritually tuned to our very nature, the Nature of All Things.

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To have successfully transmuted all forms of pran into spirit is to reach a level where pran exists in transcendental form. It is to reach a repose where all our energy has been transformed into the transcendental quality known as the "Clear White Light." This is to merge into a homogeneous light field from which all other planes of existence are derived. This Clear Light, which
corresponds directly with the seventh chakra level, is also called Pure Spirit, Pure Light, and Pure Consciousness. This spiritual Light is said to be so immense that it transcends every form of rational understanding. In the Bhagavad-Gita there is a passage that equates this Light to a thousand suns: "Suppose a thousand suns should rise together into the sky: such is the glory of the Shape of Infinite God."

When we have successfully succeeded in ceasing to identify with our body, senses, emotions, and thoughts, and have transmuted all of our various energies into Spirit, we then merge into this Pure Consciousness, into God. When we have severed all attachments and have become one with this Pure Light, we are then a totality of our Perfection; we are "Sat Chit Ananda:" total existence, total knowledge, and total bliss. Short of this state, however, are the many intermediary steps of purification and surrender that need to be implemented.
Surrender. Surrender is protection and surrender is illumination. Surrender is our perfection. We begin our journey at the very commencement of our life. We surrender our existence to our parents and get, in return, protection. We listen to our parents. We surrender to their will, to their advice and suggestions, and we are protected, well protected. Joy boundless we feel in our day to day life when we are children. Why? Because we surrender our personal will, our own thinking, to our parents, and immediately we receive joy plus protection. In protection is joy, and in joy is protection.

Now in the evening of our life, what happens? If we follow the inner life and the spiritual life, in the evening of our life we also surrender. To whom? To the Inner Pilot, the Lord Supreme. Then we again get joy, perfect joy, unalloyed joy.

To quote Dante, "The happiest man is he who can connect the evening of his life with the beginning."

Now, if we are all sincere seekers of the ultimate Truth, then our journey begins with surrender to our parents, who are our well-wishers, our dearest and nearest ones. When we surrender our existence to them, we get joy in abundant measure. Then, when we walk along the path of spirituality, at every moment we try to listen to the dictates of our inner being. The more we listen to our inner being, the greater is our joy, and the higher our fulfillment. And then, when our term is over, when we have to enter into another world for a short rest, if we consciously surrender to God's Will, ours will be the supreme joy, the glory supreme.¹

Sri Chinmoy

The essence of spiritual surrender is perhaps best understood as the converting of "my will be done," to "Thy Will Be Done." "My will" means that we see ourselves as the ultimate choice makers in our lives. To allow "Thy Will" to be done means that we give up the idea that it is us, that it is ourselves as separate egos, who are really in control of our lives. It is giving up the idea that we as separate individuals possess the power to create and maintain our
existence on our own.

True surrender is giving up our individual ego control and casting all of our care upon Him, upon divine law. It means that we must have complete faith and trust in the power of God, in the power of the universal laws that govern our existence. Allowing "Thy Will" to be done in practical terms means that we let go of the outcome, the end result of any of our actions or endeavors. It means that we surrender our actions so that they are no longer motivated by personal profit or personal gain. If we give an order as a teacher or official, for example, it can be given without a thought of the possibility of its not being obeyed. If, however, it is not obeyed, there need not be any personal irritation or wounded vanity. The outcome of any situation is out of our hands and into the hands of God, so to speak. Only then do we become channels for the divine "Will" to be carried out.

One of the most difficult aspects to relinquish, when it comes to surrendering spiritually, is our judgmental mentality. "Judge not," in the strict sense, is usually taken to mean, "do not judge others," for by the yardstick with which we judge, we ourselves will be judged. It means that what we deny to others will also be denied to us, for the simple reason that we always legislate for ourselves. All of our words and actions define the world in which we want to live. If we say, for example, that people should not do or say so and so, it will not affect their lives or
change their experiences, but we will no longer have the freedom to do or say these things. If we say people's sexual experiences are vulgar, it will not change their experiences, but our sexual experiences will become vulgar. When we judge others and deny them the right to be free, we, in effect, only deny ourselves that freedom. And, it is precisely our own mental resistance which causes us to deny others their freedom. Though our resistance is usually wrapped in the cloak of morality, we forget that it is not up to us to do any judging whatsoever. "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke 6:37).

Judge not, somewhat more crystalized, also means not to judge our own actions, as well as those of others, good or bad, right or wrong, approving or disapproving. An abstention from judging, however, does not mean that we do not know what is right or what is wrong. What it means is that we give up our fixed categories of what is always right or always wrong. It means that we perceive experience from a state of flexible awareness where nothing is ever seen as being right or wrong within itself. Rather, it is who is doing what and for what reason which determines any action's wholesomeness, any action's rightness or wrongness. It means we no longer see anything as being inherently right or wrong, but rather, our motives behind doing something determine whether it is right or wrong for us in any particular situation.
Letting go of our right and wrong categories also brings with it the grave peril of succumbing to evil. We must therefore train ourselves to no longer yield to anything, not even to what we think is good. If we do not side with anything, if we do not categorize anything as being either good or bad, we then relativize both good and evil and convert them into halves of a wholeness or oneness. In practical terms though, this means that good and evil are no longer as self-evident. Everything appears to become wildly subjective. But to truly live with no judgment whatsoever, to live with "Thy Will" being done, both objectivity and subjectivity lose discriminatory meaning. We must have sufficient faith in the fact that our real nature is no different than the nature of all things, than the true nature of God.

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When Yogananda, the highly revered holy man, was a child, he was known as Mukunda. During a period of personal seeking, Mukunda, too, questioned the meaning of true surrender. To Swami Dayananda, Mukunda posed the question of how he might sustain himself if he never asked for bodily nourishment: "Swamiji, I am puzzled about following your instructions. Suppose I never ask for food, and nobody gives me any. I should starve to death." "Die then!" This alarming counsel split the air. "Die if you must, Mukunda! Never believe that you live by the power of food and not by the power of God! He who has created every form
of nourishment. He who has bestowed appetite, will inevitably see that His devotee is maintained. Do not imagine that rice sustains you nor that money or men support you. Could they aid you if the Lord withdraws your life breath?"² In the Bible, Jesus too, succinctly states the essence of spiritual surrender: "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it" (Luke 17:33).

It is only the illusion of "mine" in all this that you have to recognize and renounce.

Swami Muktananda

John Calvin, the Protestant reformer of the 16th century, also spoke on our tendency to rely on our own will rather than on the Will of God. He told how he sees God responding to such presumptuous behavior: "Firstly, we are too inclined by nature to attribute all our achievements to our own flesh... We are apt to become uplifted through what is simply an inane confidence in the flesh, and the result of this is that we grow proudly independent of God Himself; as if our powers could enable us to do without His grace. The best way for Him to shatter all such arrogance is to prove to us by experience not only how foolish we are, but also how weak. Therefore He afflicts us with disgrace or poverty or bereavement or disease or other calamities, and when we find that we are unable any longer to bear up under them by our own strength, we soon give in. And thus in our humiliation we learn to look to Him for the power which
alone can make us strong under the burden of our suffering."^3

What we usually pray to God for is not that His Will be done, but that He approve ours. H.B. Gross

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The essential purpose of spiritual surrender may be said to be the task of making ourselves unnoticeable. True surrender strips us of the things which make us stand out, the things which give us leverage in defining ourselves as "somebody special." If we are trying to be special, if we desire prestige and reputation, we are still carrying out our own will. If, however, our energy is turned within, if we are allowing God's Will to be done, then we are becoming depersonalized of our ego. Chogyam Trungpa used an analogy of everyone being thrown into a big cauldron of soup. He said that we cannot stick our neck out and say, "I'm a carrot, isn't my orange color noticeable?"^4 If our "specialness" is still noticeable, we have not boiled long enough, we have not been sufficiently stripped of our ego. This may indeed seem like a disappointing approach to spirituality, as Trungpa points out, but in order to make ourselves channels of divine "Will," we must extract those things which keep us isolated from God. Once we decide to follow God's Will, we must boil out all those things which we use to define ourselves as separate. And part of the reality of this depersonalizing is that when we turn up the fire to boil out our separateness, we sometimes must burn in the process.
'Once upon a time, a man was contemplating the ways in which Nature operates and, he discovered, because of his concentration and application, how fire could be made. This man was called Nour. He decided to travel from one community to another showing people his discovery.

Nour passed on his secret of making fire to many groups of people. Some took advantage of the knowledge. Others drove him away, thinking that he must be dangerous, before they had taken time to understand how valuable this discovery could be to them. Finally, a tribe before which he demonstrated the art of fire making, became so panic-stricken that they set about and killed him, being convinced that he was a demon.

Centuries passed. The first tribe which had learned about fire reserved the secret for their priests, who remained in affluence and power while the people froze. The second tribe forgot the art and worshipped instead the instruments. The third tribe worshipped a likeness of Nour himself, because it was he who had taught them. The fourth tribe retained the story of the making of fire in their legends: some believed them, some did not. The fifth community really did use fire, and this enabled them to be warmed, to cook their food, and to manufacture all kinds of useful articles.'

Although there is a vast dichotomy between the various religious and spiritual practices of the world, true spirituality is directly related to this fifth community. In order to begin experiencing our divine selves as spirit, we must not only learn how to use fire, but must also enter into the fire. During spiritual transformation, a burning away of our impurities is needed.

In the course of becoming whole, purification must first take place. During this period of spiritual awakening, an emptiness and loss of meaning with life will often times occur. The more we advance in spiritual discipline and pull
away from ego preoccupation, the more it might seem that the richness and romance is fleeting from our lives. We may feel as though nothing is special anymore, that all is just plain and ordinary. This feeling of emptiness, however, is brought about to allow the much subtler spiritual energies to transform each moment of our lives into a richer, more joyful experience of our divinity. But in order for this process to cleanse us, our high experiences which center around ego gratification must lessen and eventually fall away. For a period of time our lives can take on a sadness and depression because nothing seems exciting. St. John of the Cross called this time the "dark night of the soul." It is when our soul has lost the flavor of life but has not yet gained the fullness of its own divinity.

What distinguishes this dark night of the soul from typical ego depression is that from time to time a sort of clarity will manifest within the emptiness. This clarity often comes like a flickering patch of light seen at the end of a long dark tunnel. Because this light is not based upon ego, it serves as a remembrance as to what is taking place: to the transformation at hand. Sometimes there is also an occasional bursting forth of inexplicable joy, but the duration of this joy is much too short and is once again followed by a swing into emptiness. At this point we have not yet become pure or strong enough to permanently hold our divinity within. Our habitual patterns of perception and behavior are still dominating our field of experience.
To better understand this "dark night" process, St. John described some pertinent points of its unfoldment:

"After the initial awakening to the true path, the path that knows of God existing within everybody and everything, the delight and pleasure of this knowledge begins to come to an end so that purification can commence. As the darkness sets in, one must bear this lack of sweetness in order to gain the sight of God, which is that of total equality. And since this process involves a new perception and a new understanding, one most likely will have to suffer the change with a bad grace, and one can very easily become irritated over the smallest matter. Now that God has showed us the Way, He sets us down from His arms in order to teach us to walk on our own two feet; which we feel to be very strange, for everything seems to be going wrong with us." St. John added, "When a soul finds no pleasure or consolation in the things of God, it also fails to find it in anything created; for, as God sets the soul in this dark night to the end that He may quench and purge its sensual desire, He allows it not to find attraction or sweetness in anything whatsoever."³

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring more fruit.

John 15:2

Within the purging of karmic impurities, our soul will likely suffer many ups and downs during the proceed-
ings. Our life can feel to be a bit like, in the words of Ram Dass, "a roller coaster ride." Each new height that our soul aspires to is usually followed by a new low. The prosperity that our soul enjoys following a certain amount of purifying will often be followed by other storms and trails; so much so that we appear to be given a period of calm so that we may be forewarned of the poverty which is to come. St. John tells us that this fluctuation is the ordinary course and proceeding of the state of contemplation until our soul arrives at a state of quietness. He said that our soul never remains in the same state for long, but is ascending and descending continually. Understanding this can make it a little easier to ride with both phases of our purification.

Ram Dass tells us that as we further our purification, our impurities can also seem to be getting larger and grosser. He said that it is not that we are continuing to get caught in our desires, but rather, as we continue to cleanse ourselves, we begin to see our impurities more clearly. Seeing our impurities more clearly means that our ego is thinning out and trying harder to hold on to something. Ram Dass said that the lions guarding the gates of the inner temples get fiercer as we proceed towards each new temple. We must therefore stay very one-pointed in concentration so as not to succumb to these seemingly more intense desires.

* * * *
Spiritual purification can be understood to exist on three main levels of experience. The first level is physical quietness. This is where our body becomes supple and can remain still over long periods of time. This phase of purification is necessary in order to train our body not to act on our mind's every impulse. Mental quietness, the second level of purification, occurs when we are no longer dissuaded or distracted by our wandering thoughts, when our mind can become focused and remain focused in the present moment. The third level occurs when we are no longer preoccupied with wandering desires. This is when we can perform our life's actions selflessly, without personal motive. When we have become sufficiently mindful of our desires and are no longer motivated to act upon them, we are in the third stage of purification.

Spiritual awakening itself can be simply stated as the act of letting go. It can be understood as the process of letting go of all forms of mental resistance. To be able to proceed with letting go, however, we need to balance the three main components of a meditative life. The first is purification; the second concentration, and the third is wisdom. These three spiritually tuned aspects, once balanced, begin to work together and allow us to let go of more and more of the things that keep us feeling separate and impure.

Ram Dass once noted that, in order for us to be interested in spirituality and meditation in the first place,
we must have a little wisdom to start with. We must have some understanding of what this path to Perfection is about to even want to sit and meditate. Starting with a little wisdom, then, motivates us to try a little concentration. Usually, however, we find that every time we try and concentrate our mind, all our desires that connect us to the world keep pulling at us. To help alleviate this pulling, we are drawn to simplifying our life a little. Purification, therefore, helps us to let go of some of our resistance. As we simplify our life, our concentration can also become deeper. As our concentration deepens, our mind becomes a little quieter and we can then see and hear more of the total cosmological picture. As our awareness expands, our wisdom and understanding can likewise intensify. The more our wisdom expands, the easier it is to let go of more of our resistance, more of our attachment. These three components, therefore, continue to interweave with one another to help propel us along on our spiritual path.

As our spiritual practice helps to cleanse us of our subtle clingings, we eventually become better equipped to receive the stronger, more finely tuned energies needed for God union. As we proceed with purification and experience the greater amounts of energy within us, we must also be mindful not to use this additional energy to pander to our lower chakra desires. Because all of our habits of reaction are based upon our usual input of energy, as we gain more energy, we may not know how to utilize it. Ram
Dass used the analogy of saying it is like we are feeding in a 220 volt current into a home which is wired for 110 volts. We must therefore develop a new framework to use our increased quantities of energy.

Gaining newly acquired energy correlates with, and involves us in, the transmuting of our sexual energy into spiritual energy. For this purpose, Buddhist scripture describes two main strategies to aid us. The first and most heavily recommended method requires us to avoid the fulfilling of our still active sexual desires. This straight-forward strategy, called "straightening by fire," directs us away from sexual stimulation and suggests we use this energy for specific acts of spiritual discipline (meditation, chanting, mantra, etc.). This particular form of discipline evolved out of traditional Buddhist Theravadan doctrine which advocated a general withdrawal from worldly life. Basically, it held that if one was not sexually tempted through his senses, he could more readily sever the connection between sexual thoughts and sexual desire. Ouspensky, too, addressed this strategy saying, "If a man gives way to all his desires, or panders to them, there will be no inner struggle in him, no friction, no fire. But, if for the sake of attaining a definite aim, he struggles with the desires that hinder him, he will then create a fire which will gradually transform his inner world into a single whole."5
Do not do what you want and then you may do what you like.

Sadasiva

A snake gets through the hole when it has straightened itself.

Chinese Proverb

Green wood can be bent; when it is dry, it is only straightened by fire.

Sufi Saying

Because of the very nature of temptation, there will always be something more to want, something more to desire. This is why, in order to become free of desire, it is essential that we break the link which identifies us with our desires. Desire itself, it is said, will continue, for it is part of the dance of nature. But, as Ramakrishna said, "A true renunciate no longer thinks that he is his desires." To no longer identify ourselves with our desires, and to no longer cater to them, they eventually lose their power over us. There is a Zen saying which gives good advice when it comes to dealing with desire. It says simply, "When a desire comes, consider it, and then let it go." With increased concentration on our spiritual work, and ceasing to indulge in habit, eventually desire will lose its hold on us and will gradually fall away.

Cultivate a crop of desire, yield a soiled harvest.

Daniel Toms

Before describing the second method of working with the pranic forces of desire, it may be helpful to first
understand an Eastern view of the meaning and implications behind the Adam and Eve story. Sri Yukteswar gave an expanded explanation of this biblical account to Yogananda so that he might better grasp the subtle and symbolic implications of the story. Yogananda inquired of Sri Yukteswar, "Why did God punish not only the guilty pair, but also the innocent unborn generations?" Sri Yukteswar replied, "Genesis is deeply symbolic and cannot be grasped by a literal interpretation." He proceeded to explain. "Its 'tree of life' is the human body. The spinal cord is like an upturned tree, with man's hair as its roots, and afferent and efferent nerves as branches. The tree of the nervous system bears many enjoyable fruits, or sensations of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. In these, man may rightfully indulge; but he was forbidden the experience of sexual indulgence, the 'apple' at the center of the body, 'in the midst of the garden.'"

...we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

Genesis 3:2-3

Because the sexual fluid contained within our body is what gets transformed into spiritual energy as it moves up to the higher chakra levels, we were forbidden to "waste" this energy on sexual indulgence. When our energy is focused toward the second chakra and we indulge in sexual pleasure for sexual gratification; when we "eat of the
fruit," or "touch it," hold sexual desire in our thoughts, we then continue to renew our physical life karma and keep ourselves bound to the life-death (suffering) cycle.

Sri Yukteswar continued to explain the symbolism of Genesis. "The serpent represents the coiled up spinal energy that stimulates the sex nerves. 'Adam' (or man, where reason predominates), and 'Eve' (or woman, where feeling is ascendant) represent the first human bodies and express the polarity that exists within us all, but manifests as dominant traits in us as individuals. When the emotions or Eve-consciousness in any human being is overpowered by the sex impulse (serpent), his (our) reason, or Adam, also succumbs."6

The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. The woman said, The serpent (sex force) beguiled me, and I did eat (indulge).

Genesis 3:12-13

Because our libidinal impulses contain such an enormous amount of energy, our sexual desire cannot be mastered in just a few weeks or months. In fact, complete eradication of the sex impulse is known to be the most difficult of all yogic practice. It takes a very disciplined mind and a tremendously concentrated effort to keep this impulse from overwhelming our thoughts and influencing our actions. For most of us, this desire is the one with the longest roots. Without one-pointed concentration and divine preoccupation, this desire cannot be totally
eliminated from our thoughts. Its force will continue to control us until we understand its nature, until we have control over its arousal and sensational levels and can transmute its power.

The second alternative to working with sexual energy is learning how to fulfill a desire while at the same time staying consciously aware of the entire energy exchange process. This method of practice is called "maituna" or "tantra." It involves subtle procedures of learning how to disengage ourselves from habitual desire patterns by using sensations themselves as a form of release.

After we are born, what we experience all through infancy and childhood is a sexuality that is diffused throughout our whole body. As we grow up, however, our energies begin to focus in on the particular chakras which have the strongest pull, which need the most work. For most of us, the strongest energy pull is toward our genitals, toward the second chakra. In order for us to work with these energies and to regain a state of sexuality diffused throughout our organism, certain yogic techniques were developed. To help us learn how to transmute our sexual energy up into the higher chakra centers, tantra came into practice. Tantra essentially involves the creating of an awareness into our sensation system. This awareness is not only an awareness of our feeling sensations, but is also an awareness into our not-sensations or witness sensations.
This means that we develop our mindfulness to such an extent that we watch ourselves undergo a sexual sensation fully, as a unitive experience, while simultaneously watching the interaction between us and the experience of the sensation take place. Rather than following our usual pattern of getting lost in the sensational aspects of the sexual experience, we learn to create an awareness into our sensations. We learn to use this awareness to break the link between our sensations and our desires.

Tantra allows us to not only observe our sexual energy becoming directive, but also teaches us how to separate this energy from its habitual arousal patterns. Zen, too, tells us that one very effective way to work with anything which causes extreme attraction or repulsion is to observe and learn from it. For example, Zen suggests we keep looking at a snake until it ceases to be repulsive, or to keep looking at a naked man or woman until he or she ceases to be arousal producing, and to keep looking until both snakes and naked bodies become supremely divine. Though witnessing procedures can teach us how to strip away the sensational and magnetizing aspects of life, it should be noted that since these techniques involve arousing lower chakra energy, it is easy to get caught in the ego attachment and gratification of these energies. It is therefore recommended that we keep away from the fires of the lower chakras and rather, rely on divine concentration and assistance to help us extinguish the flames.
Conserve your powers. Daily renewed sense yearnings sap your inner peace; they are like openings in a reservoir that allow vital waters to be wasted in the desert soil of materialism.

The forceful activating impulse of wrong desire is the greatest enemy to the happiness of man. Roam in the world as a lion of self-control; don't let the frogs of sense weakness kick you around.

Sri Yukteswar

To really want to extract ourselves from desire means that we must, at each moment of every day, cultivate and rely on our developing awareness to tell us exactly what it is we are ready to let go of. In order to do this, however, our mind must be very quiet so that we can hear what we need to let go, or do not need to let go of, next. One day, for example, it may be better for us to watch a certain television program or to engage in a certain social event. This may be what we need to do at our particular stage of purification. The next day or week, however, it may be better for us to turn our energy inward and spend our time in quiet contemplation. This may be what we need to do most in order to stay in balance with our spiritual path. Because working with desires is very subtle, we also need to be very honest with ourselves. We have to honestly ask ourselves if what we are doing is bringing us closer to God; if it is moving us further along on our path to Perfection. If what we are doing is not bringing us closer, we can then work to let go of it. If we try and pull away from our desires too soon, however, this will also cause us to remain fixed within ourselves. When we try to extract
ourselves from desire prematurely, we only create a resist-
ance. Don Juan reminds us that self-denial is, in itself,
an indulgence. He said, "The indulgence of denying our-
selves is far worse than the usual indulging because it
forces us to believe we are doing great things, when in
effect we are only fixed within ourselves." If we cut off
only the stock of desire, the roots will still remain. If
we only cut off our desires at ground level, they can once
again resurface and bid for attention. If, on the other
hand, we continue to hang on to a desire by habit, even
after its purpose has been served, we create additional
karma through which we must work. And, as the mystics say,
it is but our existing karma which keeps us feeling bound
and feeling imperfect in the first place.

I abandoned desire and went back to it. Then,
it abandoned me, and I never went back to it.
Sufi Saint
CHAPTER NINETEEN: LOVE IS ALL YOU NEED

We, as human beings, are all intimately connected through our pran, through the subtle energies which pervade and permeate the entire cosmos. Because of this pranic connection, we are also governed by the same universal laws, the most primary of which is love. It is through love that we may more readily transform and expand our pran into higher and purer vibratory levels of existence.

In order to use love as a pranic purifier, we must know what level of love we are engaging in. Love itself can be said to exist on four main levels, with each level being distinguishable by particular motivational characteristics. These four levels are not mutually exclusive, although each level is tuned in to a particular vibratory frequency. The first level, for example, is distinguished by its physical and biological motivational aspects. This type of love is best understood by the statement, "Let's make love." This physical love can be either "dharmic" or "adharmic," spiritual or worldly, depending on whether it is used for personal gratification or as a unitive sharing of oneself as a human being. Scripturally considered, this type of love's sole purpose is to procreate, though it is seldom used for this purpose only.

The second love level is associated with sincere friendship and respect. The basis of this love is trust. It is the interconnection which exists between "best friends"
or with a positive parental or relative relationship. It is the love bond that develops as we share our intimate selves with someone, without worry of judgment or self-consciousness. Because this love is generally "specific," it is still a limited type of love. As a love reserved for a "special few," it is not without some elements of ego.

The third level of love, romantic love, is best characterized by a love of personality. This type of love is, for the most part, motivated by physical attraction, while developing and maintaining itself through personal interaction. Romantic love is typically sought after in such a way that we usually seek to be loved, rather than to love. We tend to expect something from the other person and thus create a space where disappointment, jealousy, and coercion can develop. When we desire to be loved, we tend to think of the ideal love existing between our partner and ourself as a total blending of the two lives, of becoming immersed in the life of the other. Such a relationship, however, is seldom productive because there is little or no room for individual growth. Immersion in the life of another can only, at best, provide a temporary escape from our sense of aloneness. The most productive kind of romantic love is that which allows the fullest development of our own individuality, while still allowing us to share and give of ourselves as loving human beings. Only in this way is romantic love cultivated into a growth oriented, sacred type of relationship. When used productively, romantic
love can illumine us to our full human potential. However, because this love is centrally based on a love of personality, it rarely allows us to step into the more expansive fourth level of love experience.

The fourth love level, sometimes called "conscious love," takes place when we have entered into the space beyond ego and personality preoccupation. This is the state of love where we, in effect, become love; not "loving" as a verb, but when we "are love," as a noun. When in this space, we are constantly open and unresisting to all vibrational levels. Our pranic vibrations become so finely tuned that we can actually "feel" love both externally and from within. When we are in this space, the people around us can experience us vibrationally when they are open to our expanded love frequencies. On this fourth level, our calm loving presence helps to free those about us who are ready themselves to expand in love. Since on this level we are actually the embodiment of love, it allows for others around us to raise their vibrational level to their highest potential if and when they so choose to rise.

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Relating with people whose love vibrations are higher or lower than our own, there is a natural tendency to want to either stabilize at a similar frequency, or withdraw our vibrations completely from the existing situation. Because we naturally feel uncomfortable in
the presence of vibrations higher or lower than our own, we tend to make certain natural responses. If a person is on a lower level than us, for example, we will generally try to get him up to our level. Our tendency is to try and help open this person up, to try and lessen his resistance to higher levels of functioning. If, on the other hand, someone is vibrating higher than us, we will often, at first, try to bring him down to our lower level. It should be noted that when we try to help an individual raise his vibrational level, we are also working against his mostly unconscious effort to bring us down to his level. A person vibrating at a lower level will, in fact, be trying to drain the energy of the higher person, often under the guise of social motives. This pulling down effort can take many forms, such as pleading for help, looking for sympathy, sarcasm, giving suggestive remarks about lower vibrational stimuli, starting an argument, and a whole host of other strategies used to pull down the higher person's vibratory level.

When we are faced with this "pulling down" behavior, the redeeming remedy is simply to keep up a steady outflow of love. This love outflow will then prevent any resistance within our mind. The lower vibrating person may keep reaching farther and farther to bring us down, but when he finds that we will not come down, when he senses that we have no internal resistance to him, he will either have to raise to our level, or depart from the situation. He will
either have to raise his vibrations in order to feel stable and comfortable, or the instability existing between vibrations will be too painful for him to stay around us.

The disparity between vibrations and the disintegration of relationships often times occurs when a person engages in spiritual practice. Because one's vibrational love level normally begins to rise as spiritual practice develops, the people around a practitioner, such as family and friends, must either adjust to, or reject, any higher vibrations. This is why friendships based on vibration similarity often extinguish when one member raises his vibratory level. Because of the karmic bond which exists between family members, however, close relations, more often than not, will adjust and rise to higher vibratory levels. This is why it is said that when one member of a household becomes "blessed," the whole family receives divine gifts as well.

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It is quite natural in pursuing spirituality, or in just trying to be happier and more fulfilled, to look to our everyday experiences for signs and results. Actually, our daily experience can be viewed as being nothing but an expression of our spiritual condition. At each moment we are but a living statement of how conscious and loving we are. All we say, all we do, and how we do it, is constantly defining how much love or lack of it we are bringing into each moment. By our willingness
to love we actually determine who we are and what type of life experience happens to us. Since each one of us is the same kind of being, we are capable of expanding in love or withdrawing it. We are therefore responsible for all our life actions because it is only us, only ourselves, who determine our life situations. Being responsible for our actions means we must ultimately be able to respond, be able to answer for the way we choose to live our life. Because we determine our own experience by our willingness to love, ultimately we have only to answer honestly to ourselves.

When we choose to withdraw love vibrations from our life experience, the perception of ourselves and others becomes limited. When we limit our love, we see ourselves and the world in contracted form. We can think of our perceptions of the world reflecting our state of being. For example, when we are full of negativity and judgments, then we see the world and its people as negative and judgmental. In fact, the things we dislike or resist in others is really a reflection of what we do not like, or would like to change, about ourselves. That which irritates us about others can lead to a clearer understanding about ourselves, simply because we tend to condemn in other that which we fear most as existing within us.

We all strive to be free from the things that make us feel bound—routine, loneliness, authority, boredom, negativity—while not realizing that we are always funda-
mentally free and have always been. Because we control our own vibrational level, we are always free to expand in love beyond all sense of limits and boundaries. Regardless of how trapped we feel now, our fundamental freedom is never affected. It is only our mental resistance, our thinking we are bound, which colors our perceptions and limits our experience. Because we make the mistake of trying to change the external world to accommodate our internal or desired experience, we then stay feeling bound within ourselves. If we would rather change our perception, and eliminate our internal resistance, then all the seemingly binding externals would gladly come into accordance with our liking.

Breaking our resistance and expanding in love can be stated in practical terms as putting away what is in our head—desires, preconceptions, conditionings, imagined truths, judgments—and then just facing life openly, facing what might happen to us. The easiest way to raise our pranic love level is to give full, loving attention to absolutely anything we see in our mind, environment, and in other people. The people we now see as sinners or as unenlightened are our tickets to freedom—to fourth level love—when we learn to love them and all of our feelings about them. All we need to do is just love them. We need to love them as they are now or else we deny them their freedom to be what they are. Equally as important as loving others is also loving ourselves. No matter what seemingly
evil or vulgar thoughts pass through our mind, if we do not hold on to them, or categorize them, and if we love ourselves for having thought them, they will soon depart and we will continue to rise in love. Thaddeus Golas suggested some simple guidelines to follow in order to expand in love. He said, "Whatever you are doing, love yourself for doing it. Whatever you are thinking, love yourself for thinking it. Love is the only dimension that needs to be changed. If you are not sure how it feels to be loving, love yourself for not being sure how it feels." Only when we are filled with love can we see everything around us reflecting effulgence and happiness. When we ourselves are radiating joy, the world appears beautiful and safe. We might say that the world is as we see it, or perhaps more accurately stated, what we see is what we are!

There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.

E. Wharton

Thaddeus Golas reminds us that we need to go beyond having a reason to love. He tells us that unqualified love is, in fact, our only real safety. Swami Muktananda, the great Siddha, likewise said that the essence of all religions is to welcome everyone with love. The Bible similarly reminds us of the importance of love: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:39), and "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love"
(1 John 4:8). When we love with no resistance, we are, in truth, expanding in love into many other beings. Since on all existing vibratory levels we are mutually dependent vibrations, when our love level rises, we expand into a state where other beings are vibrating on the finer energy frequencies. The more loving we become, the more we know God, and the more we feel our divinity permeating the whole area in and around us. So to continue rising in love, we need to follow the advice of the great sage Sivananda. He advises us to bless those who curse us, pray for those who try to harm and persecute us, serve those who speak ill of us, and love those who want to injure us. Sivananda simply says, "Embrace all. Serve all. Love all. Develop Atma Bhav (God Love), see the divine existing within all."³

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Living life in expanded love means that we can communicate with energy directly and completely, without strategizing. When we are involved with the world with a completely open attitude, we do not have to try and work things out intellectually. Our live experience is obvious to us. Whatever we perceive, speaks to us. When we maintain this expanded love, negativity simply becomes pure strength for us. We are no longer relating to negativity as being bad, but rather, we use the energy that comes out of it as a source of life, so we are never really defeated in any situation. At this point our logical love has been transmuted into limitless love, and our conceptual ideas of good
and bad have been let go. If someone speaks ill of us or if someone praises us, our limitless love feeds equally on either. With this open awareness, devoid of conceptual judging, both praise and blame have become the same. There is simply energy occurring with both and we no longer have to resist, or try to maintain ourselves, with either.

Limitless love allows us to likewise give up all of our questioning, because it puts us in direct correspondence with the real answer. We know we contain limitless love within ourselves and we know we can experience this love when we love our enemies. We know that to "feel" this love means we cannot manipulate others for personal gain. We know that getting lost in sensual pleasures only creates more life action and we know how easy it is for money and power to become ends in themselves. We know that judging and gossiping about others keeps us feeling bound. We also know how easy it is to rationalize our deceitful actions into normalacy. Expanding into limitless love means we are no longer controlled by our discursive mind, our checking mechanism which tells us whether we are doing well or not. One might ask, "If limitless love allows us to give up our checking mechanism, how then do we know we are advancing in spiritual practice?" One answer is to just give it up and then we will know. We just have to do it on faith. We need to have faith in the "intelligence" of Divine Law. Chogyam Trungpa said that we need to have enough faith to
allow the divine current to wash us over to the "Other Shore." From this Other Shore we might see that there is no such thing as spiritual practice, except for the unlearning of habits, the stepping out of self-deceptions, and ceasing to struggle to get ahold of spiritual states. Trungpa, in fact, defined spiritual attainment as, "Sane and solid and definite, no imaginings, no concepts, no emotions, no frivolity, but being basically what is." This he called the "awakened state."4

Limitless love will then allow us to let go of the thought of attaining spiritual states. It will allow us to let go the thought "me doing the attaining." This is why true spiritual attainment is called "attaining the non-attainment." To attain "it" is to completely let go of holding on to anything, including ourselves as the holder. This is why Trungpa also said, "The attainment of enlightenment from ego's point of view is extreme death, the death of the self, the death of me and mine, the death of the watcher. It is the ultimate and final disappointment."5 And, as Hari Dass Baba says, "Who realizes what? That is realization." That is the power of limitless love.
CHAPTER TWENTY: KINGDOM WITHIN—THE THREE STAGES OF SEEKING

With most everything in the physical world vying to keep our attention focused on externals—external beauty, external wealth, and external knowledge—it becomes very tempting to look for truth, God, and love outside ourselves. It is very easy to think that spirituality is something that is apart from what is happening to us at this very moment. We prefer to think that perhaps God is up in the sky somewhere and that truth is something that must be sought after in line and verse. But, as Stevenson said of the touchstone, "What if it was in his pocket all the time?" With everything reinforcing the illusion that our ultimate happiness lay outside ourselves, we do not consider the possibility that this happiness might indeed emanate from within. Perhaps Thomas Merton was right when he said, "We have what we seek. It is there all the time, and if we give it time it will make itself known to us." If we have the thing in our pocket all the time, why do we seek elsewhere for it?

Neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you.  
Luke 17:21

Non foras ire, in interiore homine habitat veritas.  
Go not outside, truth dwells in the inner man.  
C.G. Jung

Because we become so accustomed to our striving mentality, it is difficult to grasp the fact that our very
striving and seeking is what may actually keep us from attaining truth, from knowing God. In Hermann Hesse's novel *Siddhartha*, Hesse tells how Siddhartha and his good friend Govinda meet after many years of traversing alternative paths, and how each shared opposing views on the nature of seeking:

"I am indeed old," said Govinda, "but I never ceased seeking. I will never cease seeking. That seems to be my destiny. It seems to me that you also have sought. Will you talk to me a little about it, my friend?"

Siddhartha said: "What could I say to you that would be of value, except that perhaps you seek too much, that as a result of your seeking you cannot find."

"How is that?" asked Govinda.

"When someone is seeking," said Siddhartha, "it happens quite easily that he sees only the thing that he is seeking; that he unable to find anything, unable to absorb anything, because he is only thinking of the thing he is seeking, because he has a goal, because he is obsessed with his goal. Seeking means: to have a goal, but finding means: to be free, to be receptive, to have no goal. You, O worthy one, are perhaps a seeker, for in striving towards your goal you do not see many things that are under your nose."[1]

Seeking spiritual knowledge is what initially draws us toward our spiritual path. Having discovered our path, as Siddhartha suggests, fully traversing its length means we must eventually let go of our seeking and attaining mentality. Aldous Huxley once said, "Nobody needs to go anywhere else. We are all, if we only knew it, already there."[2] But still, we must initially seek before we can find. There are three distinguishable stages along the path to finding spiritual truth. When the Bible says, "Seek and you shall find," for example, we are embarking on
the first stage. We must first make an effort to gain spiritual insight. We must put forth an effort to understand the difference between "our will" and "God's Will" made manifest.

In the second stage, after our initial seeking and surrendering, there comes an understanding that truth is also seeking us; that truth is seeking the seeker himself. When our seeking has reached this second stage, we begin to discover that the spiritual path is right here, right in front of us. Whatever we are doing is a part of the spiritual path. The Sufi saint Bayazid al-Bistami once said, "For thirty years I went in search of God, and when I opened my eyes at the end of this time, I discovered that it was really He who sought for me." Though we may not be able to walk the spiritual path deliberately, in this second stage, the path comes to us. We begin to realize that we are in fact being guided, continuously. We sense that we are always surrounded by expanded beings who are constantly urging us to open ourselves up to love. We sense that these beings are aware of us at all times, loving us and ready to make us feel this love whenever we are ready to receive it. We realize we are being guided throughout our life, through one teaching after another, with some of these teachings taking the form of teachers, some as life conditions, and some as particular experiences. It is a feeling similar to when we go to church and the preacher's sermon seems to be directed specifically
towards us. We begin to feel that he is talking to us only; that he knew we would be there that particular day and he knew exactly what we needed to hear. During this second stage of seeking, we realize that this is, in effect, what is taking place. We learn that there is a teaching in everything, that there is a message in every experience. The quieter our mind becomes, the more we are able to hear, open up to, and receive this message which helps draw us closer to "Home."

As our daily life experience unfolds, it may well seem that the situations and events occur in a random and unrelated fashion. A Sufi teaching story, however, suggests that quite the contrary is true. It tells how seemingly unrelated life events play a central but often times covert purpose in leading to the fulfillment of our ultimate well-being and happiness:

'Once in a city in the Farthest West there lived a girl called Fatima. She was the daughter of a prosperous spinner. One day her father said to her: "Come, daughter; we are going on a journey, for I have business in the islands of the Middle Sea."

They set off and traveled from island to island, the father doing his trading while Fatima dreamt of a husband who might one day be hers.

One day, the two were on their way to Crete when a storm blew up, and the ship was wrecked. Fatima, only half conscious, was cast up on the seashore near Alexandria. Her father was dead, and she was utterly destitute.

While she was wandering on the sands, a family of cloth-makers found her. They took her into their humble home and taught her their craft. Thus it was that Fatima made a second life for herself, and within a year she was happy and reconciled to her lot. But one day when she was down at the seashore, a band of slave-traders took
her captive and carried her away. The slavers took her to Istanbul and sold her as a slave. Her world once again collapsed for a second time.

At the slave-buyers market there was a man who was looking for slaves to work in his woodyard, for he made masts for ships. When he saw the dejection of the unfortunate Fatima, he decided to buy her, thinking that in this way, at least, he might be able to give her a slightly better life than if she were bought by someone else.

The mast-maker took Fatima to his home, intending to make her a serving-maid for his wife. When he arrived at his house, however, he found that he had lost all his money in a cargo which had been captured by pirates. Since he could not afford workers, he, Fatima, and his wife were left to work at the heavy labor of making masts.

Fatima worked hard and soon became a trusted helper. Thus it was that she became comparatively happy in her third career. One day her employer said to her: "Fatima, I want you to go with a cargo of ship's masts to Java as my agent." Thus it was that she set off, but when the ship was off the coast of China, a typhoon wrecked it and Fatima found herself again cast up on the seashore of a strange land. Once again she wept bitterly, for she felt that nothing in her life was working in accordance with expectation. Whenever things seemed to be going well, something came up and destroyed her hopes.

Now it so happened that nobody in China had heard of Fatima or knew anything about her troubles. But there was a legend that a certain stranger, a woman, would one day arrive there and that she would be able to make a tent for the Emperor. And since there was as yet nobody in China who could make tents, everyone looked upon the fulfillment of this prediction with the liveliest anticipation.

In order to make sure that this stranger, when she arrived, would not be missed, successive Emperors of China had followed the custom of sending heralds, once a year, to all the towns and villages of the land, asking for any foreign woman to be produced at Court.

When Fatima stumbled into a town by the Chinese seashore, it was one such occasion. When she went before the Emperor, she was asked if she could make a tent. "I think so," Fatima replied. She then asked for rope, but there was none to be had. So, remembering her time as a spinner, she collected flax and made ropes. She then asked for stout cloth, but the Chinese had none of the kind which she needed. So, drawing on her experience with the weavers of Alexandria, she made some stout tent-cloth. Then, she found she needed tent-poles, but there were none in China. So Fatima, remembering how she had
been trained by the wood-fashioner of Istanbul, cunningly made stout tent poles. When these were ready, she racked her brains for the memory of all the tents she had seen in her travels: and lo, a tent was made. When this wonder was revealed to the Emperor, he offered Fatima the fulfillment of any wish she cared to name. She chose to settle in China where she married a handsome prince, and where she remained in happiness surrounded by her children until the end of her days.3

Such is the making of second-stage seeking experience. It was through these adventures that Fatima realized that what appeared to be unrelated and unpleasant experiences at the time, turned out to be an essential part of the making of her ultimate happiness.

An adventure is only an inconvenience rightly understood.
An inconvenience is only an adventure wrongly considered.

Zen Saying

The third stage of seeking commences when we are learning from the Path, and our learning reaches a special level; when we as seeker realize we are acquiring knowledge in a range beyond both seeking and finding. At this stage, the seeker begins to blend in with that which is being sought. It is reaching the understanding that it is Us alone who live and die, Us alone who teaches and learns; that We are the experience of life and life itself, the perceiver and the perceived.

This final stage of seeking is difficult to grasp—in a literal sense—without having direct experience of it.
In the Bible, Christ conveys the essence of this level of understanding when he says, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30), "...believe that the Father is in me, and I in him" (John 10:38), and "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you" (John 14:20). The vexing problem with a purely Christian belief, however, is when we read, "Christ in you (us)" it is usually understood in all its transcendentalism, but the moment it is explained through our rationality, it becomes a metaphor. Therefore, the "in" which means "contained within" and "the same as," is taken to mean "influencing" and "affecting." Because Christian doctrine is based on, and understood as, a dualistic design, its unitive level of comprehension is usually overshadowed and inconspicuous. With Christian doctrine having no practical conception of us as transcendent beings, our nature is therefore understood to be something ultimately separate and distinct from God.

This third stage of seeking may be understood as the coming into direct correspondence with our own true nature. We no longer perceive the "things of God" to be different from ourselves. This state of experience is reflected in the Zen saying, "Sitting quietly, doing nothing, spring comes and the grass grows by itself." Although there is still activity, our activity is selfless. Our goal of "attainment" and the possibility of "not attaining" has all but vanished because we now understand all striving to
be but ego based. We simply allow our remaining self to quietly dissolve into our Self, into our Perfection.
CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE: WORDS AS TRAPS

The difficulty in writing about mystical knowledge, and in all honest efforts to tell how to achieve it, comes from trying to use limited terms to talk about what is beyond limits. The main problem is that symbols used to express meaning (namely words), are at best only representations of approximations to that which can never really be described accurately. Words can only convey meaning for communication purposes, but can never capture the real meaning that underlies all symbol.

As mentioned earlier, we tend to take our words for reality itself. We all agree to label objects for communication purposes, but we then come to know reality in terms of our labels. We perceive objects in terms of their label rather than seeing the object as an aspect of divine Reality. For communication purposes alone we could all just as easily agree to, "Zeda, get down out of that 'sprugle,' you're going to break your 'thitchet,'" and the message could still be received.

Whoever has taught me one letter has made me his slave.
Chinese Proverb

In Truth, in Reality, there is no more a unity than there is a duality. The symbols we use to signify the relative and the absolute are merely names of the nameless. Zen, in fact, reminds us that words such as Truth, Reality,
the Self, the One, the Other Shore, God, are only words that are used like "algebraic signs" for all that is nameless, all that escapes thought, definition, and explanation. Although these symbols breathe through our words and silence in an effort to communicate their meaning, still they can never really communicate the real essence of their meaning.1

Truth in and of itself is something that cannot be given or received. We can never really give Truth to anyone, as we could a book, nor can anyone give Truth to us. Truth is beyond the relative categorical opposites of giving and receiving. Truth is Itself, but the Truth in which a wise man tries to communicate is only but a shadow of Truth. A wise man's knowledge about Truth can be communicated, but not Truth itself. We can live in Truth, be fortified by it, and do wonders through it, but Truth cannot be directly communicated or taught. When we have Truth, we know Truth, but we do not know what it is, because it is not a "what."

Although our words are known to convey meaning, Truth is not necessarily conditional upon the meaning of words alone. Zen tells us that Truth itself is wordless, though "It" may be words also. Truth is not necessarily just the meaning of the words, however, but is also the words themselves, with their meaning not perceived separately from the words. Just as silence itself is also a form of speaking, and the blank spaces in between the marks of printing are as much part of the printing as the
letters themselves, so too is Truth contained within meaning, including the instruments of meaning (words).  

Don Juan pinpointed the basic flaw with words when he told Carlos, "They always force us to feel enlightened, but when we turn around to face the world they always fail us and we end up facing the world as we always have, without enlightenment." For this reason, don Juan suggested, "One should seek to act rather than to talk, and to this effect, get a new description of the world— a new description where talking is not that important and where new acts have new reflections."  

Carlos also had difficulty in understanding don Juan's depiction of the no word, no name, no feeling and no knowing: nagual. While sitting at a restaurant table, Carlos questioned don Juan in an effort to formulate some sense of comprehension or meaning. To help Carlos conceptualize his explanation, don Juan proceeded to identify the subjects of his inquiry by using different items on the restaurant table:

"Would you say that the nagual is the mind?"
Carlos inquired.
"No. The mind is part of the tonal," don Juan answered. "Let's say the mind is the chili sauce."
"Is the nagual the soul?"
"No, the soul is also on the table. Let's say the soul is the ashtray."
"Is it the thoughts of men?" Carlos asked.
"No. Thoughts are also on the table. Thoughts are like the silverware."
"Is it a state of grace? Heaven?" Carlos continued.
"Not that either," don Juan said. "It is, let's say, the napkin."
"Is the nagual the Supreme Being, the Almighty God?"
"No," don Juan replied. "God is also on the table. Let's say that God is the tablecloth."
Carlos then questioned, "In my understanding don Juan, God is everything. Aren't we talking about the same thing?"
"No. God is only everything you can think of, therefore, properly speaking, God is only another item of the tonal."

Everything we think and express in words is only one-sided, only half the Truth. What our words and thoughts lack is totality, completeness. We can say that in every truth, the opposite is also equally true. In fact, Truth can only be expressed and enveloped in words if it is one-sided. When the Buddha taught about the world, for example, he had to divide it into Samsara (bondage) and Nirvana (freedom): into illusion and truth. Jesus, too, had to split the world into good and evil, into suffering and salvation. He could not do otherwise, for there is no other method when words are used to teach. But still, the world itself being in and around us is never one-sided. Never are our thoughts or our actions wholly Samsara or wholly Nirvana. This one-sidedness is brought about because with our thoughts we suffer the illusion that time is real. Our thoughts keep us bound to time, and therefore we only see and come to know one side of our totality, one side of our completeness. This is why it is said that to get behind thoughts, or to enter into non-thought, then time no longer exists. Then the apparent dividing line which seems to lie between this world and eternity, between
suffering and heaven, between good and evil, has only an illusory quality.

When we exist as a part, we cannot grasp the whole. Only when the boundaries that make up this "part" are dissolved do we realize, and expand to, not only intuitively knowing the whole, but also becoming the whole. St. John of the Cross said of this union with God: "It is so that the soul cannot speak of it nor can it find a suitable way or manner or similitude by which it may be able to describe such lofty understanding and such delicate spiritual feeling. Though the inward wisdom is so simple, so general and so spiritual that it has not entered into the understanding enwrapped or cloaked in any form or image subject to sense, it follows that sense and imagination (as it has not entered through them nor has taken their form or color) cannot account for it or imagine it, so as to say anything concerning it, although the soul be clearly aware that it is experiencing and partaking of that rare and delectable wisdom."\(^5\) When Chang Tzu addressed this intuitive understanding, this delectable wisdom, he too could only say, "If it could be talked about, everyone would have told their brother."

He takes the tongue from those who share the secret:
So that they may not again speak the King's secret.

Nizami
There is no paper on which to write the nature of Truth. There is no pen that can describe Truth. There is no person living who can really do justice in trying to express It. It merely is everything that is, and there ends the matter. Om.

Sivananda

Exemplifying the knowledge that our true nature is beyond words, Mumon, the famous Zen master, said that we are indeed the Buddha, only we must not say so. Saying so, he said, makes the Buddha (makes Christ Consciousness or makes God) as something apart from ourselves, just as words in the dictionary are apart from things. When we can speak a language, Mumon pointed out, we no longer need the book of words. When we live the Christian, Hindu, or Buddhist life, telling people we do becomes meaningless. When we live the Ten Commandments, for example, it is irrelevant whether we intellectually know what they are. We, in effect, become the laws, we become the embodiment of their teachings. We do not simply follow them, we are them. When we have reached this state of being, any attempt to express or communicate to others that we live by the Ten Commandments or that our mind is the Buddha or that Christ is within us, is no different than someone who insists on telling us all the technical intricacies of his job or the botanical names of all the flowers and weeds. When we are love, there is no longer any need for words. When we know God, both relatively and absolutely, we can then simply sit silently and reflect our divinity without
having to say, "All is One."

What can't be said can't be said,
And it can't be whistled either.
Ram Tirtha
In the beginning of spiritual practice, our pranic purification can bring about certain unaccustomed experiences and bodily movements. Sudden jerking and twitching motions of the head, hands, and body are often reported as one proceeds with purifying techniques. These physical movements are said to be brought about by involuntary muscular contractions, and caused by new pranic influences and new nerve currents that are being generated and formed. Yogic science records that the human body is composed of 72,000 "nadis" or channels in which our pran is carried throughout the body. As we commence in cleansing our body and mind, new nerve currents are forming as we purify these channels. The cleaner and purer these nadis become, the further we advance into the subtler stages of yogic practice.

As we progress in purification and as our meditation expands, we are likely to undergo experiences which include entry into astral planes of existence. To help us better understand these expanded astral levels, Sri Yukteswar gave a detailed description and account of them to Yogananda. Sri Yukteswar related:

"You have read in the scriptures that God encased the human soul successively in three bodies—the idea or causal body, the subtle or astral body (seat of man's mental and emotional nature), and the gross or physical body. On earth a man is equipped with his physical senses. An astral being works with his con-

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consciousness and feelings, and a body made of prana or subtle creative lifetronic energies. A causal being (sixth chakra being) remains in the blissful realm of ideas...

"There are many astral planets, teeming with astral beings," Sri Yukteswar went on. "The inhabitants use astral planes, or masses of light, to travel from one planet to another, faster than electricity and radioactive energies."

"The astral universe, made of various subtle vibrations of light and color, is hundreds of times larger than the material cosmos. The entire physical creation hangs like a little solid basket under the huge luminous balloon of the astral sphere..."

"In the same way that human beings live on the surface of the earth, worms inside the soil, fish in water, and birds in air, so astral beings of different grades are assigned to suitable vibratory quarters..."

Much like our prisons here on earth, there are also lower astral planets for beings working out their negative karma. In Christian understanding, these lower realms are understood as the state of purgatory, or lower still, hell.

Sri Yukteswar continued: "In the vast realms above the dark astral prison, all is shining and beautiful. The astral cosmos is more naturally attuned than the earth to the divine will and plan of perfection..."

"Unlike the spacial, three-dimensional physical world cognized only by the five senses, the astral spheres are visible to the all-inclusive sixth sense: intuition. By sheer intuitional feeling, all astral beings see, hear, smell, taste, and touch..."

"Friends of other lives easily recognize one another in the astral world. Rejoicing at the immortality of friendship, they realize the indestructibility of love, often doubted at the time of the sad, delusive partings of earthly life."

"The intuition of astral beings pierces through the veil and observes human activities on earth, but man cannot view the astral world unless his sixth sense is somewhat developed. Thousands of earth-dwellers have momentarily glimpsed an astral being or an astral world..."

Sri Yukteswar continued to delineate the distinction between physical and astral death: "Physical death is attended by the disappearance of breath and the disin-
tegration of fleshy cells. Astral death consists of
the dispersement of lifetronds (pran), those manifest
units of energy which constitute the life of astral
beings. At physical death a being loses his con-
sciousness of flesh and becomes aware of his subtle
body in the astral world. Experiencing astral death
in due time (according to the weight of one's physical
karma, which draws an astral being back to earth with-
in a specified time), a being thus passes from the
consciousness of astral birth and death to that of
physical birth and death. These recurrent cycles of
astral and physical encasement are the ineluctable
destiny of all unenlightened beings..."

"So long as the soul of man is encased in one, two,
or three body-containers, sealed tightly with the corks
of ignorance and desire, he cannot merge with the sea
of Spirit," Sri Yukteswar explained. "When the gross
physical receptacle is destroyed by the hammer of death,
the other two coverings—astral and causal—still remain
to prevent the soul from consciously joining the Omni-
present Life. When desirelessness is attained through
wisdom, its power disintegrates the two remaining
vessels. The tiny human soul emerges, free at last; it
is one with the Measureless Amplitude...All the separate
eddies of ideas, particularized waves of power, love,
will, joy, peace, intuition, calmness, self-control, and
concentration, melt into the ever-joyous Sea of Bliss..."

"When a soul finally gets out of the three jars of
bodily delusion," Sri Yukteswar told, "it becomes one
with the Infinite without any loss of individuality.
Christ had won this final freedom even before he was
born as Jesus. In three stages of his past, symbolized
in his earth-life as the three days of his experience
of death and resurrection, he had attained the power to
fully arise in Spirit..."

"The physical karma or desires of man must be com-
pletely worked out before his continued stay in the
astral worlds becomes possible," Sri Yukteswar proceeded
to explain. "Two kinds of beings live in the astral
spheres. Those who still have earthly karma to dispose
of, and who must therefore reinhabit a gross physical
body in order to pay their karmic debts, could be
classified, after physical death, as temporary visitors
to the astral world rather than as established residents."

"Beings with unredeemed earthly karma are not
permitted, after astral death, to go to the high causal
sphere of cosmic ideas, but must shuttle to and fro
from physical and astral worlds only. After each loss
of his physical body, however, an undeveloped being
from earth remains, for the most part, in the deep
stupor of the death-sleep, and is hardly conscious of
the beautiful astral sphere. After the astral rest,
such a man returns to the material plane for further lessons, gradually accustoming himself, through repeated journeys, to the worlds of subtle astral texture..."

Sri Yukteswar completed his account of astral life by relating the following: "Just as most people on earth have not learned through meditation-acquired vision to appreciate the superior joys and advantages of astral life and thus, after death, desire to return to the limited imperfect pleasures of earth, so many astral beings, during the normal disintegration of their astral bodies, fail to picture the advanced state of spiritual joy in the causal world and, dwelling on thoughts of the more gross and gaudy astral happiness, yearn to revisit the astral paradise. Heavy astral karma must be redeemed by such beings before they can achieve, after astral death, an unbroken stay in the causal thought-world, so thinly partitioned from the Creator."

"Only when a being has no further desires for experiences in the pleasing-to-the-eye astral cosmos, and cannot be tempted to go back there, does he remain in the causal world. Completing there the work of redeeming all causal karma or seeds of past desires, the confined soul thrusts out the last of the three corks of ignorance and, emerging from the final jar of the causal body, commingles with the Eternal."

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out. Revelation 3:12

* * * * *

Having an idea of what exists outside the safe confines of this physical earth plane, we may, during the course of our spiritual practice, have many such encounters with astral beings within astral realms. Astral beings may try to help us, play with us, or bother us, depending on their nature, but if we have our mind set firmly on the highest goal of God union, we can simply observe these beings and they will not be able to affect us in any adverse
After only a short time of practicing meditation, we can easily experience a shift in body consciousness. We may notice that our body is beginning to feel lighter and freer. After a short time of concentrated sitting, say fifteen to thirty minutes, we may experience a semi-conscious awareness of our body, a feeling similar to a loose fitting shirt hanging gently on our body. As our concentration deepens, we may then experience a complete loss of body consciousness. We may sense that our body is thinning out and vanishing. With each new breath we may feel as though we are nothing more than a vibration of pure pranic energy.

As we continue advancing to the deeper levels of meditation, we may also experience a feeling of separation from our body. This experience can produce a mixture of immense joy coupled with fear; joy in the possession of a new light astral body, and fear owing to entry into a foreign, unknown plane of existence. At the onset, this new level of consciousness is very rudimentary. We may feel as if we have a light airy body that can fly and soar through the clouds, but this experience may be accompanied by a feeling of being rotated in the air and, consequently, there may be a fear of falling.

Don Juan told of a practical technique that we can utilize to help ourselves stabilize astral body and astral
realm manifestation. He said that every night before falling asleep, we should give ourselves the suggestion of remembering to look at our hands in a dream. After a certain level of discipline is attained in the waking state, i.e., concentration and divine preoccupation, the suggestion can then take hold. When the awareness of witnessing ourselves in a dream is achieved, don Juan recommended we then proceed to shift our eyes back and forth between objects in the dream. By not focusing our attention on just one element in the dream, don Juan explained that the shifting movement causes the elements to remain stabilized, thus allowing us controlled movement into the astral realms beyond our ordinary dream realm experience. Don Juan reminded us, however, that only with continued discipline and one-pointed concentration can this technique be expanded into a viable method of letting go of our tonal (ego) and witnessing an astral world. He added that it is an excellent technique for training oneself to let go "without losing your marbles."2

The more our mind quiets with meditation, the more our consciousness expands. With quietness and expansion come waves of bliss, feelings of leaving the body, presence of astral beings, and energy pulsating up our spine. We may also experience enlightening visions, burning sensations, spontaneous yogic movements, flashes of colors and divine lights. We may hear voices and inner sounds such as the
flute of Krishna, a waterfall, thunder, or a live orchestra. We may smell strange scents or our mouth may be filled with exotic tastes. Our body may tingle, shake, become rigid, or seem to disappear. We may enter into trance states marked by ecstasy, clarity of perception, and clairvoyance. We may have visions of unique places or find that we know things but cannot explain how we know them.

These types of heightened experience, though they may be spiritually motivated, can nevertheless seduce us. The memory of these kinds of experiences can become an obstacle on our spiritual path, especially if we try to recreate them. In order to keep progressing in meditation, we must be able to give up any attachment to these experiences. We must become aware of their seductive nature and be willing to continue to progress beyond them. Many of these experiences will come during the natural course of our purification practice. We need only to be aware that these experiences are not ends in themselves and that they will hinder our further progress if we begin to consciously seek them.

When we become attached to internal powers and seduced by internal pleasures, as with external power and pleasure, what was once a vertical path turns into a horizontal one. As each new internal desire arises, there remains a subtle struggle with our ego. Part of us will want to enjoy the seductiveness of the inner experience, and another deeper part will want to give it up and push on.
We must keep our inner eye focused on the final goal-less goal, however distant it may seem, if we are to win the inner battle and reach our Perfection.

* * * * *

As our meditation experience expands into new uncharted territories, we may see and experience things never before imagined. The Tibetan Book of the Dead, an expanded literary account of one's journey beyond ego identification, tells of ten-thousand wrathful and ten-thousand peaceful visions which one may encounter along the spiritual path. In the course of meditation we may meet them all: powers, great beauty, deaths, angels, demons, destruction, creation, and anything else that can attract or repel us. Because these visions are, in the words of Ram Dass, just the "stuff of the universe," if we acknowledge them and then let them go, they will not become binding. If we seek to hold on to them or flee from them, it is just a more subtle form of ego clinging. To hold on to, or to resist visions of heavens or hells, no matter how beautiful or horrible, is an indication that we have not yet sufficiently surrendered our ego. The more we let go our "I-ness," the less of a magnetizing effect extraordinary experiences will have on us. The more we surrender, the more opposites we will realize we contain and the less any extreme will be able to attract or repel us. If we train ourselves to love everything we see, and love ourselves for having seen it, then the force of our love will transform everything into
Itself, into God.

When you learn to love hell you will be in heaven.
Thaddeus Golas

The following Sufi story tells of the time when all beings existed as souls only, before bodies came into being:

'This was a time of a few years, but each of those years was one of our millennia.
The souls were all arrayed in line. The (earth) world was presented to their sight. Nine out of ten of the souls ran towards it.
Then paradise was presented to the remaining souls. Out of these, nine out of ten ran towards it.
Then hell was shown to the remaining souls. Nine out of ten of them ran away from it in horror.
Then there were only a few souls, those who were affected by nothing at all. They had not been attracted by the earth or by paradise nor had they feared hell.
The Celestial Voice spoke to these survivors saying:
"what is it that you want?"
The souls answered in unison: "You who know all know that it is You whom we desire, and that we do not desire to leave Your Presence."'3

Ilahi-Nama
Sufi Saint

* * * * * *

When our meditation deepens and our attention withdraws completely from the world, we will then enter into the state of "Being" or "Samadhi." While in this state we will no longer have consciousness of our body and surroundings. We will have perfect equanimity of mind. We will cease to hear external sounds and there will be a stoppage of all sensations. The consciousness of egotism will completely vanish along with our relative reasoning and reflection. Through the labors of our practice there will also be a natural retention of breath, with no inhalation
or exhalation. At this point a higher type of indescribable peace and joy will pervade and permeate our entire Consciousness.

This state of "Being" is said to exist beyond all relativity. It is properly understood to be not a state of inertia, but rather a condition of perfect awareness. It is a direct union with "Cosmic Consciousness." Within this expansion, the universe is experienced directly. While in this state of Consciousness, all perceptions are funneled through celestial eyes and experience becomes bliss beyond description. We know and actually feel "All" to be ourselves only.

Eastern scripture records two main types of samadhi to which we as individuals can aspire. The first, called "Sabikalpa samadhi," is attaining the realization of our oneness with Spirit. This level of cosmic consciousness cannot be maintained except in an immobile trance state. Only by continuing with ardent meditation practice can the superior state of "Nirbikalpa samadhi" be reached. Here we can move about freely in the world without any loss of God-perception. In this state we have dissolved the last vestiges of our material and astral karma. We may still have some subtle causal karma to work out, but we can walk the earth free from any worldly attachment.

When we have aspired to these samadhi levels, we are worthy to be called a sage. A sage himself, Sivananda, describes the characteristics that define this illumined
state:

One whose craving is annihilated is a sage. He who is free from anger, lust, greed, egoism and jealousy is a sage. He who calls nothing in this world his own, who is not elated by success or gain, who is not depressed by failure or loss, is a sage. He is one who has overcome desire and does not crave for any sensual pleasures, who has no attachment, who is without desire for the fruits of actions, who does not care about the future nor grieve over the past, is a sage. He who is not displeased with anything, who is calm under any condition or circumstance, is indeed a sage. 5

We cannot enter into these unitive states of sageshood unless we are sufficiently purified. Only when purified will we be fit enough to receive the expansion of Divine Light. Only then will we be able to bear the pressure of sudden expansion of consciousness which is around, includes, and covers the whole of existence in one sweep of omnipresent understanding.

A smiling summation,
the threshold is burst,
no limits, no boundaries,
no last or no first;

Endlessly spacious,
supportless and still,
sought after by rationality,
but only known by the will;

The Alpha and Omega,
with no beginning or end,
beyond goodness and badness,
neither enemy nor friend;
Continual, everlasting, beyond concept and word, sometimes intuitively grasped by the flight of a bird;

Inexhaustible, fathomless, a perpetual pervade, unceasing, unending, both maker and made;

The image of nothingness, cannot be defined, the form of the formless, neither improved nor declined;

Both the search and the seeker, the road and the home, the All is the None, and the One is the Om.

All in One
Daniel Toms
CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE: OBSTACLES ALONG THE WAY

As we travel along the spiritual path, we are likely to encounter certain obstacles which will have to be overcome. One particular obstacle on the path is fear. Anything which we are afraid to experience creates a psychic block within us. This obstruction, in turn, causes us to resist facing life impeccably. When we are fearful, our pran becomes blocked and we cease to advance further on the path. In order to continue making progress we must therefore learn how to absorb our fear. We need to learn how to face new and challenging situations with a sense of confidence. Don Juan, in fact, tells us that only by facing life as a "warrior" can we survive the path of knowledge because "the art of a warrior is to balance the terror of being a man with the wonder of being a man."\(^1\)

Don Juan elaborated by delineating the difference between facing life situations with the confidence of a warrior and the confidence of an average man. He said that the basic distinction between the two is that a warrior takes everything as a challenge, while an ordinary man takes everything as either a blessing or a curse. He added that the self-confidence of the average man is to seek certainty in the eyes of an onlooker, while a warrior "seeks impeccability in his own eyes and calls that humbleness."\(^2\)

Don Juan said that fear is the first "natural" enemy which we must face in acquiring inner knowledge. He also
said that fear is a terrible and treacherous enemy who is
difficult to overcome. Carlos asked of don Juan, "What
will happen to the man who runs away from fear?" "Nothing
happens to him," don Juan replied, "except that he will
never learn. He will never become a man of knowledge."
"And what can he do to overcome fear?" Carlos inquired.
Don Juan said the answer is very simple, "He must not run
away. He must defy his fear, and in spite of it he must
take the next step in learning, and the next and the next.
He must be fully afraid and yet he must not stop. That is
the rule! And then a moment will come when his first enemy
retreats. The man begins to feel sure of himself. His
intent becomes stronger. Learning is no longer a terrifying
task. Knowledge is frightening, true, but if a warrior
accepts the frightening nature of knowledge, he cancels out
its awesomeness."3 Sri Yukteswar shared these same
sentiments towards fear when he said, "Look fear in the
face and it will cease to trouble you."4

There is no fear in love; but perfect love
casts out fear, because fear involves punishment,
and the one who fears is not perfected in love.
1 John 4:18

Because we as aspirants on the path are usually
eager to have enlightening experiences, we sometimes want
to rush our natural purification process. Once we do have
an expanded experience, we endeavor to hold on to some-
thing familiar. When we begin to rise above body
consciousness we may frighten ourselves by wondering whether we will return to our body again. We may even think we are falling into evil. Here we need to remember that the process of becoming "whole" means to contain all opposites within ourselves, without being attached to any of them. We need to remind ourselves that all levels, all experiences, are a part of our true nature. It is only our resistance to these frightening experiences which, in turn, keeps us bound by them.

'Shibli was asked: "Who guided you on the Path?"
He said: "A dog. One day I saw him almost dead with thirst, standing by the water's edge.
Everytime he looked at his reflection in the water, he was frightened, and withdrew, because he thought it was another dog.
Finally, such was his necessity, he cast away fear and leapt into the water; at which the 'other dog' vanished.
The dog found that the obstacle, which was himself, the barrier between him and what he sought, melted away."5

Sufi Teaching Story

To leap into the water is to learn that there is really nothing to fear but fear itself. Because fear is the basic result of impurities, by not resisting fear mentally, we expand beyond these impurities, past our psychic blocks. Opening ourselves up to fear, however, means that we must risk our security. But if we are intent on going beyond our fear, we must learn that our main enemy is no one but ourself.

Once we properly understand our fear and have learned how to vanquish it, we are then free from it for
the rest of our life. This is brought about because we have acquired what don Juan calls "a clarity of mind," which erases fear. At this point we essentially know what our desires are and we know how to satisfy them.

We feel as though nothing in our life is concealed. But because of our added insight, don Juan noted that we have encountered our second natural enemy, which is "clarity" itself. He said that this clarity of mind, which is so hard to obtain, dispels fear, but it also blinds. Don Juan explained that it forces us to never doubt ourselves. It gives us the assurance that we can do anything we please because we see clearly into everything. We become courageous and we stop at nothing because of this clarity. But don Juan cautioned that all this is a mistake. "If we yield to this make-believe power," he said, "we will then have succumbed to our second enemy and will rush when we should be patient, and we will fumble with learning until we wind up incapable of learning anything more."^\textsuperscript{6}

In order to overcome clarity, as with fear, we must understand it. We must learn about it, wait patiently and measure carefully before taking new steps. Don Juan said that we should, above all, think that our clarity is a mistake. We should not allow our ego to feed on this perception and thus give ourselves credit for having achieved it. If we act as though this clarity is not ours, don Juan said that a moment will come when we realize that our clarity was only a "point before our eyes."^\textsuperscript{7} We will
then understand the relativity of this clarity and will have overcome our second enemy.

The third natural enemy on our path is power, and power is a direct result of clarity. We can think of clarity as the confidence to step up to the edge of a cliff, and power as the confidence to jump. Power on the spiritual path comes when we have attained a certain degree of insight and fearlessness. It becomes an obstacle, however, when we still have a desire for adventure, a desire for more thrilling experience, either physical or astral. Because of its seductiveness, power is the strongest of all our enemies and the easiest to give in to, especially if sometime in our life we have felt inadequate or weak. Because of its attractiveness, power makes us slow down or come to a standstill on our spiritual journey, so that we may enjoy our newly acquired pleasure and strength. The only way to overcome power is to realize it involves ego. If we realize that power is but seduction, and if we train ourselves not to indulge in it, then we will continue onward toward Perfection. As Ram Dass said, "It is better to go for broke than to take a small profit and run with it."

Another obstacle encountered along the path, and in life in general, is that of death. If asked, most of us will say that we are not afraid to die. Our ego affords us a great opportunity to be brave and courageous when we are in a comfortable setting and not threatened. It is exceed-
ingly easy to feel removed from the possibility of death and to feel that deaths and accidents happen only to other people. We develop a sense of unrealness toward death, which in turn manifests in nonchalant behavior. Though we are actually walking along the edge of a sword every day, we do so without a direct awareness of it. Death is constantly hovering over us, but we walk along what we suppose to be a broad highway.

With an awareness of death, life no longer seems ordinary and trivial. When we face the fact that we may die at any time, we begin to relate with life differently. When we develop a constant awareness of the possibility of our own death, and use that awareness as a guide for our actions, do we truly take responsibility for what we do. Only then do we live each day as if it were our last.

Sleep with the remembrance of death and rise with the thought that you will not live long.

Uwais el-Qarni
Sufi Saint

Don Juan disclosed to Carlos some added insight on the importance of living with the awareness of death. He said, "Only the idea of death makes us sufficiently detached so that we are incapable of abandoning ourselves to anything. Our decisions are final, simply because the awareness of our death does not permit us time to cling to anything. The knowledge of our death guides us and makes us detached, the power of our final decisions makes us able to choose without
regrets and what we choose is always strategically the best; and so we perform everything we have to do with gusto and efficiency." Don Juan added that we should focus our attention on the link between ourselves and our death, without remorse or worry, for it is an inevitable part of our existence. By drawing our awareness to the fact that we may not have much time, our actions can then begin to come into alignment with our present awareness. Only by performing our actions as if they were our "last battle on earth," do our actions have their rightful meaning and power. Otherwise, as don Juan said, "They will be, for as long as we live, the actions of a timid man."  

Carlos, examining all possibilities of life behavior, asked don Juan if it is so terrible to be a timid man? "No. It isn't if you are going to be immortal," don Juan replied, "but if you are going to die there is no time for timidity, simply because timidity makes you cling to something that exists only in your thoughts. It soothes you while everything is at a lull, but then the awesome, mysterious world will open its mouth for you, as it will open for every one of us, and then you will realize that your sure ways were not sure at all. As a rule of thumb, when you feel and act like an immortal being that has all the time in the world, you are not impeccable; at those times you should turn, look around, and then you will realize that your feeling of having time is an idiocy. There are no survivors on this earth!"
Be ye therefore ready; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

Luke 12:40

'A man worked for thirty years, accumulating by effort, trade, and lending, three hundred thousand dollars. He decided that he would spend a year of enjoyment, living comfortably, and then decide as to what his future should be.

But on the first day of his leisure, the Angel of Death appeared before him to take his life away.

The man tried with every argument he could muster to dissuade the Angel, who seemed, however adamant. Then the man said: "Grant me but three more days and I will give you one-third of my possessions."

The Angel refused and pulled again at the man's life, trying to take it away.

Then the man said: "If you will only allow me two more days on earth, I will give you two hundred thousand dollars from my store."

But the Angel would not listen to him. And the Angel even refused to give him a solitary extra day for all his three hundred thousand dollars.

Then the man said: "Please then, give me just time enough to write one little thing down."

This time the Angel allowed him this single concession, and the man wrote: "Man, make use of your life. I could buy not one hour for three hundred thousand dollars. Make sure you realize the value of your time."

Sufi Teaching Story

It is important to remember two things in your lifetime. One is your death and the other is God. If you cannot remember both, just remember God.

Swami Muktananda

Swami Muktananda reminds us of still another obstacle with which we must contend during our short life span: that of old age. He draws a colorful yet lucid account depicting this state of affairs:

Today my body looks very healthy and sturdy, but soon it will look like a withered vegetable. One day my hands and legs will become as tired and useless as
a bankrupt business, and their strength will be like that of a king who has no prime minister to advise him. My nose, which now delights in the fragrance of flowers will soon become as insensitive as a camel's knee. My head will be in the same condition as animals that contract a skin disease during the rainy season. Today my eyes compete with lotus petals, but they will soon become as dull as a dry gourd. My eyelids will hang like the dry bark of a tree. My legs will wobble when I walk and my arms will become crooked and useless. When a coughing fit overcomes me, it will disturb my neighbor's sleep and they will say, "How many more people will that old man trouble?"

At the end, my body will be in this predicament. When my body is worn out from indulging in sense pleasures, what will remain of me to be uplifted? He knows that before a person becomes deaf, he should listen to worthy teachings, and before his body becomes lame, he should go on pilgrimages. He knows that when this wretched condition comes upon him, his mental state will deteriorate and that before he falls into this state, he should acquire pure knowledge. When old age comes, this entire body will become useless, and for that reason one should become detached from it at once.—With the help of self-restraint, he blocks all the doors of the senses through which sin enters the body.12

* * * * *

As we gain insight and gather momentum while traveling the path, we may sometimes feel like taking a short-cut. Having heard of all the seductive powers and indescribable bliss, we may sometimes want to get to these experiences in a hurry. One method often used to override habitual thoughts and behaviors, for a limited period of time, is drugs. For a short-term expanded experience, certain chemicals are known to react with our consciousness to produce an awareness beyond the normal concepts of ourselves and the normal constructs of "reality." The most well known of these chemical components are LSD (d-lysergic
acid di-ethyl-amide), peyote with mescaline as the active alkaloid, and "magic mushrooms" with psilocybin as the operant compound. Although the amount of "expansion" keyed by the drug will depend on the dosage, the mind set (expectations and preparation), and the setting (environment in which the chemical is taken), these three hallucinogens can easily rechannel consciousness into an area beyond its accustomed ways of perceiving and experiencing this physical reality. Depending upon a person's readiness for a trial run in expanded consciousness, these components can give one a first hand experience of multifarious heavens and hells.

The advantages of utilizing this type of method to expand consciousness vary in degrees. If we are deeply embedded in, or attached to, any finite reality which we take to be absolute, a "moksha" or liberating agent can, under the proper conditions, help us to break out of our mind created models. It can also provide insight into the realms of experience outside of space and time constructs. It can strengthen our faith in the reality of "enlightenment" and lead us to work toward a systematic method of purification. A deeply concentrated moksha experience may also allow us to transcend polarities and, therefore, transport us beyond the relativity of "mass-oriented" reality.

The main disadvantage of using a short-cut method to expand consciousness is that we still "come down." Any drug experience provides only a temporary visit to the
expanded realms. Unless we are very highly evolved before we take a drug (in which case we probably would not be taking it), we are going to return to our normal state of being; the drug effects are going to wear off. Although, as Ram Dass said, a drug experience may allow us to have a glimpse of the "garden," it will not allow us to stay and enjoy the fruit. Because a drug only allows us to temporarily override our habits, once the chemical reaction begins to wear off, we usually return to our former ego-realm preoccupations. Furthermore, because of the intensity with which drug experiences provide us with "insight," they can also make us greedy to attain higher states before we are ready for them. It therefore becomes very easy to become attached to the external agent (the drug itself) and the experience of "getting high," rather than realizing that the "high" is always within us. Always thinking that we must "get high" prevents us from advancing far enough along the path to realize that the traveling itself is the "High."

Because of the force generated by drugs, they also have a detrimental affect on our body. They, in fact, take their toll by damaging and destroying our body's cells. Carlos once asked don Juan if "power plants" really helped him? "Certainly," don Juan answered. "They opened you up by stopping your view of the world. They flooded your tonal with information and forced your internal dialogue to come to a stop. The plants are excellent for that, but
very costly. They cause untold damage to the body. This is their drawback. "13 Ram Dass also added some sobering thoughts with regards to drugs. He said, "If you destroy the temple (body) in which you must do the work, before the work is finished...you lose." 14
CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR: THE GURU AND DEVOTION

While treading the spiritual path there comes a time when we must have faith in the fact that there are "realized beings," that is, beings who have attained to their true nature as Spirit. We must have faith that there are beings who have reached the exalted state of God union. We must eventually accept the possibility of exalted beings existing here on earth as well as on the higher vibratory spheres. In order to properly understand the significance of these channels of divine assistance, however, it is helpful to know the difference between an "Upa Guru" and a "Sat" or "Sad Guru."

An Upa Guru is a form of spiritual teacher, in the sense of being anyone or anything that we encounter within our life experience which points to, or helps us, gain a deeper understanding of our own divinity. The essence of understanding this form of Guru is knowing that there is a teaching contained within every facet of our life, that there is divinity being reflected in all the various components and complexions which make up our life experience. With this understanding, any aspect of our life can qualify as an Upa Guru if we are receiving the message. Even our enemies or the people and situations which irritate us can be understood as a form of Upa Guru because they awaken us to our resistance. They point to the things within us that still need to be let go. From this understanding, then, we
may view our whole life as a form of teaching. With the knowledge of an Upa Guru we can learn to honor everybody and everything which we encounter as a teacher who is helping us to work on our evolving consciousness.

The other form of Guru, the Sat (or Sad) Guru, is in direct correspondence with the seventh chakra. He is one who is emmersed in the Source (who, in fact, has become the Source, both in body and out), and who is none other than the divine Self of all.

A Sat Guru is properly understood to be the bliss of the Supreme Absolute, or the Father, and is known to be the personification of pure knowledge. He is considered to be the goal reflected in the wisdom of the Upanishads, "Tat twam asi," which means, "Thou art That." The Sat Guru is understood to be the reflection of all that is. A verse from the Guru Gita, a sublime chanting text, says:

Brahma-nandam parama-sukadam
Kevalan jnaana-moortim,
Dvandva-teetam gagana-sadrusham
Tattva-masyaadi-lakshyam.

Ekam nityam vimala-machalam
Sarvadhee-saakshi-bhootam,
Bhaavaa-teetam tri-guna-rahitam
Sadgurum tam namaami.

Translated, it means: "He is absolute bliss, the bestower of supreme happiness, and he is the only One. He is the embodiment of knowledge and he has transcended such dualities as pleasure and pain. He is all-pervasive, like the sky. He is the final goal of the Vedic dictum, 'Thou
That.' He is one, eternal, pure, steadfast, and the Witness of the intellects of all. He is beyond all states and devoid of the three gunas; sattva (purity, light, harmony); rajas (activity, passion); and tamas (dullness, inertia, ignorance). To him, to the Sadguru, I bow.1

The Sat Guru, God, and the Self, are all understood to be one. The Sat Guru, dwelling in our hearts as the Supreme Witness, is said to know the essence of all doctrines. He is understood to be the seed of the world because the entire world of insentient objects and sentient beings are known to exist within His heart. In the Bhagavad-Gita, Lord Krishna said "bhokta maheshwara," which means "in the form of individuals, he (the Sat Guru) is the experiencer of all." Therefore, the Sat Guru is considered to be both the conscious power that bestows knowledge and the knowledge that is bestowed. The Guru Gita likewise says:

Yasya kaarana-roopasya
kaarya-roopena bhaati yat,
Kaarya-kaarana-roopaaya
tasmai shree-gurave namah.

"Salutations to Sri Guru, who appears as the effect (world) of which he is the cause. He is the cause as well as the effect."2

The Sat Guru is He who beckons us from beyond, although He is both here and beyond simultaneously. Occasionally our physical earth is blessed with the presence of a Sat Guru in human form. A verse from the Kularnava Tantra
describes some of the characteristics of an "Exulted One" while He is in the body: "He is clad in spotless clothing, and his bewitching smile reveals that the current of inner bliss flows through all his senses, manifesting outwardly as joy. All his limbs are beautiful and radiate bliss because the stream of love and ecstasy and effulgence of the Absolute flow through them."³

It is also important to understand that a Sat Guru is not merely a human being, but rather an eternal principle. He has been transformed into the power of grace. He is, in fact, the grace-bestowing power of God. The Sat Guru thereby lights the lamp of knowledge, making us, the disciples, recognize our own true divinity. Just as fire is able to burn wood only because wood already contains fire in a potential form, the Sat Guru similarly awakens our divinity as a lit candle lights an unlit one. As stated in the philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism, the Sat Guru is the means through which we reach our Perfection. It is through Him that we attain the power potential of the (our) Self.

Yasya jnaana-didam vishvam
na drushyam bhinna-bhedatah,
Sadeka-roopa-roopaaya
tasmai shree-gurave namah.

"Salutations to Sri Guru, whose only form is Truth and by whose knowledge this world will no longer be perceived as being divided by differences."⁴
The word "Guru" itself reveals the completeness of God. The Guru Gita says: "Maya—the creator of the world, the veiled knowledge born of ignorance—resides in the body. He by whose light (true knowledge) arises is known by the word 'Guru.'" The first syllable "Gu," represents darkness, while the second syllable "ru" represents light. "Gu" is the darkness of separateness which envelops our true nature of Spirit, and "ru" is that principle which destroys the darkness of ignorance and reveals the light of wisdom. It is thus the Guru (or God), manifest or unmanifest, who gives us knowledge of the Supreme Principle. It is the Guru's "shakti," the divine cosmic power that projects, maintains, and dissolves the universe, which awakens our own inner spiritual energy (or kundalini) and thus gives us lasting experience in the expansion of consciousness. It is none other than this grace which constantly leads us along the path to our Perfection.

Na guro-radhiyam tattvam
na guro-radhiyam tapah,
Tattvam jnaanat-param naasti
tasmai shree-gurave namah.

"Salutations to Sri Guru. There is no truth higher than the Guru, no austerity greater than (service to) the Guru, no truth greater than the knowledge (of him)."

Even if you have only been present in silence at the assembly of a 'Wise One,' you have gained more potentially than you could, by ordinary thinking, ever imagine.

Mirza Asim
Amidst the movement toward spiritual understanding, we also come to immerse ourselves in three distinct stages of devotional absorption. We come to express our spirituality through our level of ego occupation and eventually through ego dissolution. We come to know, associate, and at last wholly identify ourselves with God through the level and quality of our devotion and worship.

In the beginning devotional stage, we tend to worship anything that has an attraction to or for us. Our spiritual energies are invested in external expressions of worship. For example, we may devote ourselves to man, woman, money, children, job, pleasure, etc. All of our objects of worship are a part of the physical world and our devotion is geared toward maintaining these objects as a part of ourselves.

When our ego control lessens and our spiritual understanding deepens, we enter into the second stage of devotion. Here, we come to outwardly express our devotion to God. But, because our mind still resides in a state of restlessness, and because our understanding is as yet incomplete, we worship a conceptual image of God. We conceptualize God in human form and worship Him as Father, as Provider, as Savior. In this stage, we may very well experience true spiritual joy, but we still experience a separation between our image of worship and ourself.

As we enter into the final stage of devotion, we
learn about God directly. We learn that God is both an "is" and an "is not." We learn to contain opposites and can better distinguish between the relative and the absolute. Our purification has reached such a stage that there is no longer a clear distinction between our devotion and our object of devotion, between God and not-God. We begin to perceive everything as a form of God. Our prayers are no longer directed outward toward externals, but are for devotion's sake only. Our level of devotion is clearly reflected in the words of the Sufi Saint Rabia:

    Lord, if I worship you from fear of hell, plunge me into hell. If I worship you from hope of paradise, deny me paradise. I seek to worship you for yourself alone.7

In Jnaneshwari, the commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita, Lord Krishna, speaking from the omniscient state of God union, imparted knowledge of the various levels of devotion. To his beloved disciple Arjuna, he said:

    O Arjuna, My inherent light destroys the darkness of ignorance which creates perplexity regarding Me. Through its help, people can easily see My nature. It engages people in worship of Me and grants them true knowledge. The miracle of this light is that wherever a person who has faith may sit, it allows him to see everything. Through this light, the universe comes into being and is dissolved, just as both dreaming and not dreaming depend on one's existence. This light is called devotion. In an afflicted person, devotion takes the form of pain. My devotee thinks of Me as that which will remove his pain; he makes Me the object of his longing, and through this form of devotion his pain is removed. O Arjuna, best among the brave, to one who seeks knowledge, devotion reveals itself as a desire for knowledge. That devotee considers Me the object of his
search for knowledge, and I become that for him. In one who seeks wealth, devotion becomes the desire for wealth, O Arjuna. By identifying Me with wealth, his devotion gives Me that form. In this way, when devotion springs from ignorance, it makes a person feel that I, the seer, am that which is seen. There is no doubt that (in a mirror) the face sees the face, but it is the mirror that gives the false impression of duality. A person perceives the moon with his eyes, but if he has an eye disorder he may see two moons when there is only one. In the same way, devotees find Me everywhere through devotion, but if they think that I am the object of seeing, that is the result of their ignorance. When ignorance is dispelled, My apparent visibility and Myself become one, just as a reflection is united with the object reflected. Even when some alloy is mixed with gold, the gold itself is pure, and when the impurity is removed, only pure gold remains. Similarly, I alone exist for one who truly sees. Is not the moon complete in itself even before the night of the full moon? Of course it is, yet it seems to reach perfection on that night. In the same way, I alone am seen through the path of knowledge, although by different means, and when the seer's seeing is completely destroyed, I alone attain Myself.8

* * * * *

Macrocosmic rain drop, Microcosmic tear, Above, the roaring thunder, Below, a silent fear;

God cries out a teaching, Wheat field turns to sand, A seeker says "please know me," As he reaches out his hand;

He's answered in a whisper, The sun kisses the sky, His fear is turned to laughter, His heart knows the reason why;

Clouds sometime obscure the sun, Eclipse the brilliance of the day, But the inner light of devotion, Illuminates the Way.

As Above, So Devotion
Daniel Toms
CONCLUSION: PERFECTION

Perfection is finally attained, not when there is no longer anything to add, but when there is no longer anything to take away.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Whether we decide to take the long way home or get on with our journey, will depend, partly on our past virtues, and partly on the amount of reward or payoff we are receiving now. If we are content with our life and its pleasures as they are now, we will probably choose not to alter our existing life circumstance. If, on the other hand, we are starting to feel tired, tired of our suffering, tired of the experience of ourselves as limited beings, then we may seek to rechannel our energy into higher, more expansive realms of being. We may be ready to experience ourselves in our true state of being, devoid of limits and conceptual imaginings. We may be ready to know who we are before we were. We may be ready for Perfection.

William James once said that we pass into mystical states as from less into more, from a smallness into a vastness, and at the same time from unrest to rest. We feel the expansion of our consciousness opening up to more reconciling, unifying states. James said, in reference to the higher vibratory frequencies, "In them, the unlimited absorbs the limits and peacefully closes the account."

The more awareness we bring into each moment, the more in tune we become with the Infinite Life. Although
it may seem advantageous to be less aware of the horrors of destruction, pain, and injustice, it is not until we expand past our limited concepts of injustice and tragedy that we begin to truly understand the meaning behind life's suffering. Only heightened awareness can provide insight into the pathos that underlies all life experience. It is only awareness that can take the horror out of the seemingly horrible aspects of life.

As we continue to grow in understanding we will realize that enlightenment is not merely an alertness to what we see and feel. We will realize that Truth is not theory, religion, speculative systems of philosophy, or intellectual insight. Although these may act as stepping stones toward enlightenment and Truth, they begin to be rightly understood as just sign posts along the way. The Sufi Saint Ghazali once said, "The ignorant man has no real idea of the learning of the scholastic. Equally, the scholastic has no adequate conception of the knowledge of the Enlightened Man." One may ask, "What is the difference between an enlightened man and an unenlightened man?" One answer is to say that we cannot know the difference until we realize ourselves to be no better than others. When we realize this, then we are better than others. But, if we think we are better than others, then we are not. How we see ourselves in relation to others can always provide us with a clear picture of our own state of being. If we are
not reflected as better or worse, then there is no necessity for desired attention or feelings of inferiority. We can simply be who and what we are and allow others this same freedom.

There is a Zen story where a young disciple asks his teacher what the difference between an enlightened and an unenlightened man is? The teacher says, "There is no difference. Well," the teacher said, "there is one small difference. The enlightened man walks three feet off the ground." The enlightened man walks three feet off the ground because he is not bound by anything. His own nature is realized to be no different from the nature of all things. Nothing is seen as being unnatural. The demons of hell, the crippled and ill, the perversions of the disturbed neither surprise nor disgust him. Everything is perceived as happening in its lawful sequence. Nothing is seen as being out of place. Faults, failures, and follies are all seen as being a part of the divine play, as are skills, talents, and expertise. In short, everything is realized to be of God.

An "Enlightened One's" life flows silently and irresistibly into an ever fuller life. It flows into a living peace all the more complete, all the more profound, because it knows all pain and unhappiness, knows them and takes them into itself and makes them one with its own substance. An enlightened being's life is in exact correspondence with Truth, and Truth is in exact correspond-
ence with Reality. This is not, however, the reality of consensus, built upon desire and expectation, but rather is the Reality of what Is, the Truth of unshakable knowledge of our true nature of Self, as Spirit, as Divine Light. In the Bible, Jesus, by every act and word of his life proved that he knew Reality and the Truth of his being. He did not spend time conforming to popular belief or worry about not being accepted as "one of the guys." In fact, he no doubt knew that if everyone was doing something it was a clue that it was more than likely based on some transitory assumption. He knew that Truth, in and of itself, is the sole guiding force which sets us as man and woman free. Being wholly identified with that omnipresent Christ Consciousness, he could say with simple finality: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free (John 8:31-32).

Man, you enter the world reluctantly, crying, as a forlorn babe;
Man, you leave this life, deprived again, crying again, with regret.
Therefore live this life in such a way that none of it is really wasted.
You have to become accustomed to it after not having been accustomed to it.
When you become accustomed to it, you will have to become used to being without it.
Meditate upon this contention. Die, therefore, 'before you die,' in the words of the Purified One.
Complete the circle before it is completed for you.
Until you do, unless you have—then expect bitterness at the end as there was in the beginning; in the middle as there will be at the end.
You did not see the pattern as you entered; and when you entered—you saw another pattern. When you saw this apparent pattern, you were prevented from seeing the threads of the coming pattern. Until you see both, you will be without contentment—Whom do you blame? And why do you blame?

Hashin the Sidqi Sufi Saint

* * * * *

When we have taken it upon ourselves to lead a disciplined, spiritual life, we begin to notice certain signs of spiritual progress. We begin to live life with calmness, contentment, and dispassion. We experience a lightness of body and a clarity of mind. We feel that everything is pulsating with one life, and one life only. We maintain a feeling that all forms are of the Lord; that the world is the Lord Himself. These signs tell us we are making steady progress.

The major sign which indicates we are growing in meditation and approaching Perfection is that we no longer have an attraction to the world. Sensual objects no longer tempt us and we steadily grow desireless, I-less, and mineless. The attachment to our body also gradually dwindles and we no longer feel a possessiveness toward material objects. We feel that all are manifestations of our Self, and we behold God in everything.

As we become cleansed through our purification practice, we also maintain the awareness that the pendulum of life is in constant flux; that pain follows pleasure, that worldly highs are always followed by worldly lows.
Having cultivated an even, balanced mind, we know that all earthly goods are transitory, that eventually riches become shackles, and that fame is a breath. We realize that youth, health, and beauty vanish, and that more worldly pleasure will never be enough. We know that those things whose end is always dust and disappointment cannot be the real goods which our soul requires. We now understand the meaning and implications behind the words of Jesus when he said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-20). Having turned our striving for external riches into attaining internal ones, we will have reversed our habitual patterns of wanting earthly goods into having spiritual ones. With the help of divine guidance, we will have learned to cut our desires down to nothing.

He who with little is well content is rich indeed as a king; and a king, in his greatness, is poor as the pedlar, when his kingdom Sufficeth him not.

Shekel Hakodesh

We will attain to the One that remains by continuing in the words of St. John:

That thou mayest have pleasure in everything, seek pleasure in nothing. That thou mayest know everything, seek to know nothing. That thou mayest possess all things, seek to possess nothing. That thou mayest be everything, seek to be nothing.3

We can look upon our spiritual training as training
to be nobody. Becoming nobody means that there is no longer any tension, pretense, or ego. It is letting go of our goal-oriented mentality, along with our concepts of who we think we are. As we near the end of our path we must even give up the thought of being someone seeking Perfection. We must have sufficient faith to exist in "no-thought," to just empty our mind and trust that as a situation arises, out of it will come what is necessary. We must simply let "Thy Will be Done."

The final letting go of ego means that we also accept our life situation as it is, completely. Don Juan reminds us that a true warrior on the path takes his lot, whatever it is, and accepts it in ultimate humbleness. He accepts in humbleness what he is, not as grounds for regret, but as a living challenge. "A warrior cannot avoid pain and grief," don Juan said, "but only the indulging in them." When we cease to indulge in our folly, it can be said that we have attained wisdom. Wisdom in this sense is non-identification with our life situation, including the spiritual path. We will no longer need to identify ourselves with the spiritual path, because we will have become the path. We will have become a living statement of the Vedas, the Bible, and all spiritual doctrines. All of our thoughts, feelings, and actions will be in perfect harmony with all the forces of nature. At this point we will perfectly "Be."

* * * * *
The purpose of our earthly life may be explained as a coming to the conscious realization of our oneness with the Supreme Life, of opening ourselves fully to our divinity. To the degree that we become aware of our oneness, we actualize in ourselves the qualities and powers of God; we make ourselves channels through which the Supreme Intelligence and Power can work. When our heart becomes filled with cosmic love, we then serve all beings equally and selflessly. To the degree that we surrender our ego, we exchange stress for ease, confusion for understanding, and suffering and pain for abounding bliss and strength. As love flows freely from us, we continue to soar towards the heavens.

As Rumi said, "We are departing for the skies. Who has a mind for sightseeing?" All of this will bring us to the Gateless Gateway. But as we enter the Gateway, we will experience the presence of that which lies beyond. Yet there is no "That" which lies beyond, for there is really no beyond. As Ram Dass said, "What it is contains all that is." By going beyond means that we contain all opposites within ourselves. It means that we find "this" to also be "that." James Broughton perhaps expressed it best when he said, "This is It, and I am It and You are It and so is That and He is It and She is It and It is It and That is That." It is also reflected in the lyrics of John Lennon when he sang, "I am He and you are me and we are all
together." For when the background becomes foreground and
the foreground becomes background, we are all together!

As we prepare ourselves for the ultimate mystic
Gateway, the inner temple of the seventh chakra, we must
even let go of the great fear of non-existence. By letting
go of the thought "I," there will then be nowhere to stand
and no one to stand there. There will no longer be any
separation anywhere. We will have merged back into our
original state of Being, into our Source and Self of All.
We will have traversed the entire length of our path and
will have indeed reached our Perfection.

Nothing is left to you at this moment but to have a
good laugh.

In the words of a Chinese Zen Master

A cosmic cognitive clearing,
an unwritten pageless page,
Through a joyous joining journey,
comes the Spirit of the Age;

The permanent pulsing pathway,
the center sequent stage,
Over the bridge of balance,
is the Spirit of the Age;

Seekers of samadhi,
seer and sage,
Pierce the rays of rhythm,
enter the Spirit of the Age;

The dawning doorway cracking,
shatter the captive's cage,
Penetrate the Perfect,
become the Spirit of the Age.

Spirit of the Age
Daniel Toms

* * * * *
He who knows and does not know that he knows: he is asleep. Let him become one, whole. Let him be awakened.

He who has known but does not know: let him see once more the beginning of all.

He who does not wish to know, and yet says that he needs to know: let him be guided to safety and to light.

He who does not know and knows that he does not know: let him, through this knowledge, know.

He who does not know, but thinks that he knows: set him free from the confusion of that ignorance.

He who knows and knows that he is: he is wise. Let him be followed. By his presence alone man may be transformed.5

Sarmoun Recital

In mysticism, knowledge cannot be separated from a certain way of life which becomes its living manifestation. To acquire mystical knowledge means to undergo a transformation; one could even say that the knowledge is the transformation.

Fritjof Capra

Om shantih shantih shantih
Om. Peace! Peace! Peace!

All the Love of the Universe

Daniel Toms
NOTES

FORWARD


INTRODUCTION: THE PATH BECKONS


CHAPTER 1: A CONSCIOUS LOOK AT CONSCIOUSNESS

2. Carlos Castaneda, Tales of Power, pp. 121-22.
3. Ibid., p. 255.

CHAPTER 2: GOD CONTRACTS INTO PHILOSOPHY

1. Teaching story as told by a Siddha Swami while the author was residing in an Ashram of Swami Muktananda.
2. General discussion on early Greek philosophy from Fritjof Capra, The Tao of Physics, pp. 6-7.
3. Ibid., p. 6.
4. Ibid., p. 7.
5. Part of this myth is found in R. H. Blyth, Games Zen Masters Play, pp. 5-6.
6. The other part of the Hindu myth is taken from Swami Tejomayananda, Introduction to Kashmir Shaivism, p. 9,14.

CHAPTER 3: QUANTUM THEORY SHEDS LIGHT

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CHAPTER 4: THE PATH OF BALANCE

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3. Ibid., p. 130.
5. General discussion on "wholeness" from Thadeous Golas, The Lazy Man's Guide To Enlightenment, pp. 24-25.

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CHAPTER 5: EGO BIRTH—THE BIRTH OF SEPARATENESS

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CHAPTER 6: ENERGY CENTERS—CHAKRAS

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CHAPTER 7: EGO PRIDE—A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

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CHAPTER 9: THE WORD—CREATION MANIFESTS

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CHAPTER 10: REINCARNATION—PLAY IT AGAIN SAM

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4. Ibid., p. 41.

CHAPTER 11: THE DIVINE PLAY—SHIVA DANCES ON

CHAPTER 12: MOTIVATION FOR MAYA

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CHAPTER 13: SUFFERING AND THE END OF SUFFERING

1. Roger Waters of the musical rock group Pink Floyd. Lyrics from the Album, Dark Side of the Moon.
2. Carlos Castaneda, A Separate Reality, p. 142.
3. Ibid., p. 142.
6. Ibid., p. 97.

CHAPTER 14: MAKING A SPIRITUAL START

1. Teaching story as told by a Siddha Swami while the author was residing in an Ashram of Swami Muktananda.

CHAPTER 15: BEING HERE NOW- OR LATER

1. R.H. Blyth, Games Zen Masters Play, p. 49.
2. Jackson Browne, from the Album, Late For The Sky.
5. Ram Dass, Be Here Now, p. 90.

CHAPTER 16: WORKING WITH EMOTIONS

2. Ram Dass, Be Here Now, p. 39.

CHAPTER 17: SPIRITUAL SURRENDER- THY WILL BE DONE

1. Sri Chinmoy, as quoted from the inside album cover of Carlos Santana and John McLaughlin, Love Devotion Surrender.
CHAPTER 18: STRAIGHTENING BY FIRE OR PLAYING WITH FIRE

3. Ibid., pp. 63-64.
5. Ouspensky, as quoted in Ram Dass, Be Here Now, p. 45.

CHAPTER 19: LOVE IS ALL YOU NEED

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CHAPTER 20: KINGDOM WITHIN- THE THREE STAGES OF SEEKING

4. Zen Saying, as quoted in Fritjof Capra, The Tao of Physics, p. 112.

CHAPTER 21: WORDS AS TRAPS

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2. Ibid., p. 86.
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CHAPTER 23: OBSTACLES ALONG THE WAY

CHAPTER 24: THE GURU AND DEVOTION

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CONCLUSION: PERFECTION

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