

IN SEARCH OF THE SOUL

FRANK GLASBY



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A MANUAL FOR SEEKERS

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BACKGROUND

About the book

This work, *In Search of the Soul*, is the result of a personal search for spiritual identity, and an understanding of the nature of the human soul. The investigation shows that man is a spiritual being, and the book discusses methods of experiencing the inner spiritual identity. The details are the product of a study of different teachings, and show parallel methods of attaining a personal spiritual awareness. A comparative analysis of eastern and western meditation systems demonstrates that the inner spiritual experience is the same for all sects. A comparison of the near death experience with effects in meditation systems also shows a similarity, and demonstrates that man is much more than a physical body. This helps to clarify the nature of the soul, and further indicates that the process of spiritual awakening is common to all the teachings. As an extra point it indicates why many people are not happy. This is because they are denying their true nature, and methods show how this can be corrected.

About the Author

The author studied philosophy and after completing his studies in philosophy he became a Fellow of the Philosophical Society, and qualified as a teacher through London University. He taught in a Christian School for a number of years, as well as other schools. In addition, he spent four years in India, where he developed an interest in Indian Philosophy. His specific interest is in the common themes underlying the great spiritual teachings. He has applied the disciplines discussed in this work, and is able to write from personal experience as well as lengthy study. He has therefore set out the work as a reference book for all students and seekers in this field. He also taken an active interest in astronomy, and has published a book, entitled Planets, Sunspots and Earthquakes.

Front illustration

Two Birds on One Tree. This is from an Asian fabric print of unknown origin. It illustrates an analogy from the Bhagavad Gita, in which one bird is enjoying the fruits and the other is watching. The one enjoying the fruits is the personal self and the one watching is the spiritual soul.

ILLUSTRATIONS & TABLES

Frontispiece Two Birds on One Tree

Figure 1 The Levels of Consciousness	11
Figure 2 The Main Mansions	15
Figure 3 The Chakras	52
Figure 4 The Centres of Consciousness	62
Figure 5 The Causal Body	63
Figure 6 The Greater Chakra System	66
Figure 7 A Comparative Table	112
Figure 8 The Invisible Bodies	113
Figure 9 The Cycles of Yugas	116

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE - THE HIDDEN TEACHINGS	6
CHAPTER TWO - VEDANTA, YOGA AND <i>THE BHAGAVAD GITA</i>	13
CHAPTER THREE - ZEN BUDDHISM	27
CHAPTER FOUR - THE TEACHING OF JESUS	39
CHAPTER FIVE - KUNDALINI YOGA	50
CHAPTER SIX – THE HEART OF THE SOUL	58
CHAPTER SEVEN – MANY MANSIONS	67
CHAPTER EIGHT – HEAVENS AND HELLS	77
CHAPTER NINE – THE WANDERING SOUL	80
CHAPTER TEN – THE NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE	90
CHAPTER ELEVEN – TWO BIRDS ON ONE TREE	100
CHAPTER TWELVE– THOU ART A GOD	108
CHAPTER THIRTEEN –THE MESSAGE OF A MYSTIC	118
CHAPTER FOURTEEN – THE LAST FRONTIER	124
GLOSSARY OF TERMS	128
BIBLIOGRAPHY	132

INTRODUCTION

The following discussions are the result of a search for evidence of the soul, and the meaning of mystic experiences. This included a comparative analysis of different meditation systems. In this process, the concept of the body as the centre of our identity had to be challenged. It became clear that the sense of identity often depended on cultural beliefs, and this raised many questions. The answer to those questions becomes clearer when eastern philosophy is considered. Their descriptions include meditation disciplines aimed at giving personal insight rather than book knowledge. By using this approach they are able to attain insights that are not attainable by academic study. This appears to be the reason why they see things differently.

In the search for rational explanations, it seemed that there was a need for a student's reference book to spiritual awareness. The indication is that many in the West do attain spiritual awareness but they do not always understand it. This work therefore sets out to clarify this elusive process. It is planned as a practical source book, and the aim is to offer a guide to various approaches, of which there is a wide range, and numerous people use them. Also, the present restless times are now causing more people to seek meaning and purpose in their lives, and many are turning to meditation. Furthermore, it is estimated that millions have experienced the unique mystic near death experience. This is considered as part of the investigations, along with other developments, which seekers often experience, and explanations of these unique experiences are included.

As this work is the result of comparative analysis, it offers knowledge that could be helpful to members of different groups. From the accounts, the indication is that it does not matter which sect or method we choose, for all the great teachings point to the top of the same mountain. Therefore, the processes are basically the same, and this investigation considers those processes. They are offered in the hope that they will be useful to all seekers on the path of personal self enquiry.

CHAPTER ONE - THE HIDDEN TEACHINGS

Secrets of Spiritual Knowledge

All the great spiritual teachings refer to the progress of the soul through different stages of development. This is described in terms of a journey through other worlds, or different levels of consciousness or different mansions. In the past the details were carefully guarded secrets, but now many of these are being revealed through modern translations of various scriptures. By comparative analysis it is possible to see how the different teachings match up. To do this we need a framework with which to relate them to each other. Saint Teresa of Avila describes the journey of the soul through

seven mansions in her book, *The Interior Castle*, which she wrote in 1577. Jesus said, 'In my Father's House there are many mansions.' This means, many dimensions, which are where the different worlds exist. Saint Teresa's list compares very well with the Hindu Vedanta system, which describes seven worlds, called "lokas" in Sanskrit. However, this ignores the lower worlds, which also have seven levels, with the hell worlds at the bottom. In our journey to the heaven worlds there is no need to consider the lower worlds, and for us the earth world is number one on the main list. Yet, this is not the only frame of reference, for the Buddhists speak of the ten directions of space. This consists of six worlds and four heavens, and the earth world is in the middle of this list, with lower worlds beneath it. To resolve these differences, Jnana Yoga uses a framework of five levels. This list puts the earth world as number one and above it are four more levels. As this is taken from Vedanta we can draw on these descriptions to understand the nature of the soul and plot its journey through the hidden worlds.

Apart from that, this clarifies one essential principle. This is that there are two points of identity. One is the soul, which is defined as the Jiva, Atman or Self. In western philosophy a seventeenth century philosopher, Leibniz, used the term Monad. The other is the ego, which was a term that was becoming common towards the end of the nineteenth century. The importance of this is that we have to transcend the ego to experience our spiritual identity as a living soul. This framework is therefore used as a basic frame of reference and we can go beyond it as we proceed.

The main work of Jnana Yoga is enormous, and we consider a simplified version later. Many of these ideas met with a mixed reception. Some thought them too radical and others classed them as blasphemous. A central theme in these works was that the soul evolves through many stages. The church disapproved of such views, and they would probably have received further unfavorable attention if someone had not already written a book that was more challenging. The other literary work was entitled *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859) by Charles Darwin (1809-1882).

Darwin's main thesis was that all species evolved biologically and man was presently at the end of this chain of evolution. The church strongly objected to this and to the suggestion that man might have descended from apes. With these new ideas, there was biological evolution at one extreme and spiritual evolution at the other. In a more academic field, Sigmund Freud was suggesting other new ideas about the mind; psychology was emerging. This new thinking would seriously affect conventional religious attitudes. Yet, the developments were often very restrictive. For example, the term "psychology" comes from the Greek word "psyche" (soul) so psychology really means "soul-ology." Despite this fact, modern psychologists do not generally accept the idea of a soul, and psychology is defined as a science of the mind. Some specialists consider that the physical brain creates consciousness, but eastern teachings insist that consciousness exists in its own right and exists on more than one level. This theme constantly emerges in the comparison of the different teachings.

The original terminology in these abstruse subjects was classical Sanskrit. These terms have persisted through the ages, and are clear enough if one can take the time to understand them. Nevertheless, their specific meaning requires explanation, even in Sanskrit, so for the western reader

the definitions are doubly essential. There is no way around this problem, as ignoring the definitions would result in meaningless sentences.

Different levels of Consciousness

According to the descriptions, the overall structure of the soul is quite complex and there are no complete western descriptions. We therefore have to draw on the eastern teachings, which focus on a specific awakening that leads to a state of spiritual awareness. This proceeds through a definite process. The central theme of this process is that there are five main levels of consciousness. Starting at the highest point, they are spirit, intelligence, reason, emotion and the physical level, as already stated. Many use this framework, with the Sanskrit names except for the emotional level, which is defined as the “astral”. This is the area of desire, feeling, and psychic phenomena. It is these subdivisions which make the complementary list of seven levels. These seven relate to various levels of activity called “lokas.” They are unseen locations, or localities, but they are inner dimensions. They are described as being like “beads on the string of consciousness that runs through them all.”

Vedanta says that these inner dimensions, or worlds, are illusions to our worldly focused minds, but they are real when the consciousness is focused in them. Normally we are unaware of them. Awareness of higher worlds is by mental discipline. In some cases of mental disturbance, there is an overlapping into lower worlds, but controlled ability to penetrate the higher levels of consciousness requires effort and discipline.

The Ego and the Spiritual Self

Interwoven into these five levels of consciousness are the two points of identity. One is the ego and the other is the spiritual self, or soul. Yoga refers to this as the “Self”, with a capital “S”. The variations on this can be confusing, but we need to use common terms, and the term “Self” specifically means the spiritual Self. A search through Vedanta for details of the soul reveals other names, such as Jiva, Atman, and Jivatma, as well as Self. This is typical of all discussions on the soul. There is no agreed meaning or standard terminology. The background descriptions explain that the soul enters matter as a means of gaining experience in the lower worlds. To operate in matter, it creates an ego. From then, it identifies with matter and with the ego. Therefore, it forgets its own identity and identifies with the body and the ego. The soul’s task is to awaken and return to the source. In Christian terms, the Prodigal Son has to break free and go back to the House of the Father. Before the Prodigal Son can return to the Father’s House the Soul or Son has to become self-aware. When it is truly aware it becomes a specific spiritual soul-awareness, although in Yoga teachings this is not the final realization. The final stage is a state of oneness. Most of the eastern disciplines are aimed at achieving this final stage and the analogy of being asleep, and having to awaken, is repeatedly used. Being asleep is also equated with being “dead”. In the process of awakening there are distinct stages. The first step is individual ego awareness, the second step is a soul realization, and union with God follows. The final step is an abstract state of universal spiritual awareness. This makes four specific stages in soul-

awareness operating through five levels of consciousness. Some teachings say that extrication from identification with the physical body is the first step, and this then makes five stages. This basic framework recurs throughout the different teachings and is the basis of knowing the soul and the dimensions in which it operates.

These experiences of course do not happen overnight, and require effort in meditating and studying the scriptures. Although all this knowledge is very useful as a scaffold on which to build a more ordered frame of reference, there are many gaps to fill. Studying other teachings provides many of the missing clues. There are gaps because many translations do not mention various important factors. Nevertheless, the descriptions make two specific points. These are that there are different levels of consciousness, i.e. the five already mentioned, and there are two points of identity, defined as the ego and the soul or Self. Some teachings put the emphasis on the soul's journey through the inner worlds, such as with Saint Teresa. Others put the emphasis on awakening the soul and attaining Self-realization. Yet, both are needed, especially with a knowledge system. Even so, the great teachings continually emphasize that as a method, devotion, and knowledge, are essential for any real progress in soul-awareness.

As a more definitive presentation of these levels of consciousness, they are shown in the form of a diagram (Figure 1). Of course, a mere diagram can never represent the full complexities of the human soul, and the so-called levels are really one within another. The diagram is an aid to conceptualizing abstract ideas in an understandable form.

The levels of consciousness are like the floors of a house. We mainly live in the lower floors, below the ego level and dominated by the ego and the desires. The ego stands halfway, blocking the way to the higher nature. Transcending the ego is therefore a necessity. The soul is the focal point of the higher consciousness and contact with this is the individual soul-awareness. The mind is the bridge, because the higher part of the mind overcomes the lower aspect of the mind. In this framework, the soul is above the spiritual level, but it can move down when the individual is attempting to contact it. The soul operates in the upper levels and the ego operates in the lower levels. In ordinary life we usually only look outwards and ignore the higher aspects of the soul, but spiritual insight can be developed by looking within. In terms of the diagram, this means moving the focus of consciousness up to the higher levels. Unless we can do this, we remain locked into our physical consciousness and are unable to transcend it.

In presenting this type of discussion some writers speak of going down into hidden depths and then explain in terms of going deeper, into the levels of inner consciousness. Saint Teresa's concept was with God at the centre and the mansions stretching outwards, whereby we are in the outer court. The traditional method is to speak of higher worlds and of higher levels of consciousness. The western view of most of these concepts is very over-simplified. Usually only the physical and spiritual worlds receive attention. This implies that there is then only one shift of perception to gain insight into the spiritual world, ignoring the consideration of the intermediate worlds in the areas of the feelings and the

mind. Experience of the intermediate worlds often seems like a psychological disorder rather than entry into another dimension. These areas of psychic emotional experience are usually a distraction and often mislead the seeker.

There is then an obsession with phenomena rather than an attempt to gain true insight. They are dubious areas but they often occur, and it is important to deal with them as they happen. There are many hazards in the journey through the different levels of soul consciousness.

The specific terms used in this framework are in the diagrams. The terms “astral” and “physical” are western terms, although the Sanskrit terminology also has specific corresponding terms. The names of the five sheaths or bodies that relate to these levels of consciousness are given below but can be analyzed in detail later when they are discussed with other diagrams.

Terms and Meanings

CONSCIOUSNESS		THE FIVE SHEATHS	
Atma	Spirit	Anandamaya	The Spiritual Body
Buddhi	Intelligence	Vijinanamaya	The Intelligence Body
Manas	Mind	Manamaya	The Mental Body
Astral	Psychic Energy	Pranamaya	Psychic Energy Body
Physical	This World	Anamaya	Physical Body.

Apart from Vedanta, other writers dealt with this theme. Rudolf Steiner, (1831-1925) lectured and wrote on the subject. He said that the ego used the body as a plaything and when the person was ill, it shifted its focus to a different level. On this point, it is worth quoting from a work on the Tao called *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, by Richard Wilhelm (1974). It explains that the “lower heart” (meaning the ego) acts as though it is in charge and despises the “true ruler”, (the monad or Self), thinking it is weak. The ego seizes the power for itself and acts as the leader. These, and other similar comments, reoccur in later chapters, as the same theme constantly arises in the different explanations.

<p style="text-align: center;">THE SOURCE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The One Reality: the All Embracing Spirit.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">THE SELF (MONAD)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The True Self: the Spiritual Identity.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">ATMA</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Holy Spirit: Spiritual Insight.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">BUDDHI</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Love: Intuition: True Intelligence.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">MANAS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Higher Mind: Pure Reason</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">THE EGO</p> <p style="text-align: center;">An aspect of the lower Mind.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">LOWER MANAS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ordinary mental ability.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">ASTRAL</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Psychic/Emotion: Longings and Desires.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">PHYSICAL</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Action, Instincts and Appetites</p>

Figure 1 The Levels of Consciousness

The Subsidiary Selves

A more recent writer, Jane Roberts, explains the system of the five sheaths or subtle bodies, saying that the central soul rules over these subsidiary selves, which she calls “counterparts”. However, they do not wish to cooperate and operate in isolation. In her book, *The Seth Material, (The Self and Probable Realities, P.200)* Jane Roberts explains that the different selves experience time in their own way because they have a different nature. Initially there is no unity in these selves unless the central self helps them to unite into an overall awareness of the whole self. She then says that the central self must be able to know its subsidiary parts at the same time. Otherwise, these seemingly separate selves appear to be isolated. Each part of the total self must become aware of the other parts. Furthermore, Roberts explains that the inner self must bring about comprehension to these parts of the group selves. The person is then fully integrated. Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) says there is no communication between the levels because they cannot understand each other. He says that there is an internal man and an external man, and they must be united by means of the rational mind. This indicates that it is the

internal man that is the means of mutual comprehension of the subsidiary selves. His teaching is dealt with in more detail in Chapter Eight.

The central theme is therefore the same as that indicated by the other writers. We are like a divided house, and are by no means Masters of our inner house. The inner conflicts of these uncooperative selves can cause many neuroses. In terms of inner bodies, or sheaths as Yoga calls them, the mental body and the astral body are the two most adjacent ones. The physical sheath, which we all know so well, can give some trouble, mostly in the areas of physical appetites, instincts and addictions, such as sex, food (gluttony), alcohol and drugs. The physical body is really only an instrument, more easily controlled by a strong mind. The point is that the consciousness of the soul or Self interpenetrates all these levels, and through discipline can develop a more objective awareness of these subjective aspects. This is defined as a philosophy of “objective subjectivity”, and no degree of self-awareness is possible without it. The teachings say that we must become aware, first of our own self and then of our own self-nature. Our own self is the soul and the soul-nature is pure spirit.

These comments are only the background for a more specific framework of the soul and a consideration of the nature of the soul and the inner worlds in which it operates. By studying the different teachings, it becomes evident that there is only one theme, presented through the ages in many different ways. Religious groups each encourage their own version of the path to spiritual development, sometimes claiming a teaching as their own, in isolation from other forms of teaching. Yet, it is the same for everyone, but the mode of teaching changes from time to time so that it is easier to understand in contemporary terms. That is to say, there is not a new teaching but only a new way of presenting it, with a more sophisticated terminology to suit the latest cultural values. These teachings also implied that if we do not evolve spiritually we run the risk of rejection, like failed experiments of Nature.

The Basic Statements

The most important statement in these works is that there are two distinct points of identity. There are repeated references to a spiritual self or soul, and a lower self, the ego. The idea may be strange to the west but these enigmatic statements are common in Vedanta and Buddhism.

This concept of two points of identity is essential for insight into the nature of the soul. It helps to accept this concept as a working hypothesis, especially when considering the after-death experiences. The greatest difficulty in grasping these ideas is due to the unusual terminology and the western view that the body is the self. However, all the spiritual teachings insist that the body is only an instrument. As already explained the spiritual soul is the activator and as such, it acts through the ego. There are also the five other aspects relating to the body, the desire nature, and the mind, also the intelligence principle and the individual spirit. Beyond and within all these is what Zen calls the “self-nature” and what Vedanta defines as the Supreme-Self. Western psychology appears to have no such concepts and usually does not use the word “God”. We have no clear western frame of reference to discuss any intimate subjective experiences or to help us to discover our own spiritual identity. We

consequently have to rely on the traditional eastern philosophies as a means of establishing a framework on which to base discussion about the nature of the soul. This preliminary discussion offers a skeleton outline and the following descriptions help to fill in the gaps, eventually revealing the overall structure and nature of the soul.

CHAPTER TWO - VEDANTA, YOGA AND *THE BHAGAVAD* *GITA*

Knowledge and Revelation

Further details on the nature of the soul and the inner dimensions in which it operate are continually being translated. Yet, a small book, called *The Holy Science* written in 1894 by Swami Sri Yukteswar contains an almost complete frame of reference for discussing these subjects. Yukteswar was the guru of the well known Swami Yogananda who later formed the Self-Realization Fellowship in California. Yukteswar was born in 1855 and died in 1936, so he was not quite forty years of age when he wrote his book. Yogananda referred to him as a Jnana Avatar, or Guru of Knowledge. In comparison with other books, *The Holy Science* is very concise and specific, and includes a commentary on each section that relates it to quotations from the Bible. For the sake of discussion, we can summarize the teachings of Yukteswar's Jnana Yoga so that we have a sharper outline to put into our original framework. Jnana Yoga is the Yoga of Knowledge, and its scope is enormous, but it covers some useful details. In his book, the essential points are set out in four sections classed as the Gospel or main teaching, the Goal or the aims and Purpose, the procedure or method, and finally the Revelation or divine explanations. A person who has attained a revelation becomes a true guru, but they are rare. A person can attain such status by any discipline. The main points by Yukteswar are similar to those of others. They are that man has a subtle body, and the individual spirit operates through more than one level. The teachings insist that the essence of spirit is everywhere and in everything. Also, the teachings say that there are seven main levels, called swargas, or lokas, and the Divine Spirit is equally in all of them. However, other works explain that there are other heavens, and hells, above and below these main seven lokas or levels.

In the introduction to Yukteswar's book, there is an explanation of how the Ages manifest in cycles over a period of about twenty-five thousand years. In this progression, we have both Dark Ages and Golden Ages. It explains that we are at present in a Dark Age, called the Kali Yuga. As part of the revelation, the enlightened devotee sees such details when they have a final illumination.

Unfortunately, they are in symbolism and can be somewhat obscure. Although Yogananda was a disciple of Yukteswar, he did not enlarge on the subject in any public writing. A book about Yogananda by his brother, S.L. Ghose, under the title of *Mejda*, which was his name for Yogananda,

has an excellent summary of these main points at the end of the book. Other useful clues are in other chapters.

An interesting point that comes out of these writings is that different writers concentrate on different aspects. For example, one may focus only on the nature of the unseen world in terms of describing the system of inner dimensions, as in the book by Saint Teresa of Avila. Another may specialize in examining the levels of consciousness in the human psyche, as some Yoga systems do. A third may focus only on the means of attaining enlightenment, such as with Zen. Some of course ignore all these aspects and prefer to stick only to worship and devotion to God, without worrying about any definitions or explanations. The critical point is that there is no single book that we can use to study the different views on the soul. This work is an attempt to fulfill that role.

The common standpoint in the different approaches is that the essential task is to discover our true spiritual identity in terms of spiritual soul-awareness, by one means or another. Many say that the method and the sectarian concepts do not matter. We are informed that what really matters is our spiritual growth. To attain this it is essential to have some knowledge as a means of avoiding difficulties and knowing what is happening when certain experiences occur. This is particularly necessary with the advanced experiences.

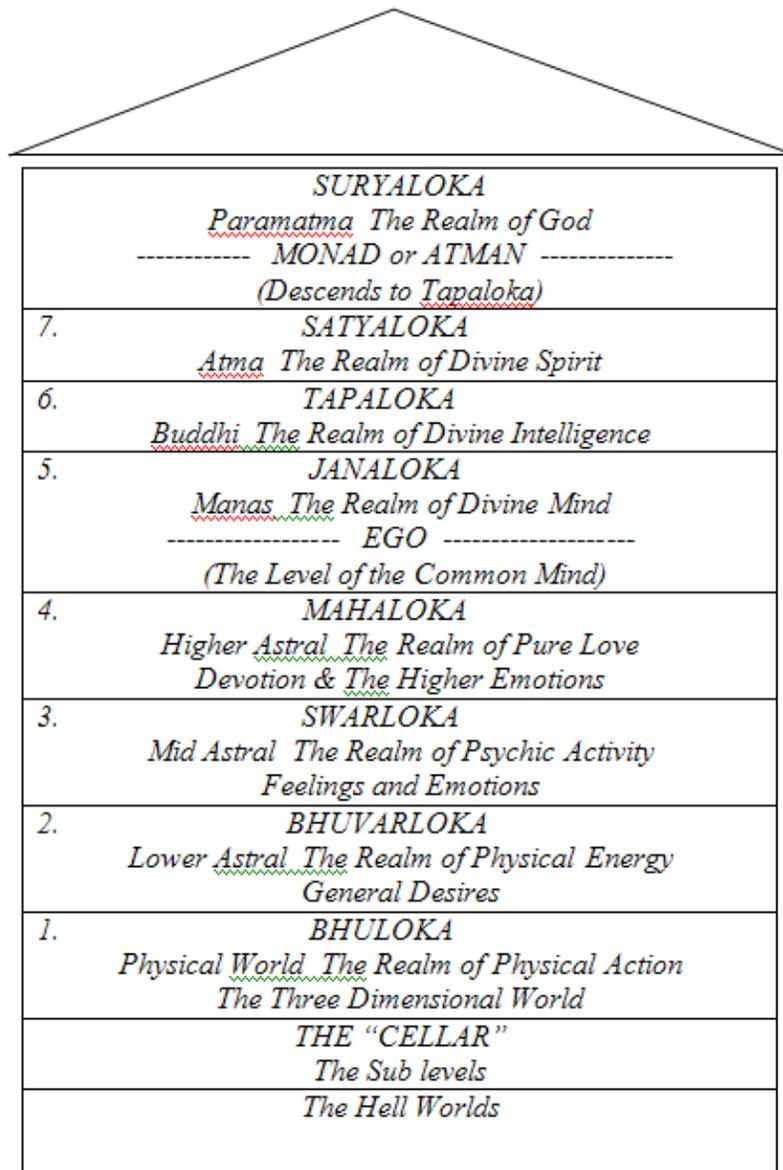
The Father's House

As will be seen there are difficulties in the arrangements of the diagrams because one has a list of five terms and the other has a list of seven. Yet, they relate to each other in a very simple manner. Figure 2 demonstrates this. The unusual names can be ignored in the beginning so long as the concept of other dimensions, other levels of consciousness, and two points of identity are accepted. The initial aim is to explain the subject as information. Then, the important step is to grasp that these details apply to us. We have to realize, as an experience, that we are indeed souls, and to do that we need some knowledge. The main names and descriptions of the seven levels shown in the "Father's House" diagram in Figure 2 are mainly from Vedanta (the Hindu scriptures), but some are from other sources.

The principle is that we have to raise our consciousness into the higher levels to a state of spiritual awareness. Conscious experience of the higher lokas, or worlds, is part of the revelation. By all accounts, the ones from Mahaloka down are relatively easy to enter, but the ones above are more difficult. Transcending the ego is the only way to contact these higher levels. Sri Yukteswar, and others, put the ego at the level of the mind, in the area of Janaloka, alternatively referred to as Manaloka. These points will be clarified again using a composite table to show the relationship between the five sheaths or inner bodies, and the five levels of consciousness.

Jnana Yoga in particular deals with the different bodies or sheaths and the levels of consciousness in other dimensions. In Raja Yoga, they are only implied. They are not in the devotion system of Bhakti Yoga at all. Nevertheless, some knowledge of these different systems is useful. Saint Teresa only spoke of the soul journeying through seven mansions. This is conveniently simple, but there is not much scope for exploring other subtle details.

Emanuel Swedenborg said that the soul is a spirit and it can experience different levels of heaven and hell, but did not develop the other aspects of the soul. He did differentiate between the spirit and the ego, in his own terms, but did not expand on extra detail of the soul body and the five subsidiary bodies, although there are brief references scattered through his extensive writing. However, he did state that the soul is spirit, the true nature of which is love. Philosophically this is almost the crux of the situation because it points to the conclusion that our problem is ignorance of our spiritual nature. There is consequently a lack of love in the world generally.



The inner worlds of astral/emotions, mind and spirit, as well as the lower sub levels, appear to have no genuine reality to our physical object based idea of reality. We consider them imaginary or only as concepts because we measure reality in terms of tangibility. From the viewpoint of the inner reality of the spirit, they are real worlds with their own type of tangibility. In our dimension, we operate in dense matter but they are in a more subtle matter, experienced by a more subtle perception.

Figure 2 The Main Mansions in “My Father’s House”

Other Methods

Many methods of awakening have been devised and other writers often quote the two books mentioned here. One of the best known of these methods is Raja Yoga. In contrast with Jnana Yoga, which aims at knowledge that will lead to wisdom, Raja Yoga concentrates on discipline of the mind and sets out the method in a series of sayings or Sutras. The Sutras of Raja Yoga, as recorded by Patanjali, are approximately four thousand years old. There are almost two hundred Sutras, or statements for guidance. These are set out in four sections called books, although they are always produced in one book that usually has the same title, such as *Raja Yoga, “The Sutras of Patanjali”*.

Patanjali’s Raja Yoga is a detailed process of mental discipline aimed at leading to a specific awakening in the traditional manner. The first book is an introduction and a preview of the whole system. The second and third books are mental discipline exercises. The fourth book deals with further exercises and effects obtained by these mental disciplines. A full description is given further on. The aim of the Sutras is that the devotee should use the statements for meditation and contemplation to attain spiritual insight.. Although very specific, many will be compatible with any discipline. There is also a devotional system of Yoga called “Bhakti Yoga”. This is the path of intense love for God and gives little scope for discussion other than to say it is a much more effective method for obtaining results. Nevertheless, some knowledge is still helpful.

Devotion to Ishvara

We can now consider the details of Raja Yoga as the supreme mental discipline of attaining full soul awareness. Almost all the disciplines put some emphasis on mental control, and overall they amount to three aims. The first aim is to calm the mind, the second aim is to purify the mind, and the final aim is to transcend the mind. In Zen this is “crossing to the far shore”, or beyond the furthest limits of the mind. This is extremely difficult. However, in Patanjali’s Sutras one Sutra indicates how this difficulty may be by-passed. Although Raja Yoga is a mental discipline, it states in Sutra 23, Book 1, that “The shortest method is intense devotion to Ishvara”.

Ishvara is the Lord within, and the advice is to trust in the Lord within. However, some versions of Patanjali’s Sutras do not use the term “devotion”. They say that the best method is by intense concentration on Ishvara. No doubt, the more mentally focused writers preferred concentration to devotion, but most translations say devotion. The simplest method therefore is to put more emphasis on devotion, especially as Sutra 45, in Book 2, says “From devotion to God the aim of meditation is achieved”.

Below is a simplified list of the Sutras, and apart from emphasis on the Sutras just mentioned Sutra 1, in Book 4 is significant. It refers to the development of powers, or siddhis, that are often an

obstacle to true insight, and Patanjali makes this point. Such powers are usually the result of awakening the primal energy, or “Kundalini”, and indeed all forms of intense meditation, concentration, and devotion will awaken the Kundalini energy. Patanjali never mentions Kundalini, but the mental discipline advised by Patanjali and the intense devotion also suggested can awaken this energy. Specific knowledge of Kundalini is not necessarily essential, as the first step is to calm and purify the mind. After that, the mind is ready to make the “big leap”. The German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, (1781) endorses this, for he says, “there is a point beyond which reason cannot go, and there has to be a leap off into Pure Faith”. This is the position in the final stages of Raja Yoga and it is the time to avoid distraction by the powers, or siddhis. They can easily mislead the devotee because there is still some potential ego influence.

The Sutras of Patanjali

The Sutras presented here are from a study of different commentaries. Some commentaries separate the long Sutras into two shorter ones, and combine some shorter ones. In comparison it will be noted that the numbering does not then always match up. In addition, different commentators put different interpretations on the Sutras. We should therefore take care to study reputable commentaries, such as, for example, the one by Swami Vivekananda. These remarks also apply to the different commentaries on the Bhagavad Gita.

Book One

1. The purpose of Yoga is union with the divine side of our own nature.
2. To attain this, control and discipline of the mind is necessary.
3. By this process man then becomes inwardly aware and the Self is able to contact the Spirit.
4. When this is not the case man is dominated by his lower senses, lives in the lower three worlds, (mental, emotional, physical) and is only aware of his lower self.
5. There are five states of the mind and they react to pain and pleasure.
6. The five states of the mind are correct and incorrect knowledge, confused thinking, sleep and memory.
7. Clear observation, discrimination and accurate evidence are the means of correct knowledge.
8. Confused thinking leads to false knowledge that is not in accord with nature.
9. False thinking arises from the use of words that have no real meaning.
10. Sleep is a void state where there are no sense modifications.
11. Memory is the retaining of sense perception.
12. Control of these subtle states is by effort and non-attachment.
13. There must be a constant effort to control the mind.
14. In the beginning, this is difficult but repetition makes it constant.
15. Non-attachment results from freedom from longing for objects or for effects from the senses.
16. There is a higher state of the Spiritual Self.

17. There are four aspects of Consciousness; these are concerning external appearances, reasoning about causes of phenomena, personal joy and identification with inner being.
18. The next stage in transcendence is the cessation of all mental activity.
19. Attaining this state while there is still attachment to the external world does not bring true freedom.
20. The qualities of faith, effort, memory, concentration and discrimination will attain the transcendent state.
21. Those who truly apply themselves can quickly achieve results.
22. The degree of success depends on the degree of intensity.
23. One of the shortest ways is by intense devotion to Ishvara.
24. Ishvara is the Supreme Spirit and is unaffected by human changes. (Note: some texts say "Supreme Lord").
25. Ishvara is unaffected by time and is beyond it.
26. Being beyond time Ishvara is the Supreme Gurudeva of all teachers since the beginning. (Literally, God is the Guru).
27. The sacred word OM represents Ishvara.
28. Meditating on God and the sacred word reveals the Way.
29. This then brings knowledge and overcomes obstacles.
30. There are many obstructions, especially sickness, laziness, doubt, apathy, attachment to the senses, wrong views, inability to concentrate and inability to hold the state of insight.
31. Pain, distress and other disorders also create obstacles.
32. Overcome distraction by focusing on one subject.
33. Positive attitudes of mind and indifference to negative conditions help the mind to be calm.
34. Attain mental calm by the practice of correct breathing.
35. Alternatively, by concentrating on an aspect of the senses.
36. Alternatively, by meditating on the Divine Light that is in all things.
37. Alternatively, by having no desire.
38. Alternatively, by pondering on the wisdom obtained in dreams.
39. Alternatively, by focusing on that which is dearest to the heart?
40. The mind is then unobstructed on all levels.
41. When this state of mental tranquility is attained the mind can become one with whatever is contemplated.
42. The mind can then transcend question and meaning and have direct perception.
43. In this state of absorption and insight, we can know the true principle or idea involved.
44. By this, both coarse and fine objects can be known, (i.e. subtle and otherwise).
45. Eventually we transcend mental discrimination and intellectual bias.
46. Such meditations do not eliminate past causes that have been set up earlier.

47. When the mind is totally calmed true spiritual insight is possible.
48. The mind only reveals the truth at this stage.
49. This level is beyond the rational processes and therefore transcends all mind activity.
50. It therefore also transcends all worldly means of knowing.
51. Transcending this stage, the seeker experiences true Samadhi, (Bliss).

Book Two

1. It is by aspiration, study, and devotion that one attains union with the Self.
2. The attributes that must be cultivated are for transcending difficulties and attaining Samadhi. (Bliss and peace)
3. The obstacles are ignorance, egotistical self-esteem, emotional attachment, general aversion, and attachment to worldly life.
4. The greatest obstacle is ignorance as this causes the other obstacles.
5. Ignorance is the assumption that the illusory external experiences are more important than the inner values of true Reality.
6. The sense of worldly identity is the result of the True-Self identifying with its instrument, i.e. with the body and its senses.
7. Desire and attachment to pleasure are associated with effects.
8. Aversion is the inverse desire to avoid pain.
9. The desire to live and experience physical life is inborn.
10. Developing the opposite traits overcomes these hindrances.
11. Meditation will remove these obstacles.
12. It is essential to remove these obstacles because they create ongoing effects, (i.e. karma.)
13. While any trace remains, effects will follow, thus causing further conflict over pleasure and pain.
14. Whether the result is pleasure or pain depends on the original motive.
15. The enlightened person sees all as pain because it is a life in the lower worlds.
16. It is possible to avoid pain, which is yet to come.
17. The cause of such woe is the identification of the Witness Self with the conditions.
18. That which is experienced consists of insight, action and inertia. These exist for creating conditions that will lead to liberation. They are therefore learning situations. (The three states are Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, collectively called gunas, and are also called, Harmony, Action and Sloth.).
19. The qualities of matter may be obvious or subtle.
20. The See-er, or True Self, is pure Consciousness, but perceives and experiences by means of the mind.
21. Perception and experience are for the development of the Self.
22. When a man has attained true union with that self he is no longer concerned with his own life but devotes himself to helping others.

23. The union of Spirit and Mind creates perception and through this, there is an understanding of the objective world and of the subjective self.
24. While man is unaware of his true Self-Nature he remains identified with the lower self and the external world.
25. Elimination of ignorance of the truth will occur when the True Self is able to stand free, i.e. from attachment and identification with circumstances, the body, or the Ego.
26. The key to this liberation is discrimination.
27. The steps to this are progressive and involve seven stages, (i.e. in terms of the Chakras and Lokas).
28. Through practice the impurities are removed and enlightenment follows.
29. There are eight points for attention. These are morality, discipline, posture, correct breathing, abstraction, concentration, meditation and contemplation.
30. There are five commandments. These are harmlessness, truth, not stealing, avoiding incontinence and avoiding greed.
31. The commandments are general and apply to all.
32. Also there are five rules. These are inner and outer purity, contentment, discipline, spiritual study, and devotion to God.
33. When wrong thoughts enter the mind, replace them by opposite thoughts.
34. Negative attitudes related to the above should be corrected in this way.
35. With harmlessness enmity ceases.
36. With truthfulness, the person attains power with words.
37. When possessiveness and theft are transcended abundance will result.
38. True continence gains power.
39. When avarice is overcome true insight results.
40. This inner and outer purification creates a disinterest in physical existence.
41. By this purification, the individual develops serenity of spirit, concentration, control of the body and inner perception of the Self.
42. From the serenity, Bliss ensues.
43. From discipline comes all spiritual ability.
44. Study and concentration achieve contact with the Self.
45. Devotion to God achieves the aim of meditation.
46. The body position (in meditation) should be firm and steady.
47. Patience and persistence should develop a good posture.
48. These qualities will lead to the ability to balance the opposites, (and avoid the conflicts of duality).
49. Control over the inner nervous energies and Prana, i.e. Shakti, occurs.

50. Right control may be internal, external or motionless. It is subject to condition as well as to place and time.
51. A fourth condition, of awareness, is superior to the others.
52. This allows the light to manifest.
53. The mind is then ready for true insight.
54. The mind is then inward looking instead of externally focussed.
55. Through this, the senses are completely controlled.

Book Three

1. Concentration is the focusing of the mind on one particular object.
 2. Steady concentration gives knowledge of the object.
 3. When the mind is absorbed in the object, it is contemplation.
 4. Practicing these together results in true knowledge.
 5. This process obtains the light of knowledge.
 6. The development of this type of insight is gradual.
 7. This inner perception has a deep effect.
 8. These effects are external, for true insight is not on an object.
 9. By control of mental disturbances, the mind can rise above that state.
 10. This then leads to spiritual perception.
 11. One-pointed concentration in the mind attains true contemplation.
 12. A steady balance between the one and the many transcends all processes.
 13. This transcendent state allows knowledge of the essence of any object.
 14. All objects have three potential qualities. These are acquired, manifested, or latent.
 15. By this, there is a corresponding response in the perception.
 16. Meditation on these three qualities brings all-encompassing knowledge.
 17. By contemplation of word meaning and knowledge comes an understanding of all phenomena.
 18. By observing such subtle impressions, comes knowledge of past lives.
 19. By the same method, one can know another's state of mind.
 20. This does not reveal the contents of the other mind.
 21. By meditating on the physical form, the Yogi can become invisible.
 22. By meditation, a Yogi can know the immediate or future karma.
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23. By meditating on states of feeling, a Yogi can experience union with others.
 24. Meditating on the strength of the elephant brings the powers (siddhis).
 25. Meditating on the Inner Light will reveal hidden secrets.
 26. Meditating on the Sun will reveal higher worlds.

27. Meditation on the Moon reveals the appropriate lunar forces.
28. Meditation on the Pole Star gives knowledge of outer space.
29. Focusing on the Solar Plexus gives knowledge of the body.
30. Focusing on the throat controls hunger and thirst.
31. Focusing on the pit of the throat calms the body and removes disturbance.
32. Focusing on the crown of the head attains contact with the Enlightened Ones.
33. The power of intuition brings knowledge of all things.
34. Insights into the mind come from focusing on the heart.
35. Meditation on the Spirit gives discrimination between the opposites of the spiritual and personality self.
36. We then obtain the subtle powers (of seeing and hearing, etc).
37. These powers are obstacles to the higher knowledge.
38. With liberation and knowledge, the mind can enter the body of another.
39. By mastering the nervous energy, (i.e. the Shakti) the Yogi can walk on water and have other powers.
40. By using other disciplines, fire does not affect the Yogi.
41. By a different specific focusing Divine hearing is possible.
42. By relating these abilities, aerial travel is possible. (Note: These are supernatural powers but are an obstacle to True Enlightenment).
43. Removing that which veils the light frees true intelligence and illumination occurs.
44. Meditating on the fine and the gross in forms attains mastery over the elements.
45. The body then increases in beauty, complexion and strength.
46. Meditating on their nature attains mastery of the senses.

47. From all this comes rapidity of the mind and independence of perception.
48. True discrimination between Spirit and Matter results in true power.
49. Ignoring all such powers results in genuine spiritual qualities.
50. Clinging to such qualities may again develop attachment.
51. Perfect discrimination and intuition can reveal all the mysteries.
52. From this comes the ability to discriminate in all things and in all species.
53. This intuitive knowledge is applicable in all things.
54. Equal purity towards spirit and matter, when the Spirit knows that it is not dependent on anything, is true liberation. (The Yogi is then a Free Spirit).

Book Four

1. Birth, certain stimulants, the power of words, discipline, or meditation can provide access to The Power.

2. The urge to change from a lower to a higher Consciousness is natural.
3. The aim of the disciplines is to allow the higher consciousness to develop naturally.
4. The intrinsic individual Consciousness creates the means of individual experience.
5. There is only the One Mind although there are different manifestations of it.
6. Consciousness assumes many forms but only that of meditation is desirable.
7. The actions of the liberated man are free from karma.
8. From karma, appropriate conditions manifest for its fulfilment.
9. There is a connection between desires and their effects irrespective of time and space.
10. Such desires are without beginning and have existed through eternity.
11. Cause, effect, and attachment support these desires. Without these, they are absent.
12. In the True Reality, past and future already exist, because the present already holds the seeds of the future.
13. The characteristics of these desires relate to the nature of matter, i.e. they relate to the laws of matter whether fine or gross.
14. The unity in all things is due to the unity in the Mind Nature.
15. Perception and the desire for objects vary with different individuals and not all people see things in the same way.
16. Things are therefore understood or not according to the nature of the mind.
17. Forms are perceived, or not, according to the qualities in the Consciousness.
18. The Spirit transcends the Mind and therefore always knows the states of Mind.
19. The Mind, thus perceived, is an object, and as such cannot be the source of illumination.
20. The mind cannot focus in two directions at once, such as on itself and on an external object.
21. If we assume that there is another perceiving mind, such minds will be without number.
22. When the spiritual Lord reflects into the mind, there is awareness of the Self.
23. The mind then knows itself, and the Self, in true consciousness.
24. The mind is the instrument of the Self and reflects images for the consideration of the Self.
25. The one who can discriminate between the mind and the Self is enlightened.
26. The mind then learns to discriminate and gains illumination.
27. From habit, the mind will continue to reflect on other things.
28. These other things are impurities and are hindrances.
29. By non-attachment to such impressions, and contemplation of the Spirit, the student becomes more aware of the Spirit.
30. When this state of Self-awareness is attained all hindrances, and all karma, are overcome.
31. Attaining this stage removes all hindrances, and there is nothing further to do.
32. The modification of the mind, through its qualities no longer takes place.
33. This transcends the sense of time, which relates to these modifications.

34. Once such conditions no longer affect the Self it is free, and it can then unite with the Supreme One.

The Bhagavad Gita

The *Bhagavad Gita* is an episode in the sixth book of the Mahabharata and there is some considerable disagreement about its origins. Some scholars have ascribed it to the poet and philosopher Vyasa, but others think it is a composite work. It is generally seen as a direct message from Lord Krishna some five thousand years ago, at the beginning of the current

. Vyasa lived much later so there are doubts about the origins and authorship of this classical Indian religious work.

In the beginning of the Bhagavad Gita the stage is set for Krishna's comments. It describes a battle scene where two tribes, the Pandus and the Kurus, are facing each other ready to do battle. The leader of the Pandus is Arjuna. He is reluctant to attack the adversary because there is a blood relationship between the two tribes. It is because of this that Lord Krishna appears and, standing in the chariot with Arjuna has a long discussion with him. This discussion takes up sixteen chapters whereas the description of the scene only uses two chapters. This situation indicates that it is really an allegory. It is not rational to consider that the leading General of an army would be discussing lengthy philosophical problems when the enemy was preparing to attack.

The allegory has been described as the battle of Kurukshetra that takes place within the psyche when the individual decides to master the dark forces in his own soul. The main work of the sixteen chapters discusses and explains sixteen different methods of dealing with the problem. It starts with an explanation of the need for right action. This is the basis of Karma Yoga. There are a further fifteen methods which include such aspects as knowledge, philosophic insight, devotion to the Lord and so on. However, this fragmentary approach of considering different methods is really missing the point. Considering all the methods in sequence shows an ongoing process that leads through many stages. In other words it starts with Right Action, as a means of offsetting Karma and finishes with Renunciation and surrender to the Lord. Almost the last words in the Gita are in Arjuna's reply to Krishna. He says, "I will do thy bidding." This is the same as, "Thy will be done!" Therefore, after progressing from Right Action through Knowledge to Wisdom and Understanding, Arjuna must renounce everything in order to love God and do His Will. However the one that finally surrenders is not just the ego self, but involves the individual Spiritual Soul. It can only do this after it has liberated itself from identification with the physical body, the desire nature, the ego and concern for its own unique identity. After the Self-realization, there is one step to God-realization. This is the result of Renunciation.

In seeing the Bhagavad Gita as an overall process there is a very interesting point in the consideration of the sixth chapter. This is the fourth method described as Dhyana Yoga. This is specifically the path of meditation and concentration, described as Kundalini Yoga in the commentary by

the Indian saint, Jnaneshwar. Other works also explain that focused concentration, repetition of a mantra and so on will eventually awaken the Kundalini energy. The point is that if the Gita is about an ongoing process, the awakening of the Kundalini must take place at some stage.

These points are extremely important because mere philosophical insight alone will not achieve the goal. If that were true many great thinkers would be enlightened today, but they are not necessarily spiritually awakened. In fact, many do not attempt it at all, because they prefer to stay on the mental level. Yet, in the final stages the mind must be transcended. Intellectual arguments aimed at demonstrating that it is only a question of knowing the right answers are pointless. For the Spirit cannot be made subject to that which is only one of its instruments. It is also significant that the last chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* deals with Renunciation. This is sacrifice or surrender.

The sacrifice is the sacrifice of the ego, and the surrender is the total surrender of the mind to the spiritual self or soul that in turn also surrenders to the Lord. There is no short cut. The point here is that devotees of Vedanta should look at the *Bhagavad Gita* as a total process of eighteen steps and stages that lead the seeker all the way home.

Summary of the *Bhagavad Gita*

1. The first chapter is an allegory and deals with the problem, in which a combination of desire and attachment causes conflict. The battlefield is in the individual psyche and the enemy is comprised of old habits and crystallized attitudes.
2. Krishna appears to Arjuna. He explains how he must conquer the enemy, which means his own lower desires and thoughts. To succeed in this he must act from the standpoint of the Atman or true self and not from the ego or lower desire nature. The battle is therefore to give up attachments, master the lower self, and liberate the soul or spiritual self.
3. The first method is the Path of Right Action. This is the system of Karma Yoga that teaches the law of cause and effect, demonstrating that we do reap what we sow. By realizing this, we begin to discriminate so that right action becomes natural.
4. Next is the Path of Knowledge. This leads to liberation by realizing that there is only One God or One Reality, and that the individual spirit is part of the One Reality. By realizing this, we can know our own spiritual identity and our oneness with God.
5. The Path of Desire-free Action is the path of action without any concern for the fruit. That is to say without concern for any reward or results. It is an approach of doing what is necessary without self-interest. Concern for the reward of any effort is an aspect of the ego. It is necessary to act without personal interest to transcend the ego.

6. The Path of Discipline and Mental Control is Dhyana Yoga, where use of concentration controls the mind and the emotions. Mantras or repeating the name of God can assist. This method calms the mind and helps to develop the Divine Energy.

7. The development of Discrimination between Spirit and Matter follows. The Spirit. (Purusha) and Matter (Prakriti) are distinct. Discrimination in this leads to spiritual self-awareness and liberates the soul. There is then realization that matter and spirit are two aspects of the same power.

8. Devotion to God at death is next. This method is a form of Bhakti in which the individual concentrates on God during his lifetime. Thinking of God at death finally liberates the devotee.

9. The Path of Supreme Knowledge is then considered. It rests on the realization that there is only God. From this viewpoint, God is the real Do-er and we are only instruments of God.

10. God as the Supreme Cause, is the principle of Creation. Because God is the Creator, it follows that all goodness comes from God. Therefore, God is the Supreme Power. Contemplation of this leads to a realization of Oneness.

11. Seeing All in God is next. Previously the aim of the instructions was to gain knowledge and general comprehension. Now the aim is to know God and realize that the Spirit of God exists beyond everything as well as being in everything.

12. The Path of Bhakti or Pure Devotion requires both emotional and mental purity. Elimination of negative traits is essential. Intense devotion purifies the lower self and calms the mind. In the process awareness of God is achieved.

13. Discriminating Between the See-er and the Seen means between the knower and the known. Although there is a unity in all things the see-er or knower should not become subjective to that which is objective. In other words the see-er identifies and forgets the identity as the pure witness. Developing awareness avoids this.

14. Differentiation between the Qualities of Objects is a vital step. Under normal conditions, the self identifies with the attributes and qualities of whatever it experiences. In this way, it forgets its true nature. Discrimination between the self, as the witness, and the experiences help it to transcend the ego attachment that causes the self to become subjective. Development of this discrimination leads to a deeper experience of soul-awareness.

15. Realization of the Supreme Being is the next path. This explains that we normally think in terms of duality in which spirit and matter are separate. We have to realize that behind the phenomena of duality there is the invisible Supreme Being, or Divine Consciousness. Realization of this leads to the final realization.

16. The Development of Divine Qualities, in simple terms, means the development of positive qualities and the elimination of negative ones. The ego is predominantly negatively inclined. It produces the qualities of anger, hate, desire, pride, greed and envy that all the teachings condemn.

Cultivating the qualities of wisdom and love overcomes these faults. In this way, the soul is able to liberate itself.

17. There are Three Types of Faith. These are emotional, mental, and spiritual. By developing faith progressively, the soul can eventually disentangle itself from its identification with the body, its subjectivity to the feelings, or involvement in mental concepts and the delusory view that the ego is the central self. This then leads to true soul-awareness.

18. The Path of Renunciation is the last method. This is the path of renouncing all attachments; all desires, all ambitions, all concepts and all conditioned beliefs as well as fixed outward-looking attitudes. This results in pure perception and complete liberation.

The *Bhagavad Gita* shows that liberation is freedom from entanglement in the physical world and a return of the soul to its spiritual home. The directions from Krishna are seen as a direct communication from God, in the same way that of Jesus. As time passes, these inspired teachings turn into conventions that overshadow the original message. Consequently, we forget our own responsibility in making an effort to awaken. The repeated theme is that the Spirit of God is everywhere and as spiritual beings, we are part of it.

The continual message is to realize that, and the *Bhagavad Gita* is such a message, which includes a method to attain the realization.

The common purpose with these approaches is to unfold the soul. The later descriptions will show that it is not just a matter of discipline. An inner process has to occur. In contrast to this, Zen puts the emphasis on methods that make it happen. Nevertheless, most teachings usually deal with only one aspect of soul awareness that helps to clarify the nature of the soul. This concerns the two points of identity, which is a theme requiring further explanation. The next chapter examines this concept.

CHAPTER THREE - ZEN BUDDHISM

The Zen Teachings of Hui-Neng and Lin-Chi

Zen does not refer to a soul in the same manner as western teachings. It refers to a Self, which in Yoga terms would be the spiritual Self, or Soul, but mostly the emphasis is on the Self-Nature. This means the nature of the soul itself. Like Indian Vedanta, Zen has its own terminology. In the beginning, Buddhism used the common Sanskrit terms for these concepts. However, Zen developed in a different country, and used the native language. Clearly, the spirit and the soul must be the same, but to understand the Zen approach some knowledge of its origins will be helpful.

Zen Buddhism originated in China. It developed when a monk named Bodhidharma took the teaching of Buddhism to China in the sixth century. Bodhidharma was known as the twenty-eighth Indian Patriarch but in China he became the first Patriarch of the Ch'an (Japanese Zen) school. He died in 528 AD. Bodhidharma considered the basis of the Tao would be fertile ground for Mahayana Buddhism. Mahayana was the system of intense meditation and was classed as the Direct Path for monks who had left home and renounced everything to gain Enlightenment.

Later Buddha taught the Progressive Path, for Householders who had the problems of attachment, desire and worldly responsibilities, and followed it by the Combined Path. This is similar to the Yoga systems already described, and consists of working through all the stages from the lowest level.

Hui-Neng was the Sixth Chinese Patriarch and one of the greatest of the Zen Masters. Zen is a Japanese word, and Zen Buddhism developed from Ch'an when Buddhism was carried to Japan. In Japan, the existing religion of Shinto influenced Buddhism, and that is why there are some differences in the various types of Zen. Hui-Neng lived from AD 638 to 713 and became the Sixth Chinese Patriarch due to his unique insight into the meaning and aims of Buddhism. Although illiterate, his acute insight enabled him to explain the most recondite scriptures when read aloud to him. He spent about twelve years in hiding from other monks who were jealous of his appointment. Hui-Neng was the Patriarch of the Southern School, known as the "Sudden Method", and his teaching closely relates to the teaching in the Diamond Sutra given by Buddha.

Lin-Chi lived about two hundred years later, from AD 810 to 866. Lin-Chi, known for his blunt direct manner, focused strongly on individual Self-realization. He became a follower of the Northern School, classed as the "Gradual Method". Our knowledge of his teaching is due to his students in the monastery. His teaching is discussed later, in this chapter.

In general, Buddhism is more philosophical than religious and some critics have even classed it as atheistic because there is no mention of a god. However, it all depends on the meaning of the term "god". Some of the great Yogi teachers say that the term "god" is only a concept, which defies definition.

Hinduism and the Christian teaching refer to a Trinity, whereas Buddhism does not. This is an important difference. The Hindu parallel is Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma. In Christian terms, it is the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. In Jnana Yoga teachings, the Father equates with the Lord of the Sun, Lord Surya, and the Son equates with the Lord of the World, under different names, such as Krishna or Vishnu. The Holy Ghost equates with the abstract nature of Brahma, for which there are no images, i.e. of Brahma. The Holy Ghost is the equivalent of the Mother aspect or active Spirit, which Zen calls the Self-Nature.

Experiencing the Self-Nature

The point is that Mahayana Buddhism does not aim at an individual self-realization, but aims at an experience of the Supreme Self-Nature. In Western terms, this would be an experience of the Supreme Spirit as opposed to seeking God in Christian terms, or in terms of Vedanta. In general, the worship of God is the basis of the Western system, but Buddhism, especially Zen, has a different specific intent. "The aim of Zen is to transcend the ego and experience the Self-Nature." This is a Zen statement taken from writings on Zen. It indicates the abstract nature and sublime intent of their approach.

Note that it specifically says, "Experience the Self-Nature". The emphasis is on experiencing and not an external Deity. Furthermore, the term "Self-Nature" must suffice, for there is a lack of adequate terminology in the Chinese language. In Western terms, the Self-Nature is God-Nature, or in Christian terms Pure Spirit. By all accounts, neither Chinese, nor Sanskrit has Western type terms and this is why Indian Northern Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism use the term "Mind". These inconsistencies in vocabulary have helped to confuse Western critics.

A philosophical consideration of this subject concerns the difference between Monism and Dualism. Dualism takes the standpoint that God and His Creation are a Duality, but the Monist viewpoint is that "all is One and that God is in everything". The Indian systems discussed earlier lead to this view. As the Gospel of John tells us, God makes everything. Therefore, there is a unity.

The Monist view is an important premise, an understanding of that facilitates appreciation of the intent of the methods for attaining Self-Realization, which are to follow. However, Western Christianity prefers the viewpoint of Dualism and the concept of a separate God. Buddhism therefore appears very abstract and incapable of fair definition in such terms. Yet, despite the emphasis on the integral unity of Ultimate Reality the Buddhist system accepts the principle of other worlds. It speaks of the six worlds and the four heavens, known as the ten directions of space. Zen also refers to the "two points of identity" in their own vocabulary.

There is a firm framework for comparison with other systems, but students should be careful not to jump to conclusions, or engage in fruitless debate, as the whole subject is beyond academic polemics. The essential advice is to discover our own Self-Nature so that we can know the truth for ourselves.

The Diamond Sutra is a central scripture of Buddhism with two important themes. One is that there is only Spirit (although Buddhism does not use the term "Spirit"), and the other is that we can liberate ourselves from ignorance that causes woe by realizing our own Self-Nature. Our identification with the body creates our difficulties. This identification creates the illusion of an ego, or personal self. The real nature of every individual is Pure Spirit. Although "Spirit" is not a Buddhist term, it is a useful word to explain the aims of Buddhism. This Pure Spirit is universal, and in Spirit, we are not separate individuals. Physical bodies are separate, but they perish. Awareness of the spiritual identity is therefore the key to liberation from the ego-body identification.

The Heart Sutra

These varying approaches have one central aim. It is to liberate the soul from bondage. The strongest bondage of all is the identification with the physical body. To break free from it we need the mind and the will, but first we need some knowledge as an aid to making the effort. Some teachings explain the technicalities of the soul; others focus on the mind and Buddhism in particular offers wisdom as in the following Sutra.

The "Prajna Parameter Heart Sutra" is another Buddhist scripture, based on the Diamond Sutra. It sets out the main points quite clearly. Prajna means wisdom, and Paramita means method, and especially refers to crossing to the Far Shore, i.e. the furthest limits of the Mind. "Heart" here means "Mind". It is therefore the wisdom method of transcending the Mind. It is important to understand the term "Mind", as it does not always mean the individual mind. For example, Zen says, "There is only One Mind," and, "the ordinary mind is the Buddha Mind". Generally, the term "Mind" means Spirit, and as it is easy to see that there is only One Spirit, it is not difficult to accept that the individual spirit is part of the Supreme Spirit

In this process reasoning is used to expand the ordinary mind. This is using one aspect of the mind to change another aspect of the mind. This may seem strange but the choice of words is due to difficulties in translating Sanskrit into Chinese. Therefore, we have the same word used with different meanings, and it helps to understand the "Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra" in that sense. The essence of the Sutra is as follows:

1. We are ignorant because our Consciousness is in a state of illusion.
2. This is the result of wrong thinking and attachments created by conditioning.
3. Thoughts continually cloud our minds unless we turn inwards to seek the Self.
4. Buddha gained Enlightenment because he transcended appearances.
5. Man must realize that fundamentally he already possesses wisdom.
6. Introspection must search out this wisdom.
7. If we do this, we will realize that our Heart (Mind) is full of wisdom.
8. The self held idea of an ego and a personal self is the main barrier.
9. Overcoming identification with the body is necessary.
10. Wisdom comes from awareness of the True Reality.
11. Spirit exists in form (matter) and they are not separate.
12. The realization that Spirit interpenetrates form (matter) helps to overcome desire.
13. One is then imperturbable.
14. When the mind is not disturbed, insight is easy.
15. This eliminates suffering.
16. It depends entirely on the individual's own efforts.
17. Beyond the limits of the personal mind, there is total freedom, (of the Spirit).
18. This is the state of Oneness.

19. Understanding of the appearances of separateness occurs.
20. There is no gain because the mind's wisdom is inborn, and always existed.

The core concept is that we cause our own suffering by attachments and desires. This is because the soul identifies with the body and experiences domination by the ego. To gain freedom we must therefore transcend the ego and attain bodhi (wisdom). The operative point is that we are each the soul that has to be liberated. The individual must realize, "I am a Soul".

In the earlier diagram, Figure 1, this is on the level of Buddhi (intuition), which is the level above Manas, (reason). The Buddhi stage is therefore the "far shore", and bodhi (wisdom) is experienced at that level. The symbol of crossing to the "far shore" is interesting, because it implies crossing the stream of consciousness, or thought activity.

The stream of consciousness is the continual flow of thoughts that pass across the mind. This non-stop mental activity prevents us from experiencing the Spirit, and in most cases, we are in the mental level. All the disciplines aim at overcoming this problem. That is why calming and purifying the mind come first.

Zen Experiences

The application of this process usually takes many years. The stories of experiences of Zen monks show a wide range of progress. There are accounts of some monks taking as little as three years and others who only attained the final enlightenment after a lifetime of effort. This is because of the different types of seekers. Buddha said there are three main types of devotee. Some are traveling in the goat cart, some are traveling in the deer cart, and some are traveling in the white bullock cart. The ones in the goat cart are devotees who like to hear about the scriptures but cannot follow them. The ones in the deer cart are the ones who understand the scriptures but do not apply them. Those in the white bullock cart are the ones who apply the teachings, and they are the ones that have the essential experience. The experience is the insight that gives enlightenment.

Zen also says that there are students of deep roots, students of medium roots and students of shallow roots. Students of deep roots can penetrate into the deeper meaning, students of medium roots have some difficulty and the students of shallow roots are not likely to achieve very much. One Zen Master said of his enlightenment, "I attained this after only forty years." That was forty years of effort, not forty years of age. Another quite recent Master spent years in various monasteries in India, and Tibet, as well as China, studying under different Masters. He did not achieve his final awakening until he was over sixty years of age. Although the methods are hard to apply, minor experiences do help the devotee to keep striving to attain the ultimate experience.

This is the experience of the Supreme Spirit, but for the worldly seeker this is not the chosen aim. The more attainable aim of self awareness is suggested by means of what is called self cultivation. This means seeking awareness of the soul, and in this sense, Chinese Zen offers unique pointers on how the soul functions.

The Host and the Guest

These two terms, “Host” and “Guest”, are difficult to comprehend but the principles involved are crucial for insight into the nature of the soul, and the terms appear frequently. Raising the focus of consciousness from the Guest position, to that of Host is vital. The Host is the one who owns the house and the Guest is only a visitor, pretending that he owns the house. The advice is to realize this and assert ownership at the Host position. Zen also uses other terms that help to clarify these terms. These are Prince and Minister. The Prince is the Self and the Minister is the ego that is supposed to serve the Prince. The Minister, seizing the power, refuses to serve the Prince. This is our dilemma. We have to free our spiritual self, or soul, from the restrictive control of the ego. The following list helps to make this clearer.

<i>HIGHER SELF</i>	<i>LOWER SELF</i>
<i>Monad or Atman</i>	<i>Ego</i>
<i>Host</i>	<i>Guest</i>
<i>Prince</i>	<i>Minister</i>
<i>Self</i>	<i>False self</i>
<i>Witness Self</i>	<i>Personal self</i>

“Atman” is the Sanskrit term, used earlier, to refer to the individual spiritual self but the terms for the ego vary. The significant point is that all the teachings say the same thing about this combination; there are two points of identity. One is the spiritual self and the other is the ego. We do not realize this because in our physically immersed condition we are totally subjective to the ego and the desire nature. This is the meaning of the analogy in the *Bhagavad Gita*, about two birds on one tree. The one enjoying the fruits is the ego and the one watching is the witness or spiritual soul. Our task is to become aware of this by looking inward. The obstacles to this are the ego and the monkey mind. They have to undergo discipline, because it is not possible to become aware of our own soul, or self, without discipline and control. This is why there is so much emphasis placed on the methods for doing this.

The important difference with Zen is that it focuses almost entirely on the method. In comparison, there are three main approaches to the subject of the soul and the spirit. One is that of worship and praise, as with the devotional systems. The next is in descriptions that tell us about the soul and the inner worlds, as with the general religious knowledge systems. Then there are spiritual systems, focusing almost entirely on how to attain spiritual awareness. This is especially the case with Zen, and explanations are only an aid to applying the method for attaining true soul-awareness.

Another scriptural allegory with the same theme is the Chinese epic popularized in the TV series entitled “*Monkey*”, based on a sixteenth century novel called *The Pilgrimage to the West*, by Wu Cheng-em. It deals with the journey of Tripitaka, a monk, who is traveling to India to obtain Holy

Scriptures. Tripitaka represents the spiritual-Self. He has three companions, Sandy, Pigsy and Monkey. Sandy, representing the mental aspect, is always philosophizing. Pigsy represents the desire nature and is always looking for wine, women and food. Monkey is the ego that hates taking orders, but always saves his companions from trouble. Tripitaka is riding a horse, representing the physical body. These are the main aspects of the total human being. The story parallels that of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the Battle of Kurukshetra. In the *Monkey* saga, demons constantly attack the travelers. The demons say that if Tripitaka brings the scriptures back and the people become enlightened that their domination of the people will be over. Consequently, they are always trying to bring about the downfall of the seekers. The demons are the uncontrolled desires, undisciplined ambitions and other negative ego traits.

This is how it is with us; we have to break free. The Indian systems insist that to do this we must have a guru, but Zen puts more emphasis on personal effort. Hui-Neng says,

“Those who are willing to strive to enlighten themselves do not need external help. It is wrong to say that we cannot attain liberation without the help of others. Let us attain it by our own efforts.”

A few more sayings by Hui-Neng will help to bring out the main points in his teaching. He says, “The essence of mind embraces all things. Bodhi (Wisdom) is in all of us. Apart from the Buddha-Nature within there is no other nature.”

The Buddha-Nature is the Universal Spirit and the Essence of Mind is the Spirit within the Mind. As Zen puts it, there is nowhere to go and nowhere to come from because we are there already. This means that the Spirit is everywhere. Hui-Neng continues,

“He who does not know his own essence and thinks Bodhi can be attained by outward rituals is called the slow-witted. If we know our own essence, we would attain buddahood. To know our essence is to attain liberation. There is no further doubt after finding the essence. Essence is the king who lives in the realm of the mind.” The essence is the spirit.

Hui-Neng again emphasizes self-reliance, saying, “You can train yourself at home. It is not necessary to stay in a monastery.” On the subject of what attitude to take he says, “Do not look for answers outside. Remember at all times that you are on the Path. Take refuge in the Buddha within.” This is advising us to trust the inner Spirit. He goes on to say, “This is your own essence of mind. You should keep your attention on it at all times”. As the Proverb says, “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy paths.”

This is telling us to remember the spirit all the time, meaning we should remember that we are the spiritual Self and not the ego, or the body. Hui-Neng tells us that, “belief in the ego-self causes woe”, and “do not be a slave to your desires. Wisdom is inherent and not found externally. Liberate yourself from concepts and lean on the essence of mind.” He emphasizes that, “wise men who know their essence of mind know that everyone has the same nature.” This means that all are spirit in the “inner” nature.

As a means of gaining spiritual awareness, Zen insists that seekers should keep their minds free, and not fill them with intellectual concepts. If the mind is full of worldly knowledge, it will block the spirit. A little book by Eugene Herrigel makes the same point. Herrigel is the author of a well known work called *Zen and the Art of Archery*. He explains how he obtained a position as a Professor of Western Philosophy at Tokyo University. When he heard of Zen, he decided that he must investigate it. He obtained an introduction to a Zen Master, but was told that Zen was not suitable for the Western mind. Herrigel persisted and the Master said that he would only be able to do it with the help of a physical discipline, such as archery. Herrigel accepted this approach, and he began his studies. During his time with the Zen Master, Herrigel often quoted European philosophies, speaking of the greatness of various Western philosophers. Eventually the Master agreed to look at them. Herrigel lent him a hefty book on Western Philosophy. The next time Herrigel went to see him he handed the book back to Herrigel with the trite remark, "Now I know why Westerners cannot gain enlightenment".

This confirms the view of writers on the subject, that there is a tendency to mistake the signpost for the Path. We think that by study we can unravel mysteries that really depend on a change of attitude. It is so easy to think about it instead of actually taking on the task of doing it. Many people undoubtedly know the theory but are unable to apply it. This is because "the mind tries to have a will of its own", and is consequently hard to tame.

Secrets of the Tao

An unusual book on the nature of the soul very well sums up the difficulties of taming the mind. It is *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, by Richard Wilhelm. This book is a translation of a rare Chinese manuscript that dealt with esoteric traditions previously only handed down by word of mouth. One interesting point about this book is that Wilhelm, as a fellow German, used the term "monad", which had originated with the German philosopher Leibniz, and was adopted by Blavatsky. His remarks are therefore of special interest in terms of a clear comparison.

Wilhelm defines Tao as the "Undivided One" and says that this Oneness (of the Spirit) gives rise to two opposites, the "Yin" and the "Yang", classed as the "Light" and the "Dark" principles. He goes on to say that each individual has a central entity, which he refers to as a monad. This initial unity separates into life and essence, called "Ming" and "Hsing". In describing this, he also uses psychological terms, and the book contains a commentary by Carl Jung.

Wilhelm states that in the individual these two principles are at war with each other. The "spiritual soul" and the "animal soul" are in conflict. Each one is seeking mastery. He refers to the life force, which in Kundalini terms is the universal Shakti, saying that this energy tends to flow outwards and downwards, and in normal life goes into action and sex. In this sense, he defines it as transmuted sexual energy, but actually, the energy is neutral. Directing this abstract energy outwards and downwards results in normal human activities, as just mentioned, but it is also possible to reverse this energy. He describes this as the "backward flowing" method, in which the energy is caused to rise and activate other centers. This liberates the self and leads to immortality of the soul. This is when the soul

or spiritual self is free and liberated from the ego self. Wilhelm makes some mention of the spiritual-self taking refuge in the ego. This is a strange process and the description and details on Kundalini Yoga will help to make it clearer.

Finally, in the study of Zen we come to Lin-Chi. Lin-Chi is important to the study of Zen, but it is quite difficult to follow all that he says. There are many translations by different authors, the clearest essential point is in a commentary by Charles Luk in his book, *Practical Buddhism*.

The Inner Guru

Charles Luk starts by quoting Lin-Chi. Lin-Chi says, "In your red heart there is a true man of no fixed position who comes in and out through your forehead; I urge those who have not experienced it to try to see it". Luk goes on to explain that this true man is the spiritual master or inner guru that resides in the heart, unknown because of our ignorance. This is the true Soul and appears as a bright point of light. Lin-Chi says that if we can stop the flow of thoughts, calm the mind and refrain from the three sins, (carnality, killing and stealing), the good qualities of this inner guru will show forth. He warns that the ego, which is still very strong and supported by old habits, will refuse to acknowledge the inner guru, especially as the spiritual Self, the Soul, is still very weak and only appears infrequently. This means that it only appears suddenly and does not remain. The battle for supremacy between the ego and the inner guru may be quite long or it can be short.

Luk goes on to say that if the devotee is not spiritually strong or does not have enough faith the ego will certainly reassert its self, and defeat the inner guru who still does not have much strength. The student could be tempted to give up and return to his old worldly ways, especially as this conflict can be a difficult period. Luk explains further by saying that if the devotee has firm faith and is determined, he will succeed. If he follows his vow to help others, he will make rapid progress. The inner guru will grow strong and defeat his ego. From then on his inner guru will watch over him and correct him when he strays from the Holy Path. At this stage, the inner guru is still not mature and the wondrous sights that usually appear before illumination can mislead it.

In this situation the focus of consciousness is being moved from that of the lower ego self to that of the higher Soul self. This is difficult enough but the ego aspect does not wish to give up its control. In its role as the Minister, it is reluctant to let the Prince take over. This is not a symbolic story; it is an actual description of an inner conflict. This conflict befalls all genuine seekers wishing to realize their own spiritual identity and comprehend their own Soul. It can be very disturbing and is not amenable to psychological methods that do not accept the reality of this process. This summary is very condensed; therefore, students who are interested in one of the most specific descriptions on this subject should read the full commentary by Charles Luk.

Luk maintains that faith and determination will remove all remaining obstructions to the full manifestation of the spiritual Master. Lin-Chi himself demonstrates these points by Luk. In his general teaching in the monastery, he often chastises the monks for having such little faith. In almost every lecture, he mentions it.

“Have more faith. Have faith in yourself. Just have faith and take the host position”.

These and other similar remarks are scattered through his teachings. Lin-Chi also continually mentions the “true man with no rank”. He says the one in control is the true man. It matches other teachings that say the true self is the King sitting on the throne between the eyebrows. He repeats, “It is the one who is listening at this very moment. Search out this real man.” He means the spiritual-Self or Soul.

He also mentions three dark gates that have three seals. Commentators say this is the most enigmatic of Lin-Chi’s remarks. However, other writings offer some useful clues. Luk describes three gates, one at the level of the coccyx, another at the level of the kidneys and a third at the back of the head in the occiput area. Charles Luk comments that this is a very difficult area to pass through. He means that the reversed flow of Shakti is difficult to take to the crown of the head. The details on Kundalini Yoga will make this clearer. Other writings mention three doors, each with a key turned three times. This is probably what Lin-Chi meant when he refers to “three seals”.

Comparative analysis shows that Lin-Chi was referring to the opening of the “causal body”. This is in the discussions on Kundalini. The important point here is that there are significant similarities between Zen, Yoga, and other authentic teachings. They are all referring to the same process.

Lin-Chi has more to say about the inner-Self. He says that it is a single bright essence and separates into six aspects, consisting of the mind and the five senses. He asks, “Why do you seek it when you already have it? Do not look outside yourself. There is no Truth to be found outside.”

Then he adds other advice, “Keep the mind calm. It is experienced in a flash. It is spontaneous and not taught. It must be experienced.” He says also that all phenomena are only a product of consciousness. Repeatedly and emphatically he says, “Do not be led astray. Do not be misled”.

The Different Methods

From this summary of the teachings of Hui-Neng and Lin-Chi, it is evident that there are two slightly different standpoints. Hui-Neng is taking the approach that leads to an experience of the Supreme Self, or God-realization, as Yoga puts it. Lin-Chi undoubtedly understood this but he taught in terms of an individual Self-realization. The writings of Richard Wilhelm show this, and it is important to appreciate that there are subtle differences in some of these teachings. Zen and Yoga specifically aim at transcending the ego and experiencing the spiritual Self or Soul.

However, the monist type of Yoga, as with pure Buddhism, further aims at transcending the Soul and experiencing the Ultimate Reality of Oneness of the Supreme Spirit. This rarified level of enlightenment is very difficult to attain, and seekers on the Path of the Householder are less able to attain it. The teaching of Lin-Chi is therefore more likely to be of practical use to the seeker in normal life. Renunciants who have left home to enter a monastery or an ashram would be more likely to push on to the top of the spiritual mountain, and attain the final realization.

Finally, the writings by Charles Luk deserve a special mention. There is a series of three books. Books one and three of *Zen and Ch’an Teachings* contain the teachings, and the second book gives

details of the lives of the main teachers. He has also written other books that explain the different methods of the various teachers. For a concise covering the Diamond Sutra, the Heart Sutra, and the teachings of Hui-Neng and of Lin-Chi give the main points. The simplest method is the one of asking a question, such as, "who?" "Who is listening?" and "Who is observing?" etc.

In the last analysis, the particular method is not important. For example, a book called *The Bow and the Beads* compares a Zen method and a Christian method. The Zen monk chanted the name of Amitabha Buddha continually as a means of calming the mind, purifying the mind, and transcending the ego. The Christian monk recited a Christian affirmation, and eventually they both attained the same state. Of course, it would be strange if they did not. After all, whether that state is called the "Kingdom of Heaven" or the "Western Paradise" cannot possibly make any difference. Ultimately there is only one framework so Heaven by any other name must clearly be the same.

The foregoing descriptions make it clear that Zen Buddhism is not a belief system. It is not a devotional system, nor a knowledge system. It is a wisdom system, but no one system relies solely on one method and in general there has to be a balanced combination for an even result. Overall, the journey along the Path needs knowledge, devotion, and faith, as well as a balanced awakening of the Kundalini Shakti, which should only take place after adequate discipline and mental purification. The process of helping the butterfly to emerge from the chrysalis of the caterpillar, as Ch'an puts it, is therefore long and difficult. The point in offering this information is to show that there is no quick method. Charles Luk gives one or two examples of Westerners who have joined the order, shaved their heads, put on the robes, and after a few months given up in disappointment.

Seekers of enlightenment are devotees because they are devoted to the search, and Zen in particular puts the whole emphasis on that approach. There is no devotional worship just for the sake of devotion. Strictly relating devotion to the search is a means of quieting the mind in preparation for the "great leap from the hundred-foot pole". The "great leap" is the leap past the mind or beyond pure reason that is mentioned by Kant. It is true that Hui-Neng taught the Sudden Method but this means that the attainment is sudden when it happens. The approach to that sudden awakening may take years.

In the Progressive Path, of Gradual Awakening, the devotee is aware of steps and stages, but on the Sudden Path the devotee ignores the steps and stages and aims only at the final experience. It is therefore debatable as to which method is shorter, but supposed quickness is not the sole criteria for choosing a method. It is a question of suitability; that is to say, the choice is a matter of temperament.

Following Zen, it is possible to recognize the first experience of a sudden awakening quite easily, but there is something more. This is in a story about a Zen monk who had an experience and went in search of an enlightened Master to have his experience confirmed. When he found the Master, he explained what had happened. The Master listened and said,

"You have only attained the Guest position. You must go on."

If we go back to descriptions of the Guest and the Host, we can see what this meant. This is the first awakening, at the Guest position, and is that of self-awareness at the ego level. It is a significant step forward but it is only a beginning. This point is in a later chapter.

Considerable emphasis is on this first step and it is indeed important, nevertheless, it is only the first step. The Guest position is only an initial self-awareness. It is not the specific individual spiritual self-realization of the true Soul. That is the Host position, and is experienced in a higher centre. These points reoccur as they are essential points in the process of spiritual awakening and soul awareness. The final greater realization, sometimes called God-realization in Yoga, is much more difficult. That is what Yoga really aims for, as does Zen, except Zen does not call it that.

The central theme is that there is a sequence. For example, in the case of a plant there is a seed. The seed takes root. Then there is the shoot. Eventually there is the bud, and finally there is the open flower. The point is that we have to prepare the soil, and plant the seed. We must water the plant, and finally, when the bud has matured, the sun will make the flower open.

Some devotees think that a guru will solve all their problems, but this is not the case. A Zen story helps to emphasize this. The story concerns a Zen monk in a Buddhist monastery. He continually argued with the Master and was a nuisance with his endless questions. Eventually the Zen Master decided to teach the monk a lesson. He deliberately provoked the student so that he was confused, and the Master kept referring to a Master who lived on a houseboat in Kashmir. Finally, the monk took the bait. He became angry and left, saying he was going to see a true Master, the one in Kashmir that his Master had led him to consider. So off he went. It took him two or three years to walk to Kashmir, surviving on the way with his begging bowl in the traditional manner. When he arrived, the Master was standing on the gang plank, watching him approach. He knew the monk was coming. The monk bowed and explained why he had come. He said he was seeking guidance on the Path of Enlightenment. The Master invited him aboard. When the monk was half way over the gang plank the Master lifted his staff and pushed him off, into the water. The monk climbed up the bank and raved at the Master. "You are all mad," he shouted. "I've finished with the lot of you. I will do it on my own." At this, the Master bowed his approval. The monk had finally started on the Path!

This may seem like a hard attitude, but the point is that enlightenment is not an academic subject. When a person attains any stage of enlightenment, it is always by strenuous effort. When a seeker has any inner attainment, there is no external evidence such as a diploma or a letter of approval from a guru. It is a private search with a private result. Nevertheless there are common experiences for discussion and fortunately, some writers have listed them in detail. In studying them, it is essential to realize that they deal with an inner process. It is not like an academic subject where learning is the only activity.

The Essence of Zen

The simplest and most direct question that comes from the heart of Zen, and the other teachings, is "Who do you think you are?" Would you answer that with a name, or by pointing to your

body? All the teachings assert most emphatically, “you are not a body.” As for the name, that is only a label. It is very convenient in maternity wards, to avoid mixing up babies, but it says nothing. It reveals nothing about our identity. Of course, if we think, “the body is the man” there is nothing to discuss. The enlightened Yogis say the body is nothing but a bag of blood and bones. Where then is the owner of this biological bag? The central core of all the great teachings rests on that question, and the answer to that question is the only purpose of this book. There can be great philosophical debates, with any amount of lengthy theories, but if we do not experience the answer, it is only talk. There has to be an active realization of the inner identity. The only aim in this book is to press the “recall button” and help the soul to awaken. That is the purpose of Zen and that is the purpose of Yoga. There is nothing to learn, and nothing to attain. All we have to do is to wake up and stop being a spiritual sleepwalker. The teaching of Jesus, which is considered next, brings this out beautifully. Before considering it, a comparison of the methods will be helpful.

A Comparison of Methods

There are two main approaches to returning to the source. One is the direct method as epitomized in Zen, and the other is the step by step approach in the various Yoga systems. In Yoga, the seeker sets out to master each stage. This is the same as mastering the different aspects of the human nature. That is emotion and desires, mental restlessness and so on. These stages are also related to the levels, or sheaths according to the system used. Alternatively, they are centers of consciousness or lokas. Either way it is a progressive journey of self discipline, and the main advantage in these methods is that the seeker is only working on one aspect, but can also find out what stage has been achieved.

In the more direct method, as in pure Zen, the focus is in getting past the one main obstacle. This is the ego, and the intention is to go directly to the final target. All the steps and stages are ignored and the focus is always on the final attainment. However, there is also a progressive method in Zen. Balancing between these two approaches is the teaching of Jesus. The teaching of Jesus points to the ultimate objective, and gives instructions regarding the necessary steps to attain it. The Parable of the Prodigal Son sums up this process and the details are in the general teaching of Jesus. The principles so far discussed are the basis, and the Teaching of Jesus relates to the same points. The further descriptions continue this theme and will help in understanding the soul and its journey through the “mansions”.

CHAPTER FOUR - THE TEACHING OF JESUS

The Basis of the Teaching

The teaching of Jesus very specifically refers to the soul and its existence in an after life, but details of its make up and mode of operation are not given. Instead, the main emphasis is on how to ensure the welfare of the soul and enter the Kingdom of Heaven. For this, there is a clear teaching.

The teaching of Jesus rests on two specific corner stones, faith and devotion, whereas Buddhism rests on knowledge and wisdom.

The Christian teaching, although supported by a strong belief system, focuses on traditional concepts, and not so much on an abstract spiritual reality. The teaching of Jesus, like all the others, aims at helping the people to become aware of their spiritual nature. The central theme is that we are all spiritual beings and we should strive to become aware of our inner nature and experience our identity as a soul. However, the emphasis on worship overshadows this awareness. Nevertheless, it is a fact that the devoutness of many ardent Christians has yielded results in terms of authentic spiritual experiences. The Christian teaching has produced many genuinely enlightened saints and their writings testify to that.

An interesting point that emerges from comparative analysis is that both the Eastern and Western devotees only describe their experiences in their own terms. The outcome is that both approaches think their system is different, yet a careful examination shows that the teaching of Jesus leads to the same outcome as the others. The "Parable of the Prodigal Son" contains the essence of the teaching of Jesus. In this parable the younger son asks the father for his share of his inheritance and goes to a far country where he squanders his wealth on harlots and riotous living. He finally becomes a swineherd, looking after the pigs and virtually sharing his life with them. Realizing that he has been foolish, he thinks, "Even the servants in my father's house are fed much better than I am. I will arise and return to my father's house and apologize for my foolishness."

He sets out to return, but his journey has many setbacks. These are in the classic by John Bunyan, 1678, called *The Pilgrims Progress* and the same theme underlies the Greek classic, *The Voyages of Ulysses*, which describes the difficulties of a man wandering for years, trying to return home.

These stories, and many others, all deal with the same theme, that of the Soul returning to the Source. Every genuine spiritual teaching speaks of this return journey, referring to it as the Path, or the Way. Jesus says quite clearly, "I am the Way". This does not mean that the acceptance of Jesus is the only Way. However, for those who are able to apply it, an assured, genuine outcome will result.

This present comparative study of the teaching of Jesus is from various translations of the four Gospels. In analysis, certain points seemed to be missing, and it is a fact that political motives influenced the selection of the four Gospels we use. However, it is a reliable teaching, and if properly applied, will take the seeker all the way on the return journey.

The advice given by Jesus is essentially the same as that of the eastern teachings. In particular, the approach of Bhakti Yoga, which is intense devotion to the Lord equates very well with the statement in the Bible; "Thou shall love the Lord Thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind and with all thy soul". In terms of devotional comparison, there is nothing contradictory.

Another very well known saying in the Gospels is "As a man sows, so shall he reap". This parallels the traditional eastern view that we create our own Karma and that the law of cause and effect

operates through all our actions. There are many equivalents and it is not possible to use every saying of Jesus in this short comparison. The following selection should make it clear that the great teachings do have much in common.

The Essential Approach

In Matthew 5, Jesus emphasizes the need for purity. He says that if we have an unhealthy part in the body we should cut it out rather than let the whole body be corrupted. He refers to adultery and points out that even to think lustful thoughts is wrong. The emphasis is on thinking and desire, and again this matches the eastern scriptures. There is a continual exhortation to strive for emotional and mental purity. As previously mentioned pride, anger, lust, hate, envy and greed obstruct the Spirit. However, some statements by Jesus do not indicate why we should obey an injunction, whereas with the eastern scriptures there are many commentaries to bring out the inner meanings.

There are a number of sayings by Jesus that are really telling us to purify the mind, and as previously explained the first step in meditation is to calm the mind and the next is to purify it. Without that, any hope of a spiritual awakening is useless. In the terminology of Jesus, it would mean that we would not be able to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, that is to say, the Spiritual Kingdom. This will become more obvious as we proceed.

Matthew 6 tells us that we cannot serve “God and Mammon”. In other words we must renounce attachment to this world, and sacrifice our ambitions and desires for the things of this world. He tells us quite bluntly, “Choose you this day which one you will serve”. The eastern teachings say the same. They explain that we get what we focus on, and become what we think. Jesus also says quite clearly, “as a man thinks, so he is”. The eastern scriptures further explain how this works, and personal observation often shows the truth in this statement.

Matthew 7 advises choosing the narrow way. Yoga teachings continually remind us of one-pointed concentration whereby we get what we focus on, hence the advice to ignore the things of this world. Jesus says these are the things “that moth and rust can destroy”. Therefore, he tells us to ignore them and reach for spiritual wealth. However, there is one special point in this. The Yoga teachings were originally for devotees who entered an ashram and renounced worldly interests. Later, as with Buddhism, they developed a teaching for more ordinary seekers, i.e. as with the Householders as described earlier. The teaching of Jesus is specifically for ordinary people. It is not a teaching for ones who have renounced everything but for people who are involved in the activities of everyday life. The pertinent point here is that we can use this teaching as we carry out our own daily responsibilities.

In Matthew 7 and Luke 6, there is advice to beware of false teachers. It is well worth quoting in full. The *New English Bible* says:

“Beware of false prophets, men who come to you dressed up as sheep while underneath they are savage wolves. You will recognize them by the fruits they bear. You can not pick grapes from briars, or figs from thistles. In the same way, a good tree always yields good fruit and a poor tree bad

fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and when a tree does not yield good fruit it is cut down and burnt. That is why I say you will recognize them by their fruits.”

Throughout the different Yoga teachings, the advice is to discriminate. There are warnings about misleading experiences, and Lin-Chi, in Zen, makes that very point. He said, “Do not be misled.” We have to learn how to sift the wheat from the chaff. This is sound advice and applicable in this present day. There are many pseudo gurus and false prophets. Yoga advises avoiding this pitfall by clinging to the chosen “Ishta”. An Ishta is a devotional figure; usually the Deity, but it can also be a Saint. In the Christian approach, the Ishta is Christ. The Ishta will help to save the unwary seeker from false teachers.

Further, on in Matthew 7, Jesus says that not everyone who claims to be a follower will survive. He says that only those who have truly lived according to the teaching will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Mere lip service will not achieve anything. As they also say in the East, “the teaching must be applied”.

In Matthew 8, there is the trite saying, “Let the dead bury the dead”. This was in answer to a request from a disciple to have time to bury his father. It usually baffles readers who insist on taking everything literally. However, in Vedanta and Zen one who is not spiritually awake is “dead”. Such people are spiritually asleep because they are not aware of their own spiritual identity. One who is alive in the true sense is one who has awakened spiritually. This is a very serious statement, as it implies that the majority of us are sleepwalkers. Unless we wake up, we are as dead. Probably most people think they are fully awake and therefore fully conscious, but neither Vedanta nor Buddhism would agree with them.

New Teachings

Jesus goes on to say that we should not put new wine in an old wineskin, or try to sew a new patch on an old garment. This refers to accepting the new teaching and not trying to mix it with the old one. In the Vedanta tradition, a new teacher, called an “Avatar”, introduces a new teaching. New teachings are therefore applicable to current times. It is true that the essence remains the same, but the eastern tradition accepts that from time to time there is a “release” of extra truths. There is therefore no question of returning to an archaic concept. Clinging to dogmas does not facilitate the ongoing process of scriptural revelation. Jesus knew that he was offering a new teaching for that era. By the same view, we can eventually expect a new teaching to guide us. It will still match the essential truths of the great teachings of the past, because they are all saying the same thing. That is, look within and discover your own soul.

In the next chapter, Matthew 9, Jesus makes a statement that is also very applicable to this present age. He says, “The fields are ripe for the harvest but the laborers are few. Pray that the owner will send new laborers to harvest the crop.” The owner is The Lord and the fields that are ready to harvest are the people who are seeking spiritual guidance. Jesus is saying that there are many that are ready to awaken but there are not enough teachers to help them. This present day also shows

evidence of many seekers looking for the Truth and it is clear that there is indeed a shortage of enlightened teachers. Cults and false prophets are more in evidence than ever, so the teaching of Jesus is certainly relevant.

The Nearness of the Kingdom

In Matthew 10 is the message that “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” This statement underwent widespread misinterpretation, resulting in a belief that Heaven would manifest on earth. Many people therefore expected salvation through a miraculous change. Hui-Neng had a similar problem. His disciples thought the Western Paradise could come to them. What this cryptic statement really means is that the Kingdom of Heaven is available here and now. This is by a change in consciousness. Elsewhere it says that the Kingdom is within. Buddhism makes it clearer by telling us that it is within our own minds. Outward looking people find this difficult to grasp. They can only think in terms of three dimensional space and locality. The eastern scriptures are clearer. Our own thoughts and attitudes affect the outcome, and we can enter the Kingdom by a change of attitude.

Meditation and inner contemplation verify this inner truth. There is no way of demonstrating The Kingdom in a common objective manner. Jesus said we should not ask if it is here, or there, but instead should look within.

In Matthew 10 Jesus says, “Do not worry about what you will say when you are brought before the authorities because you will be taught in that very moment.”

In both the Vedanta and Zen systems, the ability of intuitive insight is well defined. There are many examples where enlightened Yogis are able to use this ability, developed by devotion and calming of the mind. Specifically, faith enables it to operate easily. Jesus was really saying that guidance is available if we can have faith, and trust in God.

Renunciation of the Personal Self

In Matthew 16, Jesus states that anyone wishing to follow Him must be willing to sacrifice his personal life. It is an emphasis on renunciation where the lower ego self is sacrificed to contact the higher soul-self. In the *New English Bible* it specifically says, “Whoever cares for his own safety is lost; but if a man will let himself be lost for my sake, he will find his true self.”

This statement and others like it are of particular interest. The original King James Version of the Bible, in English, says,

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”

Here we have a specific reference to the soul. Of course we can argue about the meaning of the whole statement, or by the term self, and say that it is only another way of referring to the soul, but it is never really defined in the Bible. *The New English Bible* goes on to say, “What will a man gain by winning the whole world, at the cost of his true self? Or what can he give that will buy that self back?”

However, at the beginning of this quotation the *New English Bible* says, "If anyone wishes to be a follower of mine he must leave self behind; he must take up his cross and come with me."

The King James Version says, "Let him deny himself". Without being too pedantic, it is clear that we are considering two aspects of the self. There is the self to deny, and the true self to save or find. The Yoga scriptures again make this clearer. In translations they refer to the self (small "s"), and the Self (capital "S") to differentiate between the ego self and the spiritual Self. The nineteenth century writer, Blavatsky, got round the problem by using specific terms, i.e. ego and monad.

It becomes clear that Jesus was speaking about exactly the same things as are mentioned in the Vedanta teachings, and historically a definite sequence of revelation is traceable. Each great teacher adds to the earlier information. Hidden mysteries unfold. As we evolve, the public learns more of the Truth. Many of these points, well understood in the ancient Greek and Egyptian Mystery School traditions, were secret.

A significant point here is that Jesus gave a more explicit teaching. This is one reason why it met with rejection. The traditionalists did not want to change. Alternatively it is a reason to study the teaching of Jesus carefully. It contains some knowledge and guidance that is not in the pre Christian scriptures.

Zen and some of the more recent Yoga teachings are revealing even more. The structure of the invisible side of the soul life remains the same, because all the teachings indicate a similar framework, but our concept of this framework is limited, and often distorted. This is why we need new teachers from time to time to increase our insight. In contrast to the existing ideas of the time, the teaching of Jesus was socially and mentally volatile. Now that we are able to compare it with translations of other great scriptures, we have an opportunity to see deeper into its spiritual message.

The Reason for Parables

In Matthew 13, the disciples asked Jesus why he spoke in parables. He said that it was because the public should not know these mysteries. This is also an eastern view. In many cases, the hidden teachings, originally passed down by word of mouth, remained closely guarded for centuries. Jesus said, "Many wise men have wished to know these things that I am telling you now."

In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus goes on to explain that those who are not ready to receive the teaching, and act on it, will not understand. He says, "They will hear but they will not understand". He then adds another Parable about the mustard seed. This tiny seed grows into a huge bush. The meaning is that a small amount of wisdom will grow into greater wisdom if it is nourished. The parables indicate that a literal interpretation of the written or spoken word is restrictive. Conversely, free interpretations can lead to a different distortion. This is why the Yoga scriptures advise the development of discrimination. We have to learn to seek out the inner meaning and avoid being misled.

There are many parables referring to the sowing of seeds. The theme is that a seed will grow, but lack of nurturing and overgrowth by weeds will stifle the growth. The symbol of yeast is also used. This activates the process to make the bread. A little wisdom can act in this way. Near the end of the

chapter, Jesus explains that a learned man knows both the old and the new teaching. Finally, He again warns against misleading teachings. All this type of advice is in the eastern scriptures.

Matthew 15 is about the necessity of having purity of thought. Jesus explains to Peter that evil thinking pollutes the Spirit. Here again the eastern scriptures make the same point. Vedanta teachings explain how the various processes operate. Jesus did not explain such metaphysical details.

In Matthew 20, Jesus speaks about working in the Lord's vineyard. In Buddhism the advice is to gain enlightenment in order to help all living beings. The Buddhist maxim is "first gain enlightenment and then teach others". This teaching is work in the Lord's Vineyard.

At the beginning of Matthew 25 is the well-known story of the five wise girls and the five foolish girls. The five foolish girls went to meet the bridegroom but they had no oil in their lamps. When the bridegroom arrived, they were not prepared. They asked the others for some oil, but they could not spare any. The five wise girls went with the bridegroom into the wedding chamber, leaving the others behind. Jesus warns that we must be ready, saying, "No man knows at what hour the bridegroom will come, therefore watch and pray".

In *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, Richard Wilhelm makes a special mention of this Parable. He says that the oil in the lamps is the Divine Energy and when it is wasted the individual will not be able attain any spiritual benefit. He quotes the Tao attitude, that the fool wastes his seed on pleasure. This means that he wastes his energy on sex, leaving none to awaken the spiritual nature. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the older translations say that the Prodigal Son wasted his substance. He spent his wealth on "harlots and riotous living". Wealth is spiritual wisdom and spiritual energy. Jesus also makes this point in the other Gospels. In Indian terms, the bridegroom is Lord Shiva and the oil in the lamps is Shakti. As the aim is to unite Shiva and Shakti, anyone without enough oil (Shakti) will be unable to meet the bridegroom. This becomes clearer, as the following chapters deal with this specific point.

The Inner Awakening

In Luke 8, Jesus speaks of one who has the Inner Light. He says he does not hide it but puts it on a hill so that others can see. Vedanta and Buddhism emphasize this. Spiritually awakened souls have a duty to help others. This is not a matter of mere convention but of having a genuine inner awakening. The Gospel of John better describes the inner awakening.

In Luke 3, Jesus says, "In truth, in very truth I tell you, unless a man is born over again he cannot see the Kingdom of God".

Nicodemus asked how this was possible. Jesus answered "In truth I tell you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born from water and spirit...it is spirit that gives birth to spirit. Do not be astonished when I tell you that you must be born over again."

This reference to being "born again" has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. However, if we study the scriptures of the East, we find helpful clues as to what this really means. The Vedanta teachings explain that the consciousness of man operates on different levels, and that ordinary man

only lives on the lower levels. To acquire spiritual consciousness there has to be a radical breakthrough into the spiritual dimension, like a re-birth. This is what meditation aims at. Over the centuries, some ardent Christians have achieved this type of insight, although it is not easy to attain.

All the teachings indicate that to reach this breakthrough requires devotion, discipline and genuine sacrifice, especially in the renunciation of desires and attachment to the things of this world. A mere pledge will not secure this new spiritual birth; usually it takes years of effort. Zen monks and Yogis in an Indian ashram spend years on difficult disciplines to attain this spiritual rebirth. The advice that a man has to be born again is only part of the whole teaching. In other words, we have to be prepared to live by the teachings, and apply them as a means of transcending the ego and attaining the spiritual birth.

The Mystic Gospel of John

John was a favorite disciple of Jesus because he had a deeper insight into the new teaching that Jesus was explaining. He had a better understanding of the aim of God-realization. In the Gospel of John, there are different references to the bread of life, and the water of life. Jesus said that the bread and the water he provided would give everlasting life. His listeners had difficulty with the idea that the bread is the new teaching, and they thought he meant everlasting physical life.

In John 6, towards the end, Jesus again tries to explain and tells them that “The Spirit alone gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are both Spirit and Life”.

Here Jesus is trying to make his listeners realize that true life is the life of the spirit. The eastern scriptures explain that the true Self is the spiritual Self, and that the domain of the Self is in the spiritual world. It is because the consciousness extends into physical life that the self, or soul, identifies with the physical body and the physical world. Liberation from this entanglement comes from awareness of the spiritual self, and its identity. Jesus was trying to explain this, within the framework of existing traditions.

In John 8, Jesus tells the Pharisees that they judge by worldly standards. This was the whole problem; they were unable to think in abstract terms. He says “You belong to this world below, I to the world above”, but they seem mystified. He tells them that they will die in their sins. They also find this difficult. Jnana Yoga says that the only sin is ignorance. Jesus says, “If you dwell within the revelation I have brought, you are indeed my disciples; you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free”.

The Pharisees could not see what Jesus meant and said they were already free. Jesus went on to say that anyone who sins is a slave, that is, to his senses, and they found that idea objectionable.

The Vedanta scriptures link the idea of liberation to the subject of freedom. This is liberation from the lower worlds, where desire and attachment are dominant. Committing a sin, in their terms, is thinking, desiring and acting from physical motives. This keeps the Spirit enmeshed in the lower worlds. It is for this reason that Jesus said that if they could accept this idea they would be free, instead of slaves to their desires, dominated by their senses. Otherwise, they would die in their ignorance, i.e. remain unawake.

In John 8 Jesus says, "I tell you, before Abraham was born, I am". This further confused his listeners, but in fairness, we have to say that it bewilders many today. It is a very mystic statement. Jesus is saying that He has always existed in the Spirit. Often the Spirit is experienced in that sense. The other scriptures explain this, although not always clearly, and despite excellent modern translations and brilliant interpretations it is often somewhat incomprehensible. It is really saying that the Spirit is beyond time and exists eternally. Anyone who can attain an experienced realization of this is fully enlightened and liberated.

At the end of John 9 Jesus says, "It is for judgement that I have come into this world; to give sight to the sightless and make blind those who see". Some Pharisees asked, "Do you mean that we are blind?"

"If you were blind," said Jesus, "you would not be guilty, but because you say, "we see", your guilt remains." Here Jesus is referring to their spiritual blindness or ignorance, and He is criticizing them because they pretend to know, yet really they do not. In the Gospel

Jesus is quoted as saying, "the Pharisees and the scribes have taken the keys of knowledge and have hidden them. They have not entered, nor have they allowed those who want to enter to do so. As for you, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves".

This is not only a criticism of the Pharisees for preventing seekers from finding the truth, but it is advice to learn to discriminate, and avoid wrong thoughts.

The Gospel of Thomas

The Gospel of Thomas is unique, as Thomas does not refer to the story of the life of Jesus but only quotes the teaching. It is a relatively new version, found in 1945 when some Egyptian workmen were working near a cliff overlooking the Nile, near the city of Nag Hammadi. They found a sealed jar, broke it open, and discovered ancient papyrus manuscripts. The selected translation, called *The Gospel of Thomas* is by Marvin Meyer, with commentaries by Harold Bloom. The manuscripts contain the hidden sayings of the living Jesus. There are well over one hundred sayings in this Gospel and the selection here highlights the inner teaching. There are many other sayings that emphasise these points.

The beginning of the Gospel states that true interpretation of these sayings will help to avoid death. This type of saying has caused much bewilderment, especially amongst materialists who cannot comprehend that there is a Soul and a life of the Spirit. The themes of eternal life and immortality are evident in many different scriptures. The Indian Scriptures explain what this means. In simple terms, they say that man is a spiritual being, but he totally identifies with his physical body. This is a state of ignorance, because man is not aware of his spiritual identity. All the scriptures aim at breaking this deadlock of subjective ignorance. The aim is to attain objective awareness of the spiritual nature of man. In this sense, the truth brings freedom, releasing the Spirit from the trappings of physical attachments. According to the eastern teachings, identification with the body is spiritual death. However, at the physical death, the liberated Soul can enter the spiritual dimension.

In Verse 3 Jesus tells the listeners that they should know themselves, and if they do this they will be “known”. This means, “Known by the Lord”. By knowing the Lord, they will know that they are children of the living father. This speech emphasizes that if they do not know themselves, they are in poverty. These two sayings are in keeping with the Vedanta and Zen standpoint. “Knowing the self” really means knowing that we are a spiritual soul, that is, in terms of Self-awareness or Soul-awareness.

A “child of the living father” is a Son of God. This means that the individual spiritual entity is aware of its own identity, and is aware that it is an extension of the Supreme Spirit, or God. Our dilemma is that we think we are only separate, isolated physical beings, so we consequently deny our spiritual heritage. We are all like the prodigal son who has gone to a far country and become lost in the activities of that place. This is why the Yoga and Zen Masters devised disciplines and expediences to help the seeker to break out from his shell of ignorance. Now, with detailed translations of different scriptures, we have a marvelous opportunity to learn the exact meaning encrypted within them.

Verse 11 says again that the ones who are dead are not alive, but the living will never die. This is a variation on words, using dead and living in a different sense. The term “dead” refers to the spiritually unaware, and “the living who will not die” are the ones who are spiritually awake. The spiritual awakening gives spiritual immortality. It is not eternal life in this world, but life in another dimension.

In Yoga language, the spiritual consciousness focuses in a higher loka or more subtle dimension. This is liberation, that is to say, from this world. Before liberation the soul is bound to this world and cannot evolve. This essential point is important.

Verse 24 advises that whoever hears this advice should take notice. It says that there is a spiritual light within each person. If it does not shine, that person is in the dark. We deal with the subject of the light within further on, in the discussion on different types of Yoga. It concerns the bright point of light mentioned by Lin-Chi. This is the light about which Jesus said that the light should be set upon a hill so that others might see. This means that the ones who have it should use their insight to help others. The ones who are spiritually awake can often see the bright point of light in meditation.

In Verse 42 Jesus says, “Be passers by”. The meaning of this advice is initially obscure, but again eastern Scriptures offer a clue. A “passer by” is one who is not involved with whatever is happening in the vicinity. In other words, he remains unattached, because he is only a passing observer. There are two important points to make here. One is to avoid becoming too involved or attached. The other is that one should be a “witness”. Yoga often says, “Be the witness.” This means, be the one who sees, or the spiritual Self.

In Verse 49, Jesus says that those who are alone and chosen are fortunate, because they will find the kingdom. Jesus states to His listeners that they have come from the kingdom and will return to it. This statement easily matches the Vedanta teachings. Vedanta says that the Self or Atman must return to its Source. The true self or soul enters physical life to gain experience, and it should return when it has obtained the necessary experience. However, the soul identifies with physical life and has

a difficult task to break free. This is why the great teachers gave public teachings, so that we could know the truth.

In Verse 70 Jesus tells those listening that if they can bring forth “what is within”, that it will save them, and warns that if they have not done so, that the “absence of it” will destroy them. This sounds rather confusing, but the interpretation is quite simple. Jesus is saying that the awakened spirit will save them, but if the awakening does not occur, they will perish.

Verse 77 contains a truly mystic statement that is pure Advaita Yoga. The translation says, “Split a piece of wood; I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there.” This is saying that the Spirit is in everything, and it is clear that Jesus totally identified with that Spirit. This statement demonstrates that in Yoga terminology Jesus was fully God-realized, and knew that the Spirit is everywhere and in everything.

In Verse 106 Jesus says that to become children of humanity the “two must become one”. This statement and other similar ones cause some difficulty for commentators. This means that Duality must become a Unity, and our concept of everything in terms of dualism changes to the realization that “all is one.” In personal terms the duality of a soul and an ego must merge, and the ego self unites with the spiritual self. Then, on a higher level, the soul unites with God.

In Verse 108, Jesus says that they who drink from his mouth will become like him, and He will become that person. Then, “hidden things will be revealed”. Yoga teachings are full of this type of statement. It means that of the disciple will take notice of what the guru says he will attain true union.. The disciple is said to become one with the guru in consciousness. To our physically conditioned minds, this is very strange. We tend to treasure our so-called individuality and preserve our sense of a separate identity, but Yoga Scriptures say that this is only an illusion caused by identification with the physical body.

In Verse 109 Jesus tells His followers that the kingdom is like someone who has a hidden treasure but does not know it. This is similar to telling us that the Kingdom of Heaven is within, a common theme. We have the Spirit within us and recognition of that Spirit will enlighten us.

In Verse 110, Jesus says that anyone who has found the world and is wealthy should renounce the world. This is a typical eastern scriptural attitude. Finding the world means finding the truth and knowing the real world. Becoming wealthy is attaining spiritual wealth, and renouncing the world means renouncing attachment to the physical world.

Finally, in Verse 113 we learn that “spiritual wealth will not come by watching for it”. Jesus tries to tell the people that the kingdom is everywhere, but they do not see it. That is to say, the Spirit is everywhere. This is the monist view, but traditional attitudes have created a view that we are here, and God, or the Spirit, is somewhere else

In summing up these statements, we can make two specific points. One is that we are all spiritual beings and we should strive to realize that. The other is that the Spirit of God is everywhere. Comprehension of these two points will help us to attain spiritual freedom.

Many people only see the teaching of Jesus as a belief system whereas other teachings rest on knowledge, wisdom, or devotion. This is why separating the teaching from the historical background avoids distraction by the story. When we do this, we can get to the heart of the teaching.

Jesus did not offer a great knowledge system by saying that he had come to explain the mysteries of the world. Put simply, he said, "I have come to tell you to wake up and discover your own soul." He says quite clearly that man is Spirit, and warns us that if we do not wake up and realize this we shall die in our ignorance. Our ignorance is that we believe the body is the real man. Yet all the teachings keep saying that this belief is not correct, because we are not just bodies: we are spiritual beings. This is the main message, and all the teaching systems are only methods for realizing that. An advantage in the teaching of Jesus is that not only does Jesus tell us about the Spiritual Kingdom. He tells us *how* to enter the Kingdom. This is by being "born again", which simply means attaining awareness of the internal man. Swedenborg says we attain this by reason.

A Postscript

Jesus was crucified because he was falsely accused of saying that he was the king of the Jews. Even the governor, Pontius Pilate, said that he could find no fault in Jesus, but the agitators in the crowd insisted that Jesus should be crucified. The charge should have been thrown out and Jesus could then be retried for saying that there is a Kingdom of Heaven. The prosecution would then have to prove that there is not such a kingdom and the jury would have to decide on that question. This is the question that we have considered here, with the conclusion that the state of consciousness, known as the Kingdom of Heaven, can be experienced by the sincere seeker. We must therefore examine the case for ourselves, and make our own decision.

CHAPTER FIVE - KUNDALINI YOGA

The Serpent Awakens

One method of stimulating the higher centres is Kundalini Yoga. The most famous work explaining this Yoga is that of Sir John Woodroffe. It has the intriguing title of *The Serpent Power*, first published in India in 1918. Other books on this subject also indicate how a seeker might awaken the Divine Fire, as Saint John of the Cross calls it. A more recent work explains how this happens. It is *ChitShakti Vilas*, (1971) by Swami Muktananda. The original Bombay publication changed to a Western version with the title of *The Play of Consciousness* (1978). The subject matter of this book is very revealing. Most books never mention the Kundalini method, and some Yoga teachers say that it is not necessary.

There are many types of Yoga. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, sixteen methods are considered and Dhyana Yoga, which is a Kundalini system, is only one of them. Most commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gita* do not associate Dhyana with Kundalini, yet the description on the method of meditating definitely

relates to awakening the Shakti, or Kundalini energy. The advice is that the person should spread an animal skin on the ground, cover this with dry grass and then spread a silk cloth over it, and sit on that to meditate. Another Yogi, Yogananda, explains that this is to stop the Shakti from going to the ground. In other words, the positively charged energy is unable to earth and the person thus retains the Shakti.

A useful thing with Muktananda's work is that he describes the whole process from experience, and was a disciple of a genuine guru. His guru, Sri Nityananda, initiated him in a traditional method, which Muktananda also describes. Nityananda lived from about 1890 to 1961 and Muktananda lived from 1908 to 1982. He left home in his adolescence and traveled all over India in his search for spiritual knowledge. Finally he met Nityananda and stayed with him. His writings provide a very up to date description of this unique method.

The beginning of the book reveals Muktananda's standpoint. He discusses the value of God-realization, stating that God is everywhere and in everything. He tells us that God is in all living beings and resides in the heart as the inner-Self. The interesting point is that it indicates Muktananda's focus, that God-realization is the true goal. He acknowledges the inner Self, but puts the emphasis on the realization that God is the Ultimate Reality. His teaching is therefore that we should strive for this and experience our own God-realization. This is in many of his statements, for example, "God exists in you as you," and "Thou art That." The experience of the individual Self is therefore only a step towards the main aim of God-realization.

The method used is a special type of Kundalini stimulation called Shaktipat. This is the transmission of spiritual power from the guru to the disciple. This type of Yoga is sometimes called Maha Yoga, which means "the great Yoga" because it embraces all the different aspects of Yoga. A Siddha is an enlightened Master who comes from a long line of Siddha Masters. The term "Siddha" is common to all forms of Yoga, appearing throughout the various Indian scriptures

Muktananda deals with the philosophy of the Siddhas, providing details about the attitude and effort needed to attain realization. He also describes the chakras, the causal body, and the Inner Light, (also called the Blue Pearl) and refers to various lokas and descriptions of inner experiences. Other writers give detailed consideration of the chakras, the lokas, and the Kundalini process in general, but few describe the soul body, called the causal body, or the "Blue Pearl", or point of consciousness with any detail. Muktananda gave specific descriptions that help to reveal the mysteries of this esoteric aspect of the human soul. His writings are extremely useful in more than one area. We can therefore draw on these explanations to clarify and expand all we have so far considered. As a step towards this, some knowledge of the chakras is essential.

The Chakra System

There are seven main chakras, or centers of consciousness. They exist in the subtle energy body and are not actual physical centers in the normal biological sense, but they do relate to the glandular and neuro-hormonal systems. Each chakra relates to a specific area of the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual nature and has an effect in those areas. Each chakra is also the

gateway to a specific loka or mansion. The Kundalini energy passes through these chakras, and helps the causal body to unfold. This is essential for a spiritual awakening to occur.

The whole process therefore involves philosophy in terms of the teaching, psychology in terms of the attitude required and a subtle type of biology in terms of the physical effects. This last point is important because there *are* physical effects. In any case we do have a body and this process is happening in relation to it. Also there are definite psychological effects, which closely relate to effects on the general nervous system. Over-stimulation of these centers, or chakras, can be dangerous. The Siddha Shaktipat method avoids this by a graded and controlled application. Swami Kripananda describes the method in another Siddha book, *The Sacred Power*. The chakras also connect with the sheaths, or subsidiary subtle bodies. The diagram in Figure 3 helps to show how these various aspects are related. Starting from the top, the centers are as follows:

<i>THE CHAKRAS</i>	
<i>Centers of Consciousness</i>	
<u><i>Chakras</i></u>	<u><i>Lokas</i></u>
1. <i>Sahasrar</i>	<i>Satyaloka</i>
2. <i>Ajna</i>	<i>Tapaloka</i>
3. <i>Vishudda</i>	<i>Janaloka</i>
4. <i>Anahata</i>	<i>Mahaloka</i>
5. <i>Manipura</i>	<i>Swarloka</i>
6. <i>Swadisthana</i>	<i>Bhuvvarloka</i>
7. <i>Muladhara</i>	<i>Bhuloka</i>

Figure 3 The Chakras

The Sahasrar is the highest spiritual center at the crown of the head. It is described as a lotus of a thousand petals” and “the seat of Shiva”, the Lord. When Shakti (Kundalini energy) unites with Lord Shiva the Yogi attains true God-realization.

The Ajna is a spiritual center in the form of a lotus with two petals, situated between the eyebrows. It is the “seat of the inner guru”, sometimes called the “King” or “Prince”. It relates to intuition, intelligence and inner vision.

The Vishudda is described as a lotus with sixteen petals, near the base of the throat. It relates to the mental faculty and pure reason.

The Anahata is a lotus with twelve petals, near the heart. It is considered as the seat of devotion.

The Manipura is a lotus with ten petals, situated in the area of the navel. It is a lower emotional center and relates to psychic ability.

The Swadisthana is a lotus with six petals, near the sexual organs. It is said to be responsible for the general physical energy as well as the sex drive.

The Muladhara is a lotus with four petals, at the base of the spine. It is referred to as the seat of the Kundalini energy and relates to physical health and external activity.

Yoga books describe two nerves in the energy body, next to the spine, called the Ida and the Pingala, and there is a central nerve or 'nadi' called the Sushumna. The energy travels along these nerves in a definite manner and any disruption of the normal flow, or fierce arousal of the energy can cause serious problems. In normal living, the primal energy circulates slowly, performing its task of energizing the body. Sexual activity and physical activity normally absorb a considerable amount of this energy so that very little is available to awaken the higher chakras, or centres of consciousness. In general, the ordinary person is focused in the bottom two centres. This is the area of action and desire of all types. To move the energy up the chakras it is necessary to discipline the activities related to the two lowest chakras. This is difficult because, due to conditioning, the average person is outgoing and constantly striving to fulfil the various desires.

Most disciplines aim at directing the energy into the heart chakra, and devotion is the best method for this. This approach also tends to bypass the third chakra and avoid unnecessary psychic difficulties. Upon reaching the heart centre or chakra, there may then be a jump to the Ajna center between the eyebrows, or via a progression of the energy through the Vishudda at the throat center. It depends on the particular disciplinary method used.

Difficulties in the Process

In Muktananda's book, there is a chapter entitled "The Piercing of the Optical Chakras". He describes in detail how a blue light rose in his eyes. He says it is preliminary to another stage, and that with this process some devotees think they are losing their eyesight. This matches another comment from a different book (Bailey), which said that some aspirants experience severe eye problems at this point. Charles Luk's remarks about difficulty in passing through the occiput area are therefore of possible concern. The biology books indicate that the nerves from the eyes go to the back of the head in the occipital area. Apparently, such experiences are classic Kundalini effects. By examining the comments on this process from a variety of sources, it is possible to put together a clearer picture of the overall process. From these accounts the indication is that the energy should rise from the throat centre to the point between the eyebrows. However, it seems that some energy may flow upwards through the occipital area. This could perhaps overheat the nerves and affect the vision in a manner related to what Muktananda mentions. The rule is that energy is directed by thought, and the indication is that the student should focus on the ajna centre to keep the energy flowing in the right direction.

Other Yoga books describe visual effects, such as many bright points of light dancing about, and minute light effects like tiny lightning flashes, as well as psychedelic light effects. From such accounts it seems that students should be alert to possible negative effects, as a type of partial blindness is hinted at in other descriptions which call it the 'prophet's disease'. Alternatively it may be

that the effects are from a natural process that occurs without meditation. Either way it seems that there is an increase in positive energy. As the body is apparently negatively charged, some people may be affected more than others. Some further comments are in a later chapter.

Details about the lights and sounds that are experienced can also help the seeker to determine his position in the process. There are many interesting developments. There may be lights in the eyes and definable sounds that can be “heard.” The sounds are of course completely subjective. The first listed is a continual chirping similar to the noise made by cicadas. With meditation the sound changes and becomes very high pitched and continuous. This is “Krishna’s flute”. The medical profession refers to these subjective noises as tinnitus, described as a pathological sensation. Yoga writings say that it is also part of the Kundalini effect. A televised documentary on tinnitus described the medical reports of patients with the condition. Some mentioned chirping, and this is one of the Kundalini sounds, but one individual said she had a buzzing like a mosquito in her right ear, and a roaring like an engine in her left ear. In Chinese meditation, the effect is reportedly like a buzzing of the bee in the right ear and the roar of the tiger in the left ear.

The television program referred to the phenomenon as a disturbance of the nerves, in some cases with accompanying pain. It may not be wise to group all these effects together with clinical conditions. The Yoga descriptions say that the sound of thunder, or the roar of a waterfall, relates to the final realization.

Descriptions say that the nerves are like coaxial cables. They carry positive ions on the outside and negative ions on the inside. Normally there is a balanced flow as we need both types of energy, but the nerves can potentially carry all types of ions, including hydrogen ions. This balance is often upset during thunderstorms, solar flares and seismic activity. All these phenomena release positive ions, and at such times animals tend to show restlessness and some people have distressing headaches.

Biological research indicates that a release of serotonin from the brain at such times can bridge the gaps in the nerves, called synapses. This would then allow an easier flow of the charged particles, and some people would find this difficult to handle. Seekers who meditate seriously are possibly more prone to such symptoms at the times of any natural increase of charged particles into the atmosphere. A simple noticeable effect is that such distress often decreases after sunset. The most interesting point is that the pineal gland is involved in this process, and the pineal gland relates to the development of higher consciousness.

Comparison with effects experienced by others show that there can be various difficulties. Another well known account is that by Gopi Krishna, *Living with Kundalini*. He describes his long period of physical distress in detail. His account is an excellent description of a sudden arousal, sometimes called a fierce arousal. This is significant because it implies that there can be a slow or gentle arousal. The point is that the process can, and does, often occur with devotees in different disciplines. The introduction to the book explains that Gopi Krishna considered the Kundalini Shakti had ascended the spinal nervous system in the wrong manner. Gopi Krishna thereafter suffered years of relapse and

illness. Overall, Gopi Krishna's experience is one of physical effects, whereas some writers speak mainly of psychological effects.

Before describing a classical psychological situation, there is one point about Gopi Krishna's approach that is of particular interest. At the beginning of his book, at the end of the very first paragraph, he says that he sat breathing slowly, keeping his attention on the crown of his head. He imagined a lotus in full bloom, filled with light. The specific comment on this concerns his focusing on the crown of the head. In all other accounts, the recommendation was to concentrate on the Heart chakra, or focus on the Ajna center, between the eyebrows. Not one suggested concentrating on the Sahasrar. This confirms that it is not wise to try to go directly to the highest center. Gopi Krishna had probably been meditating for a number of years, and normally there is generally a slow progression through the centers, and not a direct jump.

In contrast to Gopi Krishna, the account by Dr Goel, in his book, *The Third Eye and Kundalini* provides a detailed report of his psychological difficulties. Goel held a doctorate in Educational Philosophy and had a good understanding of psychology. Like Gopi Krishna, he was a Householder, not a renunciant. His account of the conflict between the ego and the Self is fascinating. He describes "inner conversations" between the ego and the Self, in which the ego is very distressed at being demolished. Throughout his period of difficulty, Dr Goel kept a detailed log. This log formed the basis for the book, which contains lengthy descriptions of the various stages, as well as many drawings explaining the different phenomena of the Kundalini progressing through the centers.

The book is readily available in India, but not in the West, but might perhaps now be available via the internet. It is a classic in terms of psychological effects. Eventually Goel's Third Eye opened and from then on he had clear insight into what was happening. He went on to establish an ashram in the Himalayan foothills.

A more down to earth view is in a short book, with the title, *The Mysterious Kundalini*. The author is a medical doctor and Dr Rele describes Kundalini as having a biological basis in the vagus nerve. It is in the diagram in Figure 6. This relates to a comment by Muktananda, who complains that as soon as devotees start meditating they start scratching their faces. Also, some Yogi instructions say, "concentrate on the tip of the nose". An extension of the vagus nerve goes from the area of the point between the eyebrows to the tip of the nose. This is why some students find it irritating. The itching often starts at the tip of the nose and then spreads across the upper cheeks. It is an indication that the Shakti is moving into the head centers. Different sensations affect the forehead and the crown of the head.

Another book of special interest is *Kundalini* by Ajit Mookerjee. This is a sound general introduction to the subject of Kundalini, but is particularly outstanding for its beautiful illustrations. Some of these are from drawings made in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One or two of the drawings show chakras, relating to lokas both above and below the main seven chakras in the torso and head. The lower centers relate to the "hell worlds" and the higher ones, above the head, symbolize

“celestial heavens”. Some of the extra chakras are shown in Figure 6 but it only shows the first celestial level of Paramatma, or Paramshiva.

For useful practicality, the book by Vishnu Tirtha, mentioned by Muktananda, helps to coordinate the details from the other books. Entitled *Devatma Shakti*, it is a specific Kundalini book. It is in English, but unfortunately, Vishnu Tirtha’s other books are not translated, but details are now on the internet. Some of his remarks are very helpful. He says there will be many periods of doubt and uncertainty, and emphasizes that intense effort is essential. Vishnu Tirtha says quite bluntly that Kundalini is necessary for any real awakening; yet, some writers insist that Kundalini is not necessary. Others say it is possible to reach the heart chakra without Kundalini. However, further progress may require it. Descriptions say that the Shakti can awaken at the base of the spine, or at the heart center. Most disciplines appear to recommend an awakening at the Anahata heart center. This then bypasses the psychic distractions and difficulties related to the third chakra, the Manipura.

The Sounds

The sounds, which are all subjective, change as the spiritual development progresses. Counting from the lowest chakra, they start with a chirping sound, sometimes like birds singing, or whistling. This initial sound can persist after the higher chakras have been stimulated. St Teresa of Avila says in the beginning of her book, *The Interior Castle* that she had been “suffering from such noises and weakness in the head...that made it difficult to write.” She later writes,

“As I write the noises in my head are so loud that I am beginning to wonder what is going on in it. My head sounds just as if it was full of brimming rivers, and as if all the waters in those rivers came rushing downward. A host of little birds seem to be whistling, not in the ears, but in the upper part of the head, where the higher part of the soul is said to be.”

Further sounds are likened to a “muttering of the gods”, or perhaps a whistle. The fourth is like a lute or harp, and the fifth is like a flute. The sixth is like a trumpet or conch shell.

The last is the sound of thunder, or of a waterfall. These are the main descriptions, but other texts include other sounds, in particular the sound of a gong. This relates to the Heart center. Goel describes a hum like that of a refrigerator motor, and Yukteswar says, “The Holy Sound of the Aum creates an engine-like sound”. It is possible to observe the sounds in relation to the physical sensations. In that way, the individual can pinpoint where the Shakti is active. As the sounds are highly subjective, their relevance is only significant to those experiencing them.

The Physical Sensations

There are various physical sensations of Kundalini activity. There may be throbbing, pressure, heat or a stabbing sensation at the Muladhara chakra. The whole body may shake or tremble, and there may be spontaneous weeping or laughing. Perhaps the shaking of the early “shakers” or Quakers may have been due to some Kundalini stimulation. There may be definite sudden movements, called kryas. The most common of these is a jerking, or cold shivers, with a slight sensation of an electric

shock. Many books refer to a sensation of a bubbling or wriggling in the spine. These effects may last over a long period. There may be a sensation of fluttering or vibration at the Ajna center, between the eyebrows, and similar sensations at the crown of the head. These effects are also over a long period and according to Muktananda the Shakti has to be taken to the Sahasrar many times. Students should heed warnings to be wary of trying to force any development. From overall reports, the purification of the mind and emotions must go hand in hand with Kundalini activity. Most of the references to distress were clearly associated with the purification process of the Shakti.

Personal Cases

The necessity of intensity of effort is of utmost importance; however, such effort should be under supervision. It is in this area that a guru may be of benefit. This is especially true if the devotee is using a Kundalini system, and the following cases indicate why.

Three personally known cases were recorded where forceful stimulation of the Kundalini caused serious distress. The first is of a man who set out to complete his development by an act of will. He knew nothing about Kundalini, and suffered serious overheating of the brain. Texts say that there is always some overheating of the nerves, but it should not be in the head. The result for the man was a short stay in hospital.

The second case is of a woman who was encouraged to use a physical technique. This caused the Kundalini energy to rise to the crown of the head. The woman experienced a short period of bliss and then suffered years of distress. There had been no prior discipline or purification and the centers were not ready for the stimulation.

The third case is of someone who went into a Buddhist monastery with the idea that he could do in one year what other monks take years to achieve. He meditated for at least six to eight hours a day and lasted six months before having to leave and go into a hospital.

These examples show that students who try to run before they can walk are likely to encounter difficulties.

A Summary of Key Points

Finally, to end this section on Kundalini, there must be special attention to the great classic, *The Serpent Power*, by Sir John Woodroffe. It is a very large book, and quoted by almost every Western writer who has studied Kundalini. Published as far back as 1918, it is a significant reference on this subject. There are approximately two hundred essential statements. Quoting them all here is impossible, but some of them are of particular interest and usefulness. Early in the book, Woodroffe says that the heart is recognized as the seat of the Jivatma or Self, (i.e. Soul) and he says it can be experienced there, but in the waking state the focus is in the Muladhara. Later he states there is nothing of real importance before reaching the Ajna chakra, and that it is only possible to awaken Kundalini at the Muladhara. Others do not agree, saying it can awaken at the heart center.

Woodroffe says that in the dreaming state the Jiva, or self, is in the subtle or mental body and wanders in the world of ideas. Other writers say the subtle body is the astral body or energy body and that impressions from the mental level are difficult to 'bring through' into waking consciousness. He says that the Sahasrar is the highest seat of the Jiva and that the Supreme Guru, Shiva is contacted at that point. Like other writers, he affirms that the Lord is the real guru.

Woodroffe says that to experience the bliss of Atma the Jiva, in waking consciousness, must live an ordered life in relation to its existence on the physical plane. Through long discipline and indifference to joy and woe, the Jiva eventually passes through Buddhi to Atma. Woodroffe explains how the mind fixes on the Ajna until Kundalini creates the realization that all is Atma; i.e. there is only Spirit. Although Kundalini starts in the Muladhara, the heart chakra is the center of Kundalini experience. There she, Mother Kundalini, "reveals herself in her own joy". However, progress is gradual and it usually takes years to complete the process.

The awakening at the Heart is awareness of the Self in conjunction with the ego, but at the Ajna centre, there is a definite realization of a spiritual identity beyond the ego. After that there is a slow progress towards an experienced realization of God-Consciousness which is in all things. Muktananda only has a short chapter on his final realization, and in general most Yogis say very little about it. The Sufis say that he who knows God is silent. All we can do is to concentrate on moving up from where we are. Experienced teachers say that we can mostly do that by study and effort.

There are one or two other methods of working up the chakras to attain higher consciousness. One is a mental approach, and in general is very difficult. Overall, faith and devotion are safer and easier, but either way the recommendation is to proceed slowly and gradually.

CHAPTER SIX – THE HEART OF THE SOUL

The Soul Body

We now come to one of the most mysterious aspects of the soul, for which we have detailed descriptions of the secret nature of the soul. These descriptions deal with the construction of the soul and its specific functions. The ancient tradition was one of secrecy and conservative caution. In this century many secrets have been revealed, because it is now time for us to break away from restrictive concepts and move on to the path of true knowledge.

Before considering the specific details, it will be useful to revise the previous teachings in relation to the technical details. The operative position is that the soul body, ego body, egoic lotus, or causal body is the central focal point of the individual consciousness that in turn is an extension of the greater consciousness. From a human aspect, the causal body is indeed the heart of the Self. However it is not a physical organ and ordinary vision cannot perceive it. Therefore, most teachers say

little or nothing about it and concentrate on the philosophical teaching and the psychological attitudes necessary to attain enlightenment and liberation.

The technical physical aspect is not over important, because in any case it is the attitude and the intent that are effective. It is the same with the ego. We can speak of transcending the ego or we can put the emphasis on removing negative ego traits without once naming the ego. In the end, the most important point is to apply the teachings, rather than know the technicalities and doing nothing. We can collect information about the mysteries of the Trinity, the different dimensions and the nature of the soul, but what use is this information if we do not use the knowledge to liberate ourselves from bondage to the senses?

The only point in explaining these details is to demonstrate that a human being is not just a physical body. The spirit is a fact and it operates in the body through its inner invisible framework, but each individual must experience this inner structure personally. So called objective methods cannot demonstrate it. The knowledge is usually given as a guide to the individual seekers so they can discover their inner spiritual identity, and understand why there are difficulties.

In his writings, Muktananda gave some very specific details about the causal body. He says he agonized for days wondering whether he should even write about the causal body. His concern was pointless, as another author had published a book almost fifty years earlier, giving a highly detailed description of the causal body, or "Egoic Lotus". The earlier work has the title *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, by Alice Bailey. The "Cosmic Fire" is of course the Kundalini Shakti, or Divine Fire mentioned by Saint John of the Cross, but her book as a whole deals with other aspects of technical knowledge. Muktananda gives details about the size of the causal body. He refers to it as a "radiant thumb-sized being that lives in the heart". His work includes a table that describes the different aspects of the causal body. First, there is a full body sized covering. This is what some writers refer to as the "etheric body", and C.W. Leadbeater, in his writings, says that the causal body is ovoid and full body size, but adds that little else is known of it. This was in 1928, three years after the release of Bailey's work, although *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* was probably not widely known at that time.

Swami Muktananda then explains that the thumb-sized body is a radiant white light, which matches descriptions of a candle flame sized light that exists in the heart. His further descriptions are revolutionary. He says that the actual causal body is only the size of the tip of a finger and appears as a black light. Within it is a tiny blue light "no bigger than a lentil seed" that contains the Divine Spirit. He quotes the Indian saint, Tukaram, who says, "God lives in a tiny house no bigger than a lentil seed".

The Blue Light, also known as the Blue Pearl, which is the recognized Siddha Yoga name for this light. However, there are references to it in many different works, variously describing it as a tiny electric-blue pin point of light, a Blue Star, and a Bright Pearl. This may be the Pearl of Great Price that Jesus mentions when He says; "the Kingdom of Heaven is like a Pearl of Great Price for which a man will sell all that he has to buy it." It is the lone point of brightness mentioned by Lin Chi. Although there are scattered references in many books, it is Muktananda's descriptions that clarify this difficult subject.

A Technical Description

Bailey's descriptions are quite different in that they are more technical. She explains that the Egoic Lotus is comprised of three sets of petals, and that each set contains three petals. This gives nine petals overall. Within the bud-like casing made by these sets of petals is another smaller set of three petals. This is the flower in the center of the lotus. The three sets of petals open by meditation, discipline and right living, and particularly relate to the aspects of knowledge, love and sacrifice.

The first set of petals open by following the path of right knowledge and many reach this stage. The second set open by devotion, and we can see in this why intense devotion to the Lord is a shorter method. Love forces the outer petals to open and goes directly to the central Spirit. Each set of petals is not just the one quality but overlaps into the others, and apparently there is no fixed sequence as to how the Lotus unfolds. This is why there are variations in progress with different people. However, attitude, intent, and conviction are vital in all cases. Zipruanna, quoted by Muktananda, makes this very point. Mere technical knowledge will avail very little. All the teachers say that love and faith really open the doors, or petals.

Each petal is a "door" but descriptions are often ambiguous because until recently these were close secrets. Bailey's diagram is adapted into a simpler presentation in Fig. 5. In analyzing these details it can be seen that the Jiva, or Self, operates through the lower chakras and has to awaken at the Heart center, and then move up into the Head centers. The lower chakras relate specifically to this world of action and desire fulfillment. To move up we have to renounce our focus in this world and look inwards, to the Kingdom of Heaven.

The actual technical aspect of liberation is to release the Blue Light from confinement in the Egoic Lotus. The tiny Blue Light is the true individual Soul, but remains restricted and cannot escape until the Egoic Lotus opens to some extent. Usually this is a partial opening, but with long discipline it may fully open. The degree of opening gives different degrees of God-realization. Luk says that when the Self, first emerges, it is not very strong, but if the student has faith and nurtures it, it will grow stronger. This means that it will not close again. The devotee is then liberated, but must be careful not to revert to the world of old mental habits and desires that still exist.

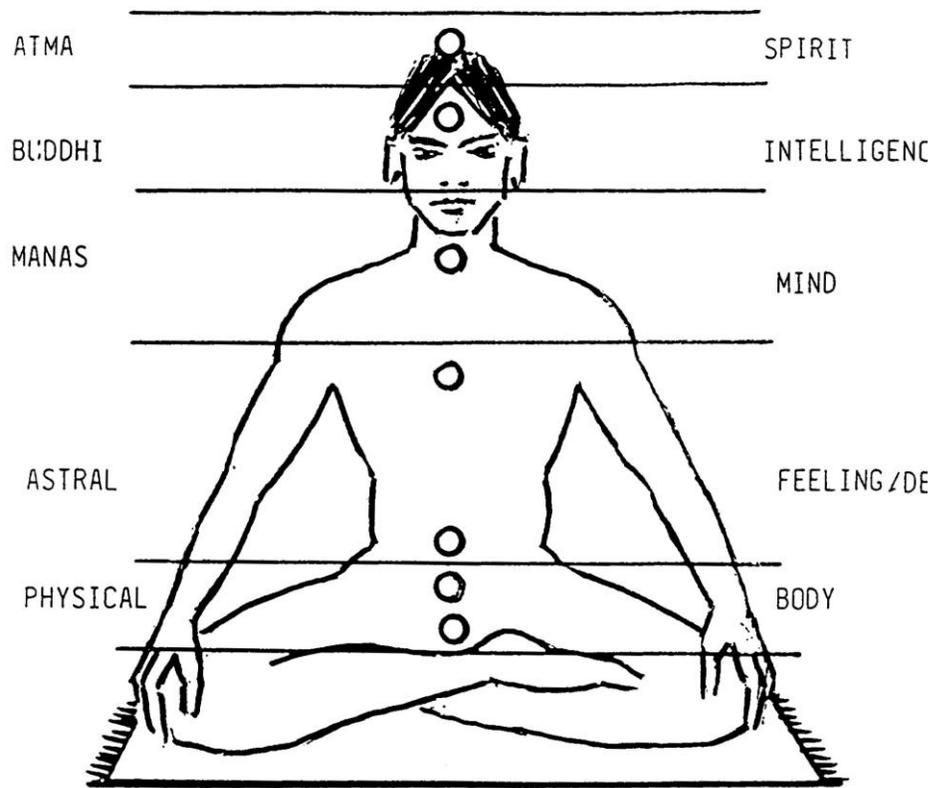
Although already discussed, it may be helpful to review the opening of the causal body in its definite stages. In the beginning, it is tightly closed and the individual has very little spiritual awareness. Slowly it begins to open and the person develops some slight degree of insight. As the nature is refined and the consciousness expands, the causal body opens more. Eventually it is open enough for the Blue Star to escape. Apparently, however, it does not leave the causal body entirely, but returns to it. This is the point mentioned by Wilhelm in Chapter three (*Secrets of the Tao*). This partly open stage may last for years. The degree of opening relates to the degree of spiritual progress. Ultimately it completely opens, (some texts say it is totally demolished), so that the Blue Star is fully free. This is the

state of a highly enlightened individual. However, all flowers do not open at the same time, so there is a big difference with different individuals.

The Blue Star is the Self

Lin-Chi says to his listeners, "You are that lone point of brightness that is listening to me at this very moment." Our problem is that we identify with the physical body to the extent that we cannot accept that we are points of consciousness and that the body is only a vehicle for use in this solid three-dimensional world.

There is a story about a diver who, by necessity, wore a heavy diving suit. When he reached the seabed, he became fascinated with what he saw. There was no one to remind him of the danger and before long he forgot himself and identified with his diving suit. He thought he was the diving suit and the world he was in, beneath the surface of the waves, was the real world. His friends above tried to explain but he did not know what they were saying. In the end, they pulled him up and he was astonished that he had forgotten his real (physical) nature. This is how we are, and this is what Lin-Chi meant. We are not the outer covering.

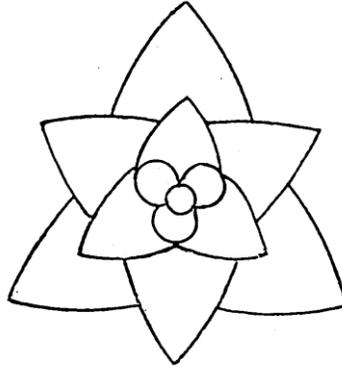


THE CHAKRAS

Centres of Consciousness

<u>Chakras</u>		<u>Lokas</u>
Sahasrar	1	Satyaloka
Ajna	2	Tapaloka
Vishudda	3	Janaloka
Anahata	4	Mahaloka
Manipura	5	Swarloka
Swadisthana	6	Bhuvarloka
Muladhara	7	Bhuloka

Figure 4 The Centres of Consciousness



The open position of the Causal Body described by
Alice A Bailey *in A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*

Figure 5 The Causal Body

Five Sheaths

The situation is complicated because there are five sheaths, which, in the above analogy, would mean that the diver is really wearing five diving suits. The ultimate body is a body of light, or at least that is how it appears to us. It is really a body of a more subtle material and it is so radiant that it appears to us like a form of transparent light. Obviously, the progression through the sheaths towards enlightenment and liberation is a lengthy process. There may be a sudden comprehension of how it is, and perhaps a sudden awakening of identity, but the teachings say that the full process takes a long time. The problem is that in the beginning we are spiritually asleep. We cannot see the truth, and as Jesus implies, we are blind.

The diagram in Figure 6 shows the Greater System of Chakras, giving names of the related lokas and different levels of consciousness. It is from various descriptions and drawings. The causal body, near the throat in the diagram, is difficult to pin point. Some writings speak of a candle flame in the heart, while others speak of a candle flame at the top of the head, shown in many illustrations of saints. The candle flame is the light of the causal body. There is some difference in the viewpoints of these writers. Of course, the flame is in the energy body, as it is not a physical organ. The causal body contains the Blue Bindu, or Blue Star, as well as three smaller bindus. According to Bailey, they are the physical, emotional and mental permanent atoms. These relate to the appropriate lower sheaths, and are visible in meditation.

This area of knowledge is not a popular field of study for scientists. They would probably find it very frustrating when such subtle aspects of life defy examination under a microscope or demonstration in laboratory terms. Nevertheless, some researchers are finding means of verifying some details by using sophisticated electronic systems. Even if they can confirm the details, it is still a very personal journey to attain spiritual development. The whole system is extremely complex and there is a danger that anyone investigating it becomes fascinated with the knowledge and ignores personal progress. Love and faith are the important qualities and knowledge is only a minor factor.

Muktananda only gives a few pages on the causal body, while Bailey gives a lengthy exposition with two diagrams relating the causal body or Egoic Lotus to the centers of consciousness. An important detail that comes out of these descriptions is that we are “units” of consciousness. This consciousness does not operate in one step from the Spirit to the physical body, but functions through a complex system that operates in more than one dimension. Although it is not necessary to know all these details, some knowledge is useful, especially concerning the effects of Kundalini.

The function of the soul body or causal body is subtle and intricate, and until now has been kept totally secret. The essential factor is that man is part of God, or in more Buddhist terms, the individual mind is part of the Universal Mind. The functional aspect is that the causal body is the instrument or focal point of that Universal Mind in its individualized expression as a human being, so that the Soul has an identity, via the causal body. Everyone has a causal body, or in effect *is* that causal body. Modern psychology fails to address these issues, missing the point of functionality and consequently losing effectiveness.

In spiritual terms, the identity is inside the causal body. It is the Divine Spark that makes it all operate and it is the Divine Spark or Bright Pearl that is the True Self, or the lone point of brightness described by Lin-Chi.

Realization by the individual that “I am that Self” is true Self-realization, and the experienced realization by the individual Self that it is part of the Divine Mind, or part of God, is God-realization. In earlier, more restricted times, there was little opportunity to mention such ideas, but now people with a shared interest in these matters are able to exchange ideas more freely. Various books that refer to

these mysteries contain frequent statements about the need for caution in revealing too much. Dr Goel uses symbolic terms in his book, *The Third Eye and Kundalini*, describing the Jiva, meaning the Self, as being like a bird in a cage, which has to undergo the liberation process. Dr Goel indicates that it is visible with the inner eye, which is how he knew about it. This completes the investigation of the technical nature of the soul. Students who find it too incredible can ignore it, as in the end it is the approach that matters.

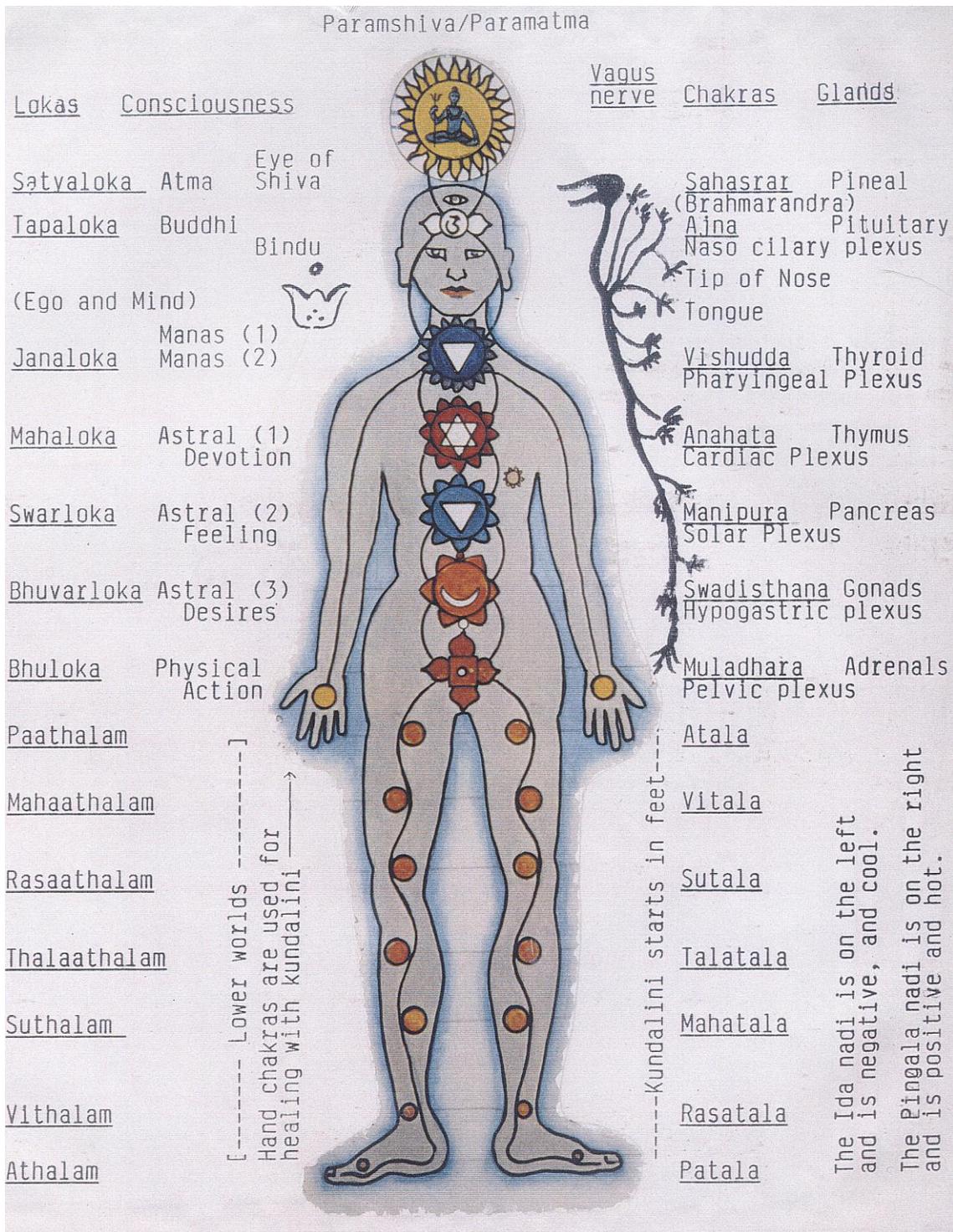


Figure 6 The Greater Chakra System

Finally, a few comments on the western approach may be relevant. In the past the emphasis has been on belief, and questions about the reality of other worlds or the nature of the soul were set aside. The classical Greek period of philosophy was one of inquiry, but with the advent of the Christian era, beliefs became more important than knowledge. Apart from that, European civilization tended to be focused on practical external problems, and hidden mysteries were ignored. Now, with a wider scientific view some of these mysteries are being examined, and as one Indian writer said, there is a great need for western scholars to examine these subjects. Hopefully, this will occur and a better understanding will eventuate. In the meantime we can only rely on the ancient eastern teachings, and the details presented here are from those teachings and accounts by modern eastern mystics.

CHAPTER SEVEN – MANY MANSIONS

St Teresa of Avila

Saint Teresa was a Catholic nun, who lived from 1515 to 1582. She wrote a considerable amount, and her book, *The Interior Castle* is her account of the inner worlds. Saint Teresa refers to the soul and inner worlds in different ways. Her descriptions are unique, and compared with other teachings support the statements that there are many “mansions” or other dimensions.

It is unfortunate that Saint Teresa lived at the time of the infamous Spanish Inquisition, instigated with royal approval in 1481. The pity of this is that Saint Teresa would probably have written more openly if her inquisitors and counselors were not continually checking her work. However, they were troubled times. Martin Luther challenged the established church in 1520, and war and unrest were dominant. Even the Cathedral of Avila, in the very center of Spain, was like a fort. The young Teresa, brought up to be pious and devout, eventually entered a convent. Her early writing talents were encouraged, and she produced other works before *The Interior Castle*, which she wrote near the end of her life.

In writing *The Interior Castle*, St Teresa begins to describe the inner worlds and then goes into rapturous praise of the Lord. It is almost as if she feels she has said enough, and fears censure by her counselors for saying such strange things. She does complain that these authoritative figures were somewhat inflexible and made it difficult for her to write freely. As a result her comments are somewhat disjointed, and in many ways they do little more than create a frustrated curiosity as to what she really did see. However we have to collect clues where we can, and readers will have to allow for the fragmentary descriptions of these inner worlds. Despite such difficulties, her symbolic comments are often brilliantly lucid.

Saint Teresa's Vision

Saint Teresa's book begins with an account of a vision in God, "who disposes all things", granted her a subject on which she could write. The introduction says,

"He showed her a most beautiful crystal globe, made in the shape of a castle, and containing seven mansions, in the seventh and innermost of which was the King of Glory, in the greatest splendour, illumining and beautifying them all".

Saint Teresa then describes the vision, and says she thought of the soul as being a castle, like a single diamond or clear crystal. In it, there are many rooms, just as Jesus says there are many mansions.

Without detracting from her descriptions, it is relevant to point out that Indian Scriptures say the individual is a microcosm of the macrocosm, and it is all within the individual's own spiritual nature. The individual soul is one with the Supreme Soul, or as Zen says, "the ordinary mind *is* the Buddha Mind". The Lord in His Glory is indeed the Lord in any terms and is reflected in each individual soul. Saint Teresa then goes on to say, "this castle contains some mansions above, some below and some at each side. In the center, in the middle of them all is the most important where very secret things pass between God and the soul." This is clearly the highest center and she is using her own imagery whereas for example, the Yogis described Indian scenes.

Saint Teresa discusses how to enter the castle, saying that this must sound like nonsense, because we *are* the castle and. We must realize that there are many ways of "being" in a place. She is saying that the individual Spirit is part of the greater Spirit, or as the eastern teachings would say, "we are that Spirit".

The Outer Court of the Interior Castle

Apparently many souls are in the outer court of this castle and do not wish to enter. St Teresa says that the outer court is the place occupied by the guards. This implies that the only ones who can enter are those permitted to do so by the guards. Other teachings say that there are guards, but they are there to stop evil spirits coming near. Then St Teresa comments that the people in the outer court are unaware that there is a beautiful place they could enter if only they wished to do so. She says that they have become accustomed to living in the outer court that has reptiles and other creatures and have become like them. Nevertheless such people have the power of the Spirit in them and are capable of seeing the Lord if they so wished. Then she adds that the door of entry into this castle is prayer and meditation, and again affirms that prayer must accompany meditation. This matches the Yoga view that insists on meditation as the key to unfolding higher consciousness. At the end of this section, St Teresa describes how the souls enter the first rooms, (the lowest floor in the Vedanta system), but many

reptiles get in. Therefore, the souls are unable to see the beauty of the castle. It is not clear whether the reptiles are unpleasant thought forms, psychic elemental forms, or something indefinable.

The First Mansion

The descriptions of the individual mansions show how we are relating the soul to our own inner nature. St Teresa emphasizes that the Sun Himself, who creates all this beauty, is still in the center of the soul. It is interesting that Saint Teresa refers to God as the “Sun”, because Emanuel Swedenborg (discussed next) states that the spirits in the celestial heaven worship the Sun because the Lord is there. Classical Vedanta writers also refer to God as Lord Surya who resides in the Sun, and equates Him with Lord Shiva. However these are to some extent abstract details, and do not really concern our more immediate task of working our way through the mansions. Later, St Teresa tells us that it is the soul that has separated itself from God. This matches the main theme that the soul has left the Kingdom of Heaven and must return there. Jesus says, in the Gospel of Thomas, “You have come from there and you will go back there”.

St Teresa repeats the idea of a central room that is the place of the Lord; this is the Sun, whose influence reaches every part of the palace. St Teresa says that the soul roams the mansions for the sake of Self-knowledge, adding “that no matter how advanced a soul is, Self-knowledge is essential”.

This is the crux of the whole situation. The soul, or self, must become aware of its own spiritual identity. St Teresa writes that she does not know if she has explained it clearly. She says that Self-knowledge is so important, that even on the highest levels we must never relax our cultivation of it. Here we have a terminology that matches that of Zen. Zen writers speak of Self-cultivation, and all the Zen disciplines aimed at exactly that. Furthermore, the Zen objective is to go beyond the Self and experience the Self-Nature. This, as explained earlier, is Spirit. The nature of the Self, on any level and in any language, is Spirit, and in overlapping terminology, this is the Spirit of God. St Teresa says that we shall never succeed in knowing ourselves without trying to know God.

St Teresa describes this first mansion as containing great riches. These riches are the ennobling qualities of character, such as humility, and she informs us that these qualities will not make the soul more timid because Self-knowledge gives strength. This will help us to avoid the reptiles that inhabit this mansion. The references to reptiles are intriguing, as some metaphysical works say they have a significant symbolic role in terms of developing consciousness, but the exact nature of this role remains a mystery. Like many mystics, St Teresa had great insight into these mysteries, but does not reveal everything.

However, St Teresa’s viewpoint is partly Dualistic. On one hand, there is the Supreme Lord who presides over all things, and we are part of the greater Soul that is everywhere. On the other hand, there is the “devil” that is waiting to ensnare the unwary individual soul. She says that in the beginning the soul is still concerned with worldly affairs and continues in its worldly attitudes. Then she explains that the vassals of these attitudes are the senses, and because of this, they vanquish the soul easily. Some of this is almost pure Buddhism or sounds like readings from the Bhagavad Gita. Yet, why

should it not sound similar? After all, they are all talking about going home to God, the Source, or the Kingdom.

In the first mansion, the soul cannot see the beauty of light because of the wild beasts and animals that force him to close its eyes to everything. These wild beasts are the desires and the lower nature. At this stage, the soul, wrapped up in worldly interests and activities, can find no time to look within and enjoy the beauty of even the lowest mansion. St Teresa advises the seeker who wishes to enter the second mansion to put aside all worldly attractions, and for those who aspire to reach the principal mansion it is essential. She says if they do not put aside these attachments and attractions they will never be able to get there, and warns against cares that have nothing to do with the spiritual traveler. In other words, she is advising against involvement and entanglement in unnecessary worldly activities.

The Second Mansion

St Teresa starts with an explanation that this mansion concerns those who have already started to use prayer as a means of approaching the Lord. Her superiors had encouraged her to write a book on the importance of prayer. *The Interior Castle* was a framework for this, but was also an opportunity to write an allegory of her mystic insight. In this second mansion, devils tempt the souls, suggesting that earthly pleasures are permanent. The devils lure the soul into valuing pride and prestige in the world. This sounds very much like the pleasurable hunting grounds of the ego and its ally the desire nature. In metaphysical terms, it is the lower astral, where gratification of desires is the main objective.

St Teresa advises that thoughtful reflection on such vanities will vanquish the devils of temptation, then stresses that it is important for a person to associate with others going the right way. This viewpoint emphasized very much in the Yoga teachings; means devotees are encouraged to fraternize only with like company. This is because evil or negative thoughts from “evil” persons can invade the mind and sabotage spiritual development.

Swedenborg uses an interesting term to describe this problem. He refers to it as “infestation”. In other words, a person infested with unspiritual thoughts is in a state of infestation. Therefore, wrong company causes “contamination”. St Teresa says that with faith and prayer, the sincere devotees can avoid these pitfalls and will see how the Lord leads them from one group of mansions to another. It is significant that St Teresa refers to groups of mansions because other teachings say there are many “divisions”. St Teresa concludes this section by saying it is wrong for us to think that we can enter Heaven without entering our own souls, and emphasizes that we have to know ourselves.

This reference to entering our own souls is of special note. Yoga writings refer to all the worlds being within our own selves. Linked to the statement by Jesus that the Kingdom of Heaven is within, it has a serious implication. It suggests that our own “individual” soul is part of the Supreme Soul, and in essence, is that Soul. That is how the individual experiences the inner worlds, for according to the Yoga teachings “they are within you”.

The Third Mansion

This chapter starts with a series of comments on the interior trials that the soul endures as it strives to make the journey to the interior of the castle. The term “interior trials” is important. Most of the difficulties that St Teresa mentions are psychological, and the experiences are quite definitely subjective.

Psychologists, unaware of these inner phenomena, have consequently considered all such experiences as the products of imaginations. St Teresa’s remarks are therefore a great support for seekers who may doubt their own inner experiences. According to all the accounts, some effects of spiritual growth create a period of extreme personal distress. This is why, for people on the path of the Householder, it is better to aim at purifying the ego and transcending it slowly.

The point here is that St Teresa was not a Householder; she was a full renunciant. Her devotion and discipline achieved what many Yogis strive for years to attain. Although she does not use our modern terminology her advice is the same, but there is one special difference. Whereas Yoga and Buddhism advise us to cast out pride, St Teresa emphasizes developing humility. It is the same with her consideration of the other ego traits. She emphasizes the positive qualities needed to enter the castle and proceed safely to the center. Her comments about the third mansion highlight purification and control over passions as a means of further progress.

The Fourth Mansion

St Teresa refers here to conditions of great beauty. As she has so definitely listed seven mansions, it is easy to match them with the Vedanta list of lokas and the chakras. Working upwards, we are now presumably in Mahaloka, on the level of the Anahata, or heart chakra. The Eastern disciplines say devotion is the easiest path to Mahaloka, which is far superior to the centers below it. St Teresa says that to reach the higher mansions one must have lived for a long time in the others, adding that normally a soul must work its way up, but that there is no fixed rule about this.

Here we have an indication that we can work through the levels or omit some of them. St Teresa’s advice is to develop devotion. She advises that if we progress on this road and ascend to the highest mansions we should not think too much, but love a great deal. She says that most of our difficulties and unrest come from the fact that we do not know ourselves. This means that we do not know the Self. St Teresa remarks about the noises in her head quoted earlier. There are comments about brimming rivers and the whistling of birds. She says that the inner peace and love in her soul remain, wondering if the highest part of the soul is in the upper part of the head, and if so, whether it can be disturbed.

According to the various Yoga teachings, the higher part of the soul is normally in the top center or chakra. Dr Goel says that the Self has two homes. One is at the crown of the head, and the other is at the center between the eyebrows. Each writer speaks according to his or her own observations and Sir John Woodroffe indicates that in waking hours we use an extension of consciousness that appears to be separate but is not separate. The Indian Scriptures insist that there is only one consciousness

and we all share it. However using the appropriate centers reveals this all-embracing consciousness. St Teresa's remarks indicate that she has truly experienced God-realization.

By contrast, she also refers to fits of sobbing and external movements that she cannot control. Kryas, as Yoga calls them, make it clear what such involuntary movements are. Muktananda's glossary of terms defines "kryas" as:

"Gross (physical) or subtle (mental, emotional) purificatory movements initiated by the awakened Kundalini. Kryas purify the body and nervous system so as to allow a seeker to endure the energy of higher states of Consciousness." ("The Play of Consciousness", P 301)

St Teresa then comments on the spiritual sweetness which meditation brings, and goes on to say that she does not think this joy has its source in the heart, but that it arises in a deeper part. Yoga writings say that there is joy and happiness at the Heart centre but that true bliss is at the Sahasrar, at the crown of the head. Further on, St Teresa indicates how this state of bliss occurs; and says love develops it. She says we should all love God without any concern for self-interest, and have true humility and detachment. Here again the eastern teachings say that we must cast out pride and develop non-attachment, because pride is an ego trait and attachment is always to the things of this world.

In reference to her inner journey she mentions Saint Augustine (354-430 AD), who sought God in many places, then found Him within, again affirming that God is within us. This is a specific mystical point that the Yoga Scriptures constantly make. In effect, they say that there is no external God. Such a view is only a concept created by worldly minds that cannot accept that there is truly an inner Reality. These philosophical ideas vary, but Biblical Scriptures also say that we exist in God. There is only God, or Divine Spirit and we are all part of that Spirit. St Teresa then comments that some people can commune with God whenever they wish. This is the aim of the accomplished Yogi, and few do it. Her remarks at the end of this section are that we should try to avoid discursive reasoning as this interferes with the growth of the soul.

The Fifth Mansion

St Teresa begins by enthusiastically stating that she will never be able to describe the riches and the great treasures and delights that may be found in the fifth mansion. Then she writes that perhaps it would be better to say nothing at all about the mansions not yet covered. She says they are beyond description, adding that access into these higher mansions does not happen often. The higher levels are more abstract and difficult to describe, and most writers say very little about the lokas beyond the fourth one. Also most teachings aim at helping the devotees to reach the fourth loka. This is the heart level, Mahaloka.

St Teresa writes that the mind would like to understand something of what it feels and goes on to say that there is no question of dreaming. Yet, she comments that the preceding mansion was more like dreaming. This matches metaphysical descriptions. The fourth level is still in the astral area, and relates to awareness in dreaming. The mental level is beyond that. St Teresa uses words such as

“certainty” and “convinced”, and she says that here there are still “a few little lizards”, which apparently correspond to thoughts caused by the desire nature.

It is not clear whether St Teresa is speaking narrative or in symbolic language. She cannot explain such things directly, only by analogy. This is why Jesus often spoke in Parables. Things are not as black and white as we like to make them. To comprehend these mysteries we therefore have to learn to think in such symbolism. Practically minded investigators dislike subjectively experienced phenomena. They like things to be certain, and St Teresa says, about seeking certainty in the mansions, “this certainty of the soul is very material”. In spiritual matters, we conclude that the true reality is not demonstrable in worldly terms. It is an impasse and the mind has to retreat.

St Teresa says that the experiences of this mansion and of the next are almost identical. Yet they are not exactly identical because the next level, the sixth, which in Vedanta is Buddhi, is the area of direct intuition. Manas, which is the fifth mansion, described now, is pure reason. St Teresa does not seem at ease with this abstract mental area, and says that despite her best efforts this mansion is still somewhat obscure, yet she refers to supernatural gifts that are available. Yoga and Buddhism warn against these “siddhis”, or powers. St Teresa intersperses her descriptions with devotional praise, and she includes contemplative thoughts, as if she cannot come to grips with this mental level. She says we will not be able to satisfy our anxiety until we come to the last mansion.

St Teresa goes on to say that the soul is not strong enough until “after the betrothal”. This is the union sought in Yoga. It takes place in the next mansion. Again she veers away from pure reason and is demonstrably happier with faith and devotion. She finishes by saying that the Lord may perhaps be pleased to help her in explaining these difficult things. The point about the soul not being strong enough until after the betrothal matches the general statements that when the Self (Jivatma) is first liberated it is still very weak. In other words it does not have real strength until it has become one with God.

The Sixth Mansion

We now come to the higher part of the journey, and as it becomes more abstract, we can expect the clues to be more elusive. St Teresa gave the preceding mansions an average of twelve pages of coverage each. For the sixth mansion there is an astonishing sixty pages. It is amazing that St Teresa attempted any descriptions at all. Most seers prefer to remain silent, not wishing to “cast pearls before swine”, and be ridiculed, so we are indeed indebted to anyone who helps us to understand these mysteries. St Teresa begins with the statement that here, in the sixth mansion, “the soul has been wounded with love for the Spouse”. In the Vedanta system, this level is associated with the insight of intuition and with pure love. Intense devotion to God gives access to this level.

St Teresa says that the soul now seeks the honor and glory of God more than anything. Again this is a Yoga devotional attitude, but St Teresa says there is still some distress, commenting that distress is common. She says someone she knew “hardly had a day without such pains and other kinds of suffering”. A footnote informs us that here St Teresa is referring to herself. Then she writes of “the torture that it costs us to have to do with a confessor so scrupulous and inexperienced that he thinks

nothing safe". She goes on to say that he (the confessor) cannot cope with anything out of the ordinary. From these and other similar remarks, it is evident that St Teresa did not always write freely.

One of her difficulties is that whatever the soul sees is not really "seen" in our terms. It is no wonder that her confessors found it difficult. St Teresa tells us that the worst phase of distress comes just before the soul enters the seventh mansion, and these phases of distress often occur when the person is least prepared for them. She says the soul is awakened as though by "a rushing comet or a thunderbolt". A footnote says that St Teresa had trouble with this description, for she originally wrote, "a rushing comet or a lightning flash...although no light is seen".

It will be recalled that in the advanced stages of Kundalini awakening there are experiences of light phenomena and a sound like thunder (see also Chapter Ten). This connection with Kundalini is very probable, because she mentions that the soul is "able to feel the burning heat of the fire," and reports that the experience comes and goes.

In the next chapter of *The Interior Castle*, still on the sixth mansion, it is explained that there is another way in which God can awaken the soul, which may be more perilous; it is by means of "locutions". It is explained that such locutions may be as if actually heard by physical hearing, or may be perceived in an imaginary, spiritual or intellectual way. In other words, there may be voices of various types. On this, Zen says, ignore voices and ignore wondrous sights. Other writings advise that such phenomena can occur and one should exercise caution if this is the case. However there is one type of "silent voice" that is intuitive and only offers helpful thoughts. St Teresa goes on to discuss this, adding warnings to take no notice of people who speak indiscriminately on these matters.

As a means of evaluating these voices or visions, St Teresa makes three points. Her main concern is that they may have "nothing to do with coming from God." She advises that there is a sense of power and authority associated with the good voices. The second point is that a great tranquility dwells in the soul, and the third sign is that these words do not vanish from the memory. She tells us that if these locutions come from the imagination there is no sense of peace or interior consolation, but she says there is another way in which some type of intellectual vision can guide the soul. She says that these visions are so sublime. In addition, says "that it is not fitting for those who live on earth to understand them." Unfortunately, St Teresa does not expand on this, instead returning to advising on how to discriminate with the locutions. Overall, the indications are that some locutions are meaningless but the intelligent ones are clear and specific, and the good ones are very interior and are not heard as a normal voice.

Next, St Teresa goes on to discuss betrothal with the King of Heaven, in Christian terminology. The true aim of Yoga is union with God, so her comments still match the Yoga Scriptures. She also says that, "the soul has never before been so fully awake than when it is with God." On this it is relevant to mention that one of Swami Muktananda's books has the title *I Have Become Alive*.

St Teresa says the last two mansions are very close together. This again coincides with Indian writings, for Buddhi and Atma are very near to each other, as the diagrams show. For, after transcending the ego and the mind, the Way is clear.

Then she states the soul unites with God. After recovering from this great impact, “the soul...will remember the revelation of the great things it has seen. It will not however, be able to describe any of them.” Note the reference to a revelation that is difficult to describe; this parallels classic Yoga.

In her attempts at description St Teresa says that when the soul is enraptured it loses its power of breathing. Yogi writings contain references to this phenomenon and so does Swedenborg’s work. St Teresa says it does not last long, and consequently the ecstasy does not last long. After this the soul is somewhat confused and has an ardent desire to serve God. In this sudden transport of the spirit, the soul appears to have left the body, as it feels as if it has been in another world. The soul learns many things at once, but whether the soul is in the body or not is difficult to say. (This is clearly an advanced type of near death experience, and the comments in a later chapter will help to make it clearer.)

There are various benefits from this experience. St Teresa says there is definite knowledge of God. There is also Self-knowledge and a lack of interest in earthly things. These statements could almost be a direct quote from any reputable writings on true Yoga. In Yoga terms St Teresa is speaking of God-realization and Self-realization. She says that to experience these things requires great courage and she says that unhappiness follows when the soul again immerses itself in the world, although frequent returns to the nearness of God do occur.

The subject of distress stands out as a serious problem. People usually ignore such references and think they only apply to other people. However, St Teresa is right, although “fortitude” is perhaps a better word to describe the way to handle it. To enter into the final mansion is not easy, and she warns that if the soul does not rely on the Lord it will never get there.

At the final stage, there are various problems with the imagination. Apparently it can create wonderful visions that, although amazingly beautiful, are actually false. St Teresa says that, “the devil” attempts to mislead the unwary soul. This is no doubt, what a Zen Master indicates when he says, “Ignore wondrous sights”.

There is a Zen anecdote of a monk who asked to see the abbot because he had seen a wonderful vision. He described how he had seen the Lord Buddha with all his Arhats (disciples). The abbot shook his head and said, “Don’t worry about it, and it will disappear.” Then he urged the monk to make more effort, as the monk was only at the threshold and needed to continue his progress even further.

St Teresa goes on to say that at this point the soul still has experiences of extreme distress and she refers to one sufferer entirely losing consciousness. She writes, “It was the last day of Eastertide, and all that Easter she had been afflicted”. This reference to mystic experiences at Easter is significant. Emanuel Swedenborg also had a unique experience at Easter, and there are references in several

other books. In Yoga language, it is a time of increased spiritual energy, indicated in the pre Christian writings of Jnana Yoga. It is a time when the earth regenerates in its yearly cycle. Observant seekers will find it is a good time for greater effort.

The Seventh Mansion

St Teresa demonstrated that prayer and meditation carry the devotee to the House of the Lord. Advice on this was her stated aim in writing *The Interior Castle*. The descriptions of the different Mansions are therefore secondary, and as much as we would like to have specific details, we usually find only fragmentary clues. The same now applies to this last mansion.

St Teresa says that in this mansion, the Lord wishes to remove the scales of ignorance from the eyes of the soul, but He does this in a strange manner. She says the soul is “enkindled and illumined”. There is also a cloud of the greatest brightness. This is comparable with pure Yoga and the matching Kundalini effects.

The enigma of the Trinity reveals itself, and by a strange process of knowledge, the soul understands its mystery. The presence of God is experienced but each devotee experiences it differently. St Teresa explains it as “the Lord appearing in the centre of the soul”, known by a subtle vision. She adds a comment that could come from Indian mysticism. She says, “It is as if a tiny streamlet enters the sea, from which it will find no way of separating itself”. In attempts to clarify this further she says, “it is as if the ends of two wax candles joined so that there is one light and the soul is then only desirous of serving the Lord”.

In this final mansion, there is no conflict, only peace. Yet, St Teresa says that there is a great desire to suffer. She means that the soul is willing to endure any hardship to serve God. This service to God is not in a vain attempt to help everybody, for she specifically says “do not try to help everybody, but limit yourself to your own companions”. St Teresa also says that once the soul has experienced this great joy, it cannot stay silent. This means there is an inner impulse to speak and teach.

In conclusion, St Teresa says that we cannot enter all the mansions by our own efforts but the Lord must admit us to them. She says that although she has spoken of seven Mansions there are many more, above, below and around. She is confirming what Jesus said; “in my Father’s House there are many Mansions”.

Today we would say there are many dimensions. St Teresa says prayer, meditation; faith, devotion and grace help us to enter them. All of St Teresa’s main points agree with the great Indian Scriptures. Although already mentioned, it is of special importance to note St Teresa’s statement that the Lord lives in the highest part of the head, i.e. the Sahasrar. She reveals by many of her remarks that she attained true communion with the Lord. Her descriptions of her attainments show that her method of prayer and meditation, with devotion, will take the earnest seeker all the way to the Father’s House. St Teresa is a saint in terms of any discipline, because by using a Christian approach she achieved the goals that the great eastern teachings described.

From that same period the account by Saint John of the Cross, shows that others did attain similar results. As already mentioned, it is a great pity that the Inquisition prevented them from revealing more than they did. This restrictive attitude still persists in some areas, and eastern teachings are dismissed without any investigation. Despite that, modern translations are now breaking down the barriers, and we can obviously look forward to a better insight in the future.

CHAPTER EIGHT – HEAVENS AND HELLS

Descriptions of Other Worlds

In our search for the soul we are looking for any descriptions of the soul and the worlds in which it exists. This description and that of Saint Teresa, deal with two of the most prominent mystic experiences in western spiritual literature. The one here is by a man named Emanuel Swedenborg. He did not live in a secluded monastery, but in the midst of normal worldly activity. He is described as a philosopher and a scientist, making significant contributions to practical science. He was born in Sweden in 1688, the son of a Lutheran bishop, and lived till 1772. In this period, he saw the rapid changes of the Industrial Revolution and it was an era of intense physical activity.

Philosophically it was the period of Empiricism. It was a philosophy of practical inquiry and for most of his early life Emanuel Swedenborg was also a practical man of the times. He applied his talents to solving industrial problems, and took an active interest in a wide range of technical processes and became a special assessor for the Swedish Royal Board of Mines. Then, around the age of fifty-five years, he had an inner religious experience that changed his viewpoint on life. The deeper mystic side of his nature that had been lying dormant now began to take over. His descriptions differ from those of Saint Teresa. Her accounts are symbolic, whereas Swedenborg described what he saw in very human terms. Nevertheless his general framework matches that of Vedanta and Buddhism.

Two of his books in particular contribute to our search for details of other worlds. One is his well-known work *Heaven and Hell* and the other the unusual *Journal of Dreams*, but his other works also consider the nature of the soul. The references here are from Dr Michael Stanley's work, *Essential Readings*, and *The Shorter Heaven and Hell* abridged by Julian Duckworth and Trevor Moffat. Also consulted are the *Journal of Dreams* (with a commentary by Dr Wilson Van Dusen), and the complete English translation of *Heaven and Hell*.

Journal of Dreams

The journal was a diary, which began as the record of a journey. It is dated 1743-1744, and has a few entries for July and August of 1743. It starts again in March 1744 and ends in October of that year. This latter period is of interest as it marked the change in Swedenborg's outlook. The most significant experience in this period of change was his vision of Christ, which was at Easter. Entries on many vivid dreams, and some details of everyday affairs followed. In his journal he uses the term "correspondences." This is a type of symbolism, and by that system, dreams can be an indication of psychological changes. We can therefore apply this to the journal and use the correspondences to evaluate his descriptions. There are so many unique points that it is impossible to use them all here; only a selection is given.

We begin with an early example, of references to the "father", which, combined with other details indicate how Swedenborg was progressing in his spiritual awakening. In entry 58, (April 6th/7th) he writes, "Afterwards I saw my father, in a different costume from what he used to wear, nearly of a red color; he called me to him and took me by the arms." This is a clear correspondence, or symbol of his father representing "the Father in Heaven", and indicates the Lord welcoming Swedenborg. Here he was making inner contact with the Lord, (the Father).

In a different context, Swedenborg indicates his growing awareness of the inner levels. In entry 62 (April 7th/8th), he says "Throughout the whole night I was going down deep, stairs after stairs, and through various places." This clarifies a critical point because some writers speak of going up, and others speak of going down, i.e. deeper into the mind. This suggests that he was moving down through different "levels of consciousness," and he does use the term "levels" elsewhere. There are also other references to going up, or down.

Before the above mentioned inner experience, Swedenborg writes on external effects (entry 51, April 6/7). This report describes strong shuddering and "a noise of thunder" happening several times. Then (in entry 52) he refers to more effects two or three hours later. He describes more shuddering and a thundering noise. Later (in entry 228) says that he "was long in holy shudders". In Yoga, these are "kryas", described in the chapter on Kundalini Yoga, and in Saint Teresa's account. Kryas are an indication that the spiritual energy or Kundalini Shakti is moving up through the centres of consciousness. Altogether, there are twenty-two such reports, referring to "shuddering", "thunder", and other related effects. By comparisons it is clear that he experienced a traditional awakening. The indication is that Swedenborg had awakened the Divine Fire, as Saint John of the Cross calls it, and therefore was having inner experiences. He uses another archetype symbol and speaks of going through a long passage, (entry 280). Yoga writings mention an experience similar to the tunnel effect in near death experiences. Then, (entry 281) Swedenborg records, "in the morning in a vision, there appeared to me the market called Disting Fair in my father's house in Upsala, in the upstairs parlor". The fair was in the upper part "of my Father's House'. That is, in a higher chakra. In general, the heart chakra is the beginning of entry into the Father's House and the crown centre is true entry, as St Teresa

indicates. His development was a classical progress to higher consciousness. Returning to the father's house is a common dream symbol.

In the next report (entry 282) Swedenborg writes, "in the morning when I wakened there came upon me again the same kind of giddiness or swoon that I had six or seven years ago". Giddiness often accompanies the movements of Kundalini when it begins to activate the head centres. Sometimes it is necessary to stop meditating until it passes off. Saint John of the Cross, and Yoga in particular, also mentions this effect. Note that the previous giddiness was *six or seven years* earlier. This is an average time span and supports statements that it is not a once only experience. He further writes in his journal about having his preconceived opinions taken away from him in his awakening. This is the stage of being "swept clean", and this extract indicates what is happening to him. It reads, "It seemed as if a sky-rocket burst above me, shedding a mass of sparks of beautiful fire" (entry 285), and adds, "it means, perhaps, love for what is high". He apparently did not understand its true significance. This is another classical Kundalini experience. The sparks are positive energy that ascends through the nervous system and activates the invisible centres in the energy body. Kundalini Yoga describes this process. The older books describe it as "flowers" or "stars falling out of the sky". Some people see it in meditation sessions.¹

Other entries endorse the conclusion that he had a traditional spiritual awakening.

Heaven and Hell

Swedenborg's work on *Heaven and Hell* is different from the journal and specifically focuses on the life of the soul after death. In the after-death stage, the soul faces a choice of different levels. It can progress to one of the heavens, or it can go "down" to one of the hells. When the soul first leaves the body at physical death, it goes to an intermediate area. He explains that after death every soul goes to the world of spirits, which is midway between heaven and hell. He uses the term "spirit", and seldom uses the word "soul". He says a person in this world is a spirit, and immediately after death is with the spirits who still have worldly values. St Teresa indicates the same. The ones who are "raised up" are called angels, but the ones who are "cast down" are called devils. Swedenborg deals with the various details at great length.

From that viewpoint, and in terms of his remarks, it means that such a spirit, whether in a physical body or not, is operating according to its character. If they are demons now, they will eventually proceed to the "lower slopes", as the Italian poet Dante puts it.² In *Dante's Inferno* (c 1314), the descriptions indicate that such souls create their own hell, and Dante's descriptions very well match those of Swedenborg.

He expands further, saying that the world of spirits and the world of men overlap. In this world, we are taking an upward or downward path, whether we realize it or not. He differentiates between the

¹ According to books on biophysics, the body is negatively charged and an increase in body energy apparently makes the body positive. This seems to be distressing to some people.

world of spirits and the spiritual world. He goes on to say that the Lord does not transfer a man from one place to another, but the individual causes the change. In other words, we cause it. Swedenborg then explains that in this way “The good are taken up to heaven and the evil betake themselves to hell”. (Note that they *take themselves* there.)

This principle obviously affects the welfare of the soul after death. And he explains that after the spirit has spent some time in the first area it can go in the direction of its inclinations. The spirit follows its inward thoughts, and he says a spirit in this condition is “thinking on the basis of his intention”. In this state, the spirit sees itself as it did in the world. However, the spirit is not “punished” for its past misdeeds, because the current attitude determines the effect. This implies that a change of attitude creates a change of conditions, and according to Swedenborg, willing spirits can enter one of the heavens with help.

In describing the inner worlds, he starts with a very significant statement. He says that whatever we see in the spiritual world is a reflection, or “correspondence” of the spiritual state of the observer. This statement has serious implications. It suggests that what we see or experience, are only subjective impressions, and that there is no fixed reality that is permanently the same. By such comments it seems that we create the conditions, both there and here, according to our intentions and attitude. The indication is that what we experience is a form of projection, where we cause the conditions.

Swedenborg explains how he experienced this and says there is communication between the outer natural man and the inner spiritual kingdom. These descriptions require some study, however three indications are clear. These are; that the soul is a spirit and therefore we are spiritual beings, there are definitely other levels or dimensions, and where we are in this framework depends on our thoughts. This endorses the statement, “as we think, so it is”. This is a powerful point in all the scriptures. He goes on to clarify this, saying, “The mind is therefore the man himself”.

(For readers who wish to compare descriptions of the inner levels, the best books are *The Interior Castle* by Saint Teresa of Avila, *Heaven and Hell*, by Emanuel Swedenborg and *The Holy Science* by Sri Yukteswar.)

CHAPTER NINE – THE WANDERING SOUL

The Journey of the Soul

To keep our central aim clear a review of our starting point may perhaps be useful. Most of the details given are not common knowledge in the world of institutionalized religion. Until the end of the nineteenth century most people could not read. As a result, simple precepts were given in church sermons, but this is now changing.

The central theme in the great teachings is that we do have a soul and it has become lost in the world of natural phenomena, and the individual person has forgotten his spiritual identity, because the mind identifies with the physical body. As a consequence, our task is to rediscover it and help in the return journey to the Source. The epitome of this journey is in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, in Luke 15. As already explained the soul or prodigal son goes to a far country and eventually decides to return to the Father's House. Saint Teresa explains this in a different manner by saying that the soul roams through the mansions for the sake of self-knowledge. She makes a passing reference to one aspect of this in her mention of Jacob's ladder, mentioned in Genesis 28/12. This was a dream or vision where Jacob saw angels coming down and going up a great stairway. The stairway leads to heaven and metaphysical writers use the sun as a symbol and say the souls come from the sun, which represents heaven, and descend to the lower worlds to gain experience as an aid to evolving. This is what Saint Teresa means when she says that the soul roams through the mansions as a means of learning more about the nature of the spirit. In fact, she says that it is always incumbent on the soul to develop self-knowledge. The journey into the lower worlds is part of that spiritual education. The problem in this journey of exploration is that the soul becomes lost and identifies with the world it is in, and with the body it is using, as happens to us, on our earth, in the worldly dimension. This means that we think we are the body, and that our worldly life is the only type of reality in the whole universe. The descriptions by Saint Teresa and others indicate that there are other types of reality, and they overlap onto the one we know, i.e. this world.

Saint Teresa leads us through a series of different mansions to a more heavenly and spiritual world. Her comments indicate that we are in a state of imprisonment by our ignorance, and she says that she feels restricted by life on earth. Apart from that, the scriptures repeatedly tell us to seek the spiritual kingdom, which is obviously not a tangible world. This is somewhat enigmatic because the whole process is so very subjective, for as Jesus said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is within." We therefore have to develop some type of inner perception that will enable us to find this inner Kingdom and the heaven world from which we have come. Without this insight, the return journey of the soul is much more difficult. The overall indication is that we are not properly informed on this situation, because previously we have accepted myths and allegories as genuine descriptions. What we need is true knowledge to help us in our task.

Yet, in our search for the soul we may wonder how important such knowledge might be, for the central task is to discover our spiritual identity. In considering this situation, Zen in particular puts all the emphasis on the method of achieving this basic self-knowledge. Because without that all the rest is mental baggage and Saint Teresa's advice to think less and love much is parallel to this, for we may learn a lot and yet not learn about our inner Self. Whereas love can bypass the monkey mind as Zen puts it, and open the door to the inner Kingdom to which the soul must return. In this effort, excessive conceptualizing is a barrier.

We therefore have two branches to our inner search. One is of discovering our inner Self and the other is working our way through the different mansions to reach the true spiritual Kingdom. In comparison to some methods, the Zen approach is wonderfully direct and focuses all the effort on the main task of transcending the ego and experiencing the spiritual nature. Nevertheless, by this method or that of Saint Teresa, or any other, the seeker is likely to have unique inner experiences that are baffling or disconcerting. That is, the devotee will encounter the many mansions, or at least some of them. Moreover, the Christian method focuses on the Kingdom of Heaven. In effect, this aims at an experienced awareness of a specific mansion. From this we can see that an early understanding that there are other worlds is a practical necessity.

In her own approach, Saint Teresa of Avila specifically aimed at communion with God and her experiences of the inner worlds were the result of that intention. For Saint Teresa, her journey through the mansions was a by product of that aim and her descriptions indicate that. With Swedenborg, his descriptions reveal his fascination with the inner worlds that he encountered. As a result, he did not formulate a specific method of awakening, apart from his recommendation to unite the internal man and the external man by means of the rational mind, which is discussed in more detail below. Nevertheless, his writings confirm the existence of the soul and of other worlds.

Even so, such experience or knowledge is meaningless if we are still unaware of our identity as a soul. This is particularly applicable to the seeker who wishes to know out of curiosity or prefers to pursue psychic phenomena. The essential point is that we have to evolve spiritually and this is the real journey. Any distraction from that leads to inner conflict because as we often hear, the spirit will not accept denial. The result then is that there is tension and difficulties. In simple terms, we are spiritual beings already but our rigid identification with the physical body is the greatest denial of all. The means of overcoming this is a change of attitude and an ordered focusing of the mind. For this a simple devotional attitude is the easiest method recommended in nearly all the teachings. With seekers who prefer more knowledge, there are various knowledge systems and we have especially considered the approach of Yoga as a basis for these. As a further means of clarification of the process of Self-discovery, another remarkable Christian saint is worth a special consideration. This is Saint John of the Cross. He is not the only one, as there were a number of Christian monks who attained true spiritual insight. All of these did not write about their experiences, and we are fortunate that some did so. Saint John of the Cross did not fully describe his experiences, but he nevertheless gives us another useful insight into these mysteries.

Dark Night of the Soul

Saint John-of-the-Cross describes his mystic experience in a poem called Dark Night of the Soul. He was an associate of Saint Teresa of Avila and he met her when he was twenty-five years of age, when he joined her Order. Saint Teresa was then fifty-two years of age and had already spent many years on the inner search. However, Saint Teresa had chosen “the path of suffering,” which she

describes as a “short cut”. Most spiritual teachers generally tend to describe the method they have used and it seems that she did the same. Saint John-of-the-Cross appears to have followed a similar approach and in nine years achieved what many Yogis take a lifetime to attain. At the age of thirty-four he antagonized the religious authorities who arrested him and consequently imprisoned him. There he wrote a poem on his mystic experiences. He later managed to escape and wrote a commentary on part of his poem, now called, *Dark Night of the Soul*, (Burns and Oats, 1935). In the book, he explains that there are two dark nights. His comments indicate that one is unbelievably difficult and distressing but the other is awful beyond description. Yet, he says that many experience the first dark night, but very few proceed to the second one. We therefore have to ask why the experience was so devastatingly difficult. An analysis of his writing, matched against that of Saint Teresa shows clearly why his was also the path of suffering. The answer is that this was the Kundalini path. In this method, the Kundalini Fire, called the Divine Fire by Saint John, burns away the imperfections in the soul, and in doing so often causes serious distress. Nevertheless, he says that there would be no suffering if there were no imperfections in the soul for the Divine Fire to act upon (P 123). This is a most important statement because the more intense the effort is the more likelihood there is of mental and nervous distress. These difficulties arise from three main factors. One is that the Kundalini Fire is aroused without adequate prior purification. The second is that over intensity and impatience figuratively fan the embers of the inner fire, described in Yoga as a fierce arousal. The other factor is via the conflict that arises from attempts to transcend the ego. Knowledge and patience can avoid the first two problems and loving compassion can reduce the conflict of the third difficulty. Even so, the first dark night is an aspect of transcending the ego. In the descriptions on Zen, we have considered the battle between the ego and the spiritual Self or soul, which can be a short or a long battle. As well as that, we have discussed the personal “Battle of Kurukshetra” in the Bhagavad Gita. This battle is the battle against the dark forces in our own lower nature.

The psychological distress is because the ego does not wish to yield and resists the attempts at change. The discipline therefore has to purify the ego so that, like Arjuna, the ego accepts the inner Lord and says, “I will do thy bidding”. Many descriptions dramatize this inner battle in an analogy of an external battle against the dark forces, or Satan and so on, but the conflict is inward and personal to every individual seeker. There is no miraculous external change because all the effects are an inner experience and we each have to make our own effort. In this, belief has to change into a personal application whereby the Kingdom manifests to the individual because of the effort. The effort is the real key, which attracts the grace that opens the final door. This is where the danger lies, as strong effort will often trigger the Kundalini energy into fierce activity. Jesus said that the Kingdom, of Heaven suffers itself to be taken by violence. This is what it means, because the fierce arousal is a violent method. As already stated, the distress is usually because there is not enough prior purification, and the seeker often makes the situation worse by impatience so that a fiercer burning occurs. In this, the nerves

overheat by the increased flow of energy that is stimulated by the concentration and meditation process. Although some descriptions say this is a subtle type of psychic energy, others say it is an increase of electrical energy. Apparently, this is why there is an actual physical effect and in any case, we are operating in a body. The useful knowledge here is that even though effort helps to open the door forcefulness aggravates the condition because physically the nerves cannot cope with the extra flow of energy. With Saint Teresa, the more she felt distress the harder she prayed and sought God. As a result, the distress was continual and lasted almost all her life and the same applies to Saint John-of-the-Cross.

The big difference between the descriptions by Saint Teresa and Saint John is that Teresa focuses on the journey through the mansions whereas John deals with the journey in terms of the personal experiences. So we have descriptions of what we are likely to encounter in our journey to the spiritual kingdom. In addition, we have vivid accounts of the personal distress that befalls the unprepared seeker. Both of these define the outcome as a blissful union of love with God. In this, they match the Yoga view of union in terms of God-realization and the only essential difference is the use of Christian terminology. The problem in both approaches is the same for the task is to transcend the ego and somehow survive the psychological distress and physical difficulties in this process. The various descriptions show these difficulties are common to many teachings even though the words are different. Nevertheless, we have to reaffirm that Saint John's approach was very intense and his distress was proportionate to that. Had he taken a different approach his experiences may not have been so intense, and the chances are that he may not have written about them. For it seems to be the case that mystics who attain a certain degree of insight feel compelled to express their experiences as a means of helping others. Fortunately for us, Saint Teresa and Saint John-of-the-Cross chose to do that. Another interesting point about effects from the Kundalini stimulation is that the seeker feels prompted to seek out knowledge. This is one of the reasons behind the tradition of a wandering yogi or monk who travels in search of an enlightened master who can guide him to a better understanding. Today, with modern translations of mystic writing the seeker no longer needs to do that and can apply the search to literature. An example of this is that the Burns & Oates edition of Saint John's commentary says "First published in 1935" and "First published in Great Britain in 1953". This is despite the fact that John wrote his account almost four hundred years earlier. The same applies to the eastern scriptures and seekers now need to travel no further than the nearest library or bookshop.

The First Dark Night

Saint John-of-the-Cross states clearly that many devotees experience this first night and he wrote his commentary so that those who experienced it might have a better understanding. In addition, he indicates that there were some commentaries extant on this first stage. A study of modern literature on the subject shows that many today are indeed experiencing this first night, which they still do not understand and our next two chapters specifically focus on that situation. Saint John's commentary is

therefore still very applicable but the difficulties need not be so distressing. As we have said, the subjective psychological difficulties are from the attempts to transcend the ego, which does not wish to yield. Zen explains that the role of the ego is to serve the soul and the clear symbolism of the Minister serving the Prince is the analogy. Because the Minister has usurped the power, there is the inner battle in which the Prince has to emerge victorious and rule over the Minister. This point is quite simple and very understandable even though the task itself is difficult. In describing this difficulty, John makes so many references to purgation, aridity and suffering, which he mentions in the plural, that only the staunch devotee would willingly choose the path that he took. This may seem excessively negative but Jesus warned us of this when he said that no king would embark on a campaign of war without first considering whether he could pursue it to victory. In other words, we should consider carefully how we approach this problem of overcoming the ego, which is our personal battle of Kurukshetra as described in the analogy of the Bhagavad Gita.

Saint John-of-the-Cross does not use the word ego but speaks of the negative ego traits, which are equivalent to the Yoga list of greed, pride, envy, lust, hate and anger. These, with his addition of luxury, are the seven sins that the individual has to purge from the soul, which the ego has contaminated. There is therefore a double process of purification and this causes the distress. We then have the two effects of a physical heating of the nerves from aggressive meditation processes and psychological conflict and tension from the discipline. Two of the works quoted earlier particularly dealt with these distressing effects. They were the descriptions by Dr Goel and the descriptions by Gopi Krishna. By comparison, Saint John-of-the-Cross had more than his share of these problems and this is why he emphasized the difficulties. Even so, he only comments on the first three stanzas of his poem and he does not discuss the remaining five. Furthermore, he indicates that the second is indeed a greater trial, which he did experience even though he says that few proceed to that stage.

All this may seem depressing but the fact is that the task does not have to be distressing, as some knowledge and a less forceful approach can certainly avoid and overcome many of the difficulties. Our journey of the soul and the experienced awareness of our spiritual identity are therefore difficult relative to the method we choose and the intensity by which we apply the method. Jesus gave a clear and simple method, which consists of asking, seeking, knocking, persisting, having faith and loving God as well as loving others. In simple terms, this is searching with faith and devotion and all we have to add to that is patience. For the fact is that most of the eastern teachings do not speak of this extreme distress and many Yogis say they did not experience such extensive difficulties at all. Even so, the Yogis acknowledge that the Kundalini method is risky and somewhat traumatic, especially if pursued without adequate guidance. These points were all in the earlier discussions but the account of Saint John-of-the-Cross justifies further emphasis on these difficulties.

The Spirit of Giddiness

One of the most distressing experiences mentioned by Saint John is what he calls a “spirit of giddiness”. Emanuel Swedenborg also mentions this but neither of them appears to understand exactly what causes it. Saint John-of-the-Cross does make many references to the “Divine Fire” and other aspects of burning, and purification of the soul by this process but does not explain any technicalities. His work is valuable as an account of the psychological trauma that besets an over eager devotee but some of the effects will apply to others who meditate by any method. The giddiness is the result of stimulation of new areas in the brain and is part of the process of transferring the focus of consciousness from the lower ego-self to the higher spiritual-self or soul. More properly, the process is the activation of a new centre of consciousness in the brain, and writers on the subject generally describe this as an expansion of consciousness.

This expansion of consciousness is the actual process of being “born again of the spirit” as Jesus puts it, and is the connection that helps the spiritual-soul to take its rightful place as the ruler of the overall psyche. Externally focused ego personalities find this hard to understand and without applied discipline would find it impossible to attain. Simply put, the giddiness is the result of energy moving into the head centres because the energy is then flowing strongly through all the centres. However, the devotional method can direct the energy straight to the heart. This, if done correctly, not only bypasses the psychic phenomena that troubles some seekers, but stimulates an awakening of the soul without the over activation of the Kundalini energy. The focus on the heart is the first stage of union with God although this is not the complete attainment. Even so, this is the best approach for seekers in the busy outside world. Saint John finishes by stating that the completion of this unity requires great purity and detachment and mortification. For the soul cannot attain true contact with God while there is any impurity and an attachment to worldly things. Similar statements are in the Yoga writing. Mortification is a Christian term but it is very apt as it means overcoming worldly passions by means of discipline and penance. That is to say, the ego traits must be controlled and transcended. By means of this, the wayward soul experiences a state of joy.

The commentary by Saint John-of-the-Cross ends with a reference to this happiness whereby the soul attains a communion with God even though he says that the means of the attainment are unknown. On this point, some of the Yoga disciplines help the seeker to know and understand what is happening and make it clear that it is by no means necessary to proceed on blind faith. The Yoga view is that there should be knowledge and devotion with the faith. The difficulties described by Saint John make this clear. Even so, his account is a valuable signpost on the path to spiritual awareness. Yet, in studying it we should remember that he was probably using the same short cut as Saint Teresa, which we do not have to do, and by proceeding slowly, we can journey safely.

Finding the Internal Man

In complete contrast is the standpoint of Emanuel Swedenborg. He states that man has an internal and external self and in one concise sentence sets out the essential task. He says, “The end of regeneration is that the internal man may be conjoined with the external, thus the spiritual, by means of the rational, with the natural.” (Essential Reading, P 87, by Michael Stanley).

The essence of this is that the external man is the natural man and the internal man is the spiritual man. Elsewhere he explains that the internal man or spiritual man is the soul and the outward body-person is the external man. He does not use the term ego because, as stated before, this is a modern term. In Dr Stanley’s work on Essential Reading, there are Swedenborg’s explanations as to how the natural man has difficulty because of the “proprium”, meaning the ego. The key point here is that both Yoga and Buddhism consider the mind to be the means of connecting the lower with the higher nature. In addition, both equally consider that discipline of the ego is essential. Swedenborg’s statements sum this up very well but he did not give a definite teaching. His writing mostly consists of interpretations of the Bible and explanations of spiritual truths as well as descriptions of his encounters with the residents of other worlds, which he calls spirits. However, the term spirit describes a wide range of spiritual entities of which the soul is only one. In his own words, Swedenborg also confirms that man is a spiritual being, or spirit as he usually says and that there are other dimensions.

A secondary point, which his earlier approach indicates, is that intense concentration will lead to an awareness of the invisible worlds. The risk in this is that the seeker may become lost in a jungle of psychic phenomena and unwary individuals may then lose more than they gain. As with other teachings Swedenborg says that the intent is of prime importance and in this, the seeker should have a clear objective of finding the internal man, attaining enlightenment, or entering the Kingdom of Heaven etc, according to the religious preference. The end of the journey of the soul is the same by whatever road we take. Some paths are smoother than others, but in the end we transcend sectarian concepts and individual methods. This may perhaps be why Saint John-of-the-Cross said nothing further about his experiences after the second dark night. In terms of Yoga, he attained God-realization and it is noticeable in Yoga writing that enlightened Yogis say little or nothing about the final stage. All we can conclude is that John most certainly completed his personal journey. He not only transcended the external man as an ego person but he transcended the individual soul as a spiritual-Self and attained the ultimate union with the abstract nature of God. This was apparently by the most direct method, but for seekers in the world a gradual and progressive path is better. Nevertheless, the result is eventually the same and in literature on this journey most of the seekers spent a lifetime on prayer and meditation. Despite that, the first stage of the journey, to the heart centre, is attainable by any earnest seeker. Nevertheless, accounts of the first dark night, to the first head centre, are a warning against impatience and the seeker should seek some knowledge as a means of avoiding the excessive distress of Saint John-of-the-Cross.

Emanuel Swedenborg made another pertinent comment on the process of spiritual regeneration for he says, "both the internal man and the external man must be regenerated." As he also goes to great lengths to explain how the internal man is the soul this means that the soul and the ego both have to be re-formed as a means of a conscious spiritual awakening. By this process, the awakened soul is able to operate in the wider spiritual world of a deeper reality. Without that the knowledge is only acquired information and the question always comes back to that of how we can change as a means of attaining a definite spiritual perception. For this we can only start where we are and the Yogi teaching insists that it all depends on our personal attitude whereby we accept the responsibility of changing.

A Question of Values

From the foregoing, we can see that the whole process is a question of values. Jesus explained that where our heart is that is where our treasure will be. This means that we will value what interests us, or as Swedenborg puts it, whatever is our chief love will affect our choice and decisions, but we do not recognize it, as we are unaware. At any given point on the journey, we would act according to our personal interests and these will change as we change. When the focus is on external success or some type of worldly attainment we will act from that viewpoint. The more we identify with the body the more materialistic and worldly will the choices be. If we act from the motive of desire and sense gratification, our choice will be on that level. When we operate from the ego standpoint, our values will change again. Eventually, when we have transcended the ego our viewpoint will be from a consideration of our identity as a soul but this is not likely to be the initial position. Even when a monk has renounced the world, and presumably dismissed the demands of the desire nature and the arrogance of the ego there can still be problems and difficulties. Entering a monastery or an ashram is not an automatic jump to the elevated status of spiritual-Self awareness. Whatever we do we take our attitudes with us and our private intent may quite well elude us.

Many of the points in the Yoga and Buddhist teachings can equally well make sense in terms of psychology or philosophy. In many cases, they seem to be nothing more than obvious common sense. Yet, they are not quite so obvious otherwise the seekers would not have such a hard time in breaking down the ego and developing a change of attitude. This also applies with the Christian teaching and many are reluctant to accept it. The reason for this is that the ego resists because it is not eager to accept anything that suggests any type of discipline. Even with Arjuna, he only said, "I will do thy bidding" at the very end of the *Bhagavad Gita*, after Krishna had explained the aims and problems and sixteen methods of overcoming the difficulties. Only when the individual has understood his position is he, or she, likely to accept guidance. In every approach, the individual has to make the effort and in the change of values, the acquisition of knowledge is the easiest stage. This is because a seeker can accumulate knowledge without any personal character discipline. However, the seeker will find that for any genuine progress there has to be an application of the teaching because knowledge alone will achieve very little. All the conflict arises from this because the recalcitrant ego balks at such a task. The

second important stage of developing love and compassion is often easier to apply and if introduced at the beginning helps to soften the crystallized ego attitudes. Finally, the stage of total sacrifice and surrender is even harder as this is the second dark night leading to complete union. We can here see why few manage to persist to that stage, but for seekers in the world knowledge and devotion are the best ways of developing a change of values. This leads to the heart centre and from that position, the seeker is better aware of the demands of the rest of the journey.

All these points generally meet with a lukewarm reception when first explained. Listeners often dismiss the suggestion of a change as preaching and we can see by consideration of the problem that the ego identity is reluctant to change. Lengthy dissertations on knowledge of the inner worlds is often acceptable because there is no demand for applied discipline, but direct statements that we can only improve our position by a radical change of character are usually not welcome. Analysis of these attitudes always comes back to the central question of personal values and when investigated show up as ego attitudes. From this we can see that a psychological approach can work on the problem just as well as a religious one. Yet, the approach has to go beyond intellectual psychology because there has to be a shift to a spiritual perspective. Because man is intrinsically a spiritual being a mental analytic approach can only go so far and there has to be a further step. This is the shift to the position of faith.

The Leap of Faith

Eventually, after using the rational mind to acquire knowledge and understand the problem the seeker has to transcend the mind. As explained earlier, this is the leap from a hundred foot pole and the crossing to the far shore described in Zen. The far shore is the furthest limits of the mind and the passage to it is the support of faith. This is not mere belief as might be the case at the beginning. Faith is an attitude of trust based on conviction derived from spiritual experience and not just a mental conditioning. Zen calls it an attitude of "No-Mind" and to the casual investigator this seems to be a meaningless phrase. We ask what is it we have to trust. The answer, in western terms, is the Spirit. As Kant made clear, the reason is set aside to allow faith to operate. We considered these points earlier and they are important because they are the final stepping-stones in crossing to the far shore. Completing the journey is not just a matter of knowledge or even devotion. The task demands a serious change of character and the ability to "be as a little child". This is not easy to achieve and the reliance on the unseen spirit seems to defy worldly conditioned concepts. The externally focused mind relies on confirmation by the senses but faith is beyond the senses. Buddhism refers to the ordinary mind as a sense, which relates to the main five senses that bind us to this world. Yet Zen says the ordinary mind *is* the Buddha Mind. This is their terminology for the Spirit because there is no adequate translation from the Sanskrit. Their view is that the Spirit is all embracing and as Saint Paul tried to tell us, we live, move, and have our being in God. In other words our spirit is part of the Supreme Spirit and we should therefore trust the Spirit. This is the faith that will move mountains and is the reason why faith and devotion achieve more than any amount of book knowledge on the path to the spiritual kingdom. We

may even learn all about inner worlds as well as the external universe and master the most recondite philosophies but it will avail nothing if we do not apply the teaching and make the final leap. After all, what good is it if we know everything but do not discover our own spiritual identity?

Finally, as an attempt to sum it up briefly, the frame of reference is quite simple, and rests on three points. These are as follows.

- There are two points of identity. These are the ego and the spirit or soul. Our task is to transcend the ego and experience our spiritual identity as a living soul.
- There are five areas of consciousness. These are the physical, the emotional, the mental, intelligence and spirit. We have to evolve through these by stages, and we can help the process by meditation and discipline.
- There are seven specific centres of consciousness in the human being, and these relate to seven distinct dimensions, known as 'mansions', or 'lokas', and we have to work our way through them.

There is no way of demonstrating these points by an objective method. The only way is by some form of ordered introspection, or inward looking. The greatest barrier is the restriction of the senses and identification with the physical body. The later chapters further emphasize these points.

CHAPTER TEN – THE NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE

Near-Death and Meditation

Comprehending the nature of the soul is particularly important in understanding near-death experiences. These are so remarkably similar to some meditation experiences that they deserve special examination. Yoga teachings say they can indicate the level at which the meditation process is functioning.

As indicated earlier, the devotee of Jnana Yoga is able to ascertain his progress by knowing the signs and inner experiences that occur with each stage. On the other hand, Zen advocates prefer to ignore these subtle experiences, because they may distract the devotee from his main purpose. Nevertheless, all seekers count certain special experiences as significant. The accounts of near-death experiences are in this useful category. However, these descriptions mostly show that the subjects are not aware of the meaning of the experiences, largely due to a general lack of understanding of the nature of the soul. A review of these experiences shows how they relate to meditation phenomena and the awakening of soul awareness.

The Experiences

This selection of near-death experiences is mainly from a research study, by Dr Cherie Sutherland. They are described in her book, *Transformed by the Light, (Life after near-death experiences)*, (1992). The book jacket claims that “millions of people world-wide have had a near-death experience.” Interestingly, the cover of *The Shorter Heaven and Hell* (Swedenborg) states, “thousands of people have had amazing near-death experiences, and in a TV documentary, it stated that well over two million had been reported in the US. Either way it now seems far more common than previously thought, and Dr Sutherland had no difficulty in finding examples. She was particularly interested in the *after effects* of the near-death experiences. Her comments are of special significance because her own experience enables her to speak with authority.

The most common after effect is that the individuals felt impelled to take a more spiritual path in their lives. In this consideration of these experiences, relevant comments are included as a means of comparison. The basis of these comments derives from collected accounts of experiences during the meditation process. There is a striking similarity between some of the experiences and the after-effects of specific meditation “high points”. Dr Sutherland’s book is ideal for this comparison because it specifically deals with the after-effects.

Seeing Light

Many of the people interviewed by Dr Sutherland reported seeing a light and some actually entered the light. According to Yoga studies and observation, there are several types of light associated with spiritual development. The first light, not always well defined, is that of a glow. There can also be a sight of the “Bright Pearl”, or point of brightness, described by Muktananda and Lin-Chi, as well as a candle flame light. The inner sight of such lights indicates a certain stage of spiritual awakening. Zen and Yoga processes particularly describe the tiny pinpoint of light, which indicates a specific beginning of inner awakening. The ultimate final light phenomenon is that of illumination, but this is not usually associated with near-death experiences. The term “seeing the light” may therefore mean different things to different people. The participants did not know exactly what they were seeing at the time. The intention here is to clarify that situation.

Medical Explanations

Claims of visions of the shining being, during a near death crisis, evoke cautious comments from the medical profession. However, clinical explanations of the near-death phenomena do not and cannot explain the experiences or the related phenomena. This is because such explanations are operating from an inaccurate premise. The suggestion that dream like functions of the brain cause these hallucinatory experiences results from the concept that the body is the primary reality. The question remains as to who is hallucinating. Alternatively, who is the witness? In near-death experiences, the body is inert. The witness of the phenomena is therefore something other than the body. The eastern teachings say that there is an inner self or soul. Yet the descriptions indicate that the

observed phenomenon is the soul. This suggests that the ego self is the observer, in a position that is temporarily independent of the body. Alternatively, it is the rational mind that can look both ways, i.e. inward and outward. Normally, it is focused outwards, but in some critical situations it can see inwards. The eastern teachings say that it is the lower self that is observing the higher self. These explanations obviously need clarification, and no doubt investigators will eventually ascertain exactly what occurs. In the meantime we have to take the esoteric explanations as a working hypothesis that needs consideration. In any case, the experiences are real enough to the persons concerned. Apart from that, the experiences of similar phenomena during meditation are not dream like experiences. The individual is fully conscious in a state where the busy mind has temporarily been switched off. The meditation process goes beyond consciousness to a state of inner awareness.

Survival After-Death

The subjects of the near-death experiences considered that their experience indicated that there is survival after death. Apparently, researchers do not pursue this line of inquiry, yet the experiences indicate that there are other modes of existence than the body. We have to keep asking, *who* has such an existence. Zen asks, "What was your original face before you were born?" Why not ask, "What is your face after you have died?" What were you before you had a body? What are you when you do not have a body? What is it that has a body? The answer is that it is the soul.

Yoga investigations, ongoing for at least five thousand years, do not support the view that the physical brain creates consciousness. Anyone prepared to apply the controlled introspection recommended in Buddhism or the applied disciplines of Raja Yoga soon discovers that the body is not the creator of conscious awareness, and that there is some other factor. The investigations repeatedly indicate that the other factor is the soul, and that the soul exists after the death of the body and what is more it is consciously aware.

After-Effects

According to Dr Sutherland, the after-effects were more objectively observable, and so noticeable that they were quite easy to define. They included personality changes and new values that led to value clashes with others. In this area was an indifference to accepted culture patterns. In addition, there was a new or increased desire for knowledge. On this it should be noted that the awakening of the Kundalini energy, no matter how slight, prompted a search for knowledge.

Dr Sutherland noted an increase in psychic phenomena. This indicates that there was a shift in the level of consciousness, and in Yoga terms it was probably a stimulation of the third chakra. These changes created a different view of religion, and here again this occurs with the awakening of the Kundalini. In some cases, these changes led to a break up of a marriage.

To reinforce the comments, it can be repeated that in the Yoga systems, one system more noticeably matches all the effects than any other method. It is Kundalini Yoga. This process of awakening the spiritual energy is a means of attaining a hastened experience of the Soul or spiritual-

Self and the inner worlds. All of the above changes are in reports of Kundalini effects. Distress at trying to fit into accepted moulds is very noticeable, and strong attempts to find answers mark the search for knowledge.

Many people who meditate unwittingly awaken the spirit to the extent that they begin to fit into this class. The flow of seekers to India is not just a by product of social fashion, nor even a curiosity trip. It is the soul trying to bring the physical person into a state of spiritual reality. Both the “near-death” seekers and the Yoga seekers are following a natural process, in which the outside world of ceaseless activity loses its appeal and the seeker begins to look within. As Patanjali says, “It is natural to seek higher consciousness”.

The Out-of-Body-Experience

In some cases, there are new phenomena associated with the out-of-body experience. This included reports of travelling down a dark tunnel, moving towards a bright light, encountering dead friends or relatives and seeing a “Being of Light”.

There is not one simple explanation for the out-of-the-body experience. There are two basic experiences. One relates to the outside world that we are familiar with, and the other is an inner experience. The outside experience allows the inner self to see things and people in this world. A common example is that of a person undergoing an operation and watching the surgeons operating on the inert body. There may be “astral travel”, i.e. an out-of-the-body experience in the known physical landscape. External astral travels, called “going out”, is a psychic phenomenon that is not highly valued in terms of Yoga and Buddhist insight.

In the other experience the individual travels in the inner worlds and moves up the levels or different dimensions indicated in the lists previously discussed. The inner travel is a more spiritually oriented activity whereby the lower point of identity, i.e. the ego-self is moving up the levels of consciousness before identifying with the true Self or Soul. This is the real shift of consciousness and is the first important objective in both Buddhism and Yoga.

The “Being of Light”, or “Shining Being” is the spiritual Self or Soul, and seeing it is an extremely important step on the path of Self-realization or soul awareness. There were also references in the descriptions of a border or boundary. This has two positions. One is when the ego-self has gone as far as it can go, and the second is when the spiritual-Self or Soul has reached the limits of its individual existence and is on the verge of merging with the “Father”. In Yoga terms, this is the highest level of duality. Beyond this level is the oneness described in both Buddhism and Yoga. The person experiencing near-death sees the first boundary, that of the limits of the ego-self as the lower point of identity.

The dark tunnel often mentioned is the connection between the lower self and the higher self, according to observations by enlightened Yogis. Hence, the bright light at the far end, which some people see in meditation or in a dream. Sometimes it appears as a green tunnel or narrow passageway,

and indicates a connection with the heart centre. Seeing dead friends or relatives is a basic inner experience on the mid-astral level. In terms of sequence, the experiences are as follows,

<i>EXPERIENCE</i>	<i>LEVEL</i>
<i>External out-of-the-body</i>	<i>Lower Astral (Psychic)</i>
<i>Seeing dead friends</i>	<i>Mid and Higher Astral</i>
<i>Moving in a tunnel</i>	<i>Higher Astral</i>
<i>Inner out-of-the-body</i>	<i>Astral / Mental</i>
<i>Seeing a bright light</i>	<i>Mental Limit</i>
<i>Seeing a Shining Being</i>	<i>Spiritual</i>

A comparison of this table with those already presented shows the sequence of experience. In simple terms, the ego-self is moving upwards through the levels and experiencing phenomena on each level until it reaches the limit of its ego-self. In terms of the five levels, the ego-self operates in the lower three levels of mental, astral and physical, and the higher self operates in the upper levels of Spirit and Intelligence and the higher part of the Mind. The tunnel is the connection between these two levels and general psychic experiences are in the astral levels. However, this is a big area containing more than one sub-level, and specific placing is difficult, because many of the experiences are “correspondences”, and not actual events. In more specific terms the consciousness is moving up through the chakras, which are the centres of consciousness. This is a more definite way of considering the phenomena, although it is still very abstract.

A phenomenon experienced by one person was a “life review”, but meditation does not appear to evoke this type of life review. However, there is a growing awareness of past actions in the outside world. Gradually the person becomes aware that these actions are the product of ego drives with dubious attitudes and motives. This marks a period of retrospective soul searching.

After Effects

Dr Sutherland reports that following the near-death experience, the individuals mostly found it better to say nothing about their experiences. This is equally so with meditation insights. However, meditation students are usually better informed on these matters as they have made a conscious decision to take the meditation path, and read appropriate books, such as those on Yoga. They generally interact with others who have some knowledge about inner experiences. In general, the meditation devotees are initially only interested in the exalted feelings. Only when inner tensions

develop from the conflict between the ego-self and the spiritual self, or soul, does the search for knowledge begin. This is out of desperation to ease the “ego agony”.

The reports in Dr Sutherland’s book state that most people have little knowledge about near-death experiences, and the same is true of meditation processes and meditation experiences. Seekers begin seeking because of the inner pressures of the soul slowly asserting its existence. The individual then “turns round” and looks within. Today’s modern outgoing society sees this as abnormal, and the seeker often has to readjust without any external support. It is usually a difficult period.

Fear of Death

Among the near-death subjects, the most widely noticed change was the absence of a fear of death. This is also noticeable with meditation, as the inner experiences build up an awareness of the reality of the soul, and awareness that there are different levels of reality. Once the individual attains the initial experience and is inwardly certain that the body is not the self, it becomes clear that the physical death is nothing more than a transition. Zen refers to the body as a corpse whether living or dead, and typically asks the question, “who is dragging this corpse around?” Upon discovering the answer, any fear of death evaporates.

Development of a spiritual outlook

The development of a spiritual outlook was a noticeable after-effect, because in the near-death experience the individuals have a spiritual experience on one level or another. The near-death experience is therefore a catalyst for spiritual development. Meditation devotees are usually spiritually inclined before they commence any meditation. They choose a meditation system for that reason. The development of a spiritual philosophy is therefore a progressive advancement of their starting point in the experience.

Discrimination between religion and spirituality

Many of the near-death accounts related to a later analysis of religious values. The subjects lose interest in conventional religious teachings. This is a recognizable meditation effect. Orthodox religions begin to appear as rigid, restrictive, and conformist. In the meditation process new values appear and are confirmed by the experiences that follow.

Meditation devotees usually have an advantage in that they have access to references on the subject. Most Yoga and Buddhist groups have their own libraries and some have an extensive collection of books on all aspects. As the meditation devotees tend to investigate other methods, they eventually become more informed.

Interest in Meditation (after near-death experience)

The accounts indicated that many who had the experience eventually adopted some form of meditation. For meditation devotees the meditation experiences lead to a consideration of life after death. Students of meditation do not generally turn to meditation because of one type of experience.

There is a wide range of initial stimuli. However, it is often a life crisis, or perhaps a unique spiritual experience, which provides the initial motivation to meditate, and the near death experience obviously does that.

Psychic Phenomena

More than one near-death subject mentioned meeting dead relatives, according to Dr Sutherland. Most of the individuals did not quite know what to make of it. There are accounts of devotees in Yoga ashrams having the same type of experience. In the table of levels, such encounters are in the “astral” area and Yoga advises transcending the astral, as the spiritual levels are beyond that. In terms of the centres in the physical body, or chakras, the astral centre is between the heart and the navel. The highest spiritual centers are in the head, and Saint Teresa of Avila, in *The Interior Castle*, says the Lord is in the uppermost part of the head. Therefore, there is a distinct difference between psychic experiences and spiritual experiences.

The reports state that half the participants interviewed mentioned “The Shining Being”, but did not have much idea what they were seeing. The accounts indicate that they did not know whether they had seen God or something else. Both these points are therefore worth further clarification. The Shining Being, as already pointed out, is the true Self or Soul, and the witness of this phenomenon is the ego-self that is temporarily free from the body. Seeing the “Shining Being” means an initial contact with the higher self. Such experiences usually lead to a more definite search for spiritual truths than the lesser experiences.

Other Types of Psychic Phenomena

Other phenomena mentioned by the near-death subjects deserve some comment, which may be useful. Dreams can be helpful, but it is important to try to understand the level that is being experienced, and to recognize whom the various characters represent. Most dreams are symbolic and assuming they are actual events may be misleading, although some dreams are a reflection of conditions in the world we know.

Telepathy, clairvoyance and picking up other people’s feelings seem quite common. There is a sequence in these abilities. The first, of picking up other people’s feelings, is “clairsentience”. It can be very distressing and the individual affected has to learn how to shut it off at will. Moving the focus of consciousness into a higher center does this.

The second psychic phenomenon is “clairaudience” and has hardly any merit at all. It is dangerous, as there is no means of knowing who or what, is speaking. Zen warns strongly against “voices and wondrous sights”. St Teresa indicates that the “locutions” are a dubious source of inspiration. It is only a phase and it is best to ignore it.

Clairvoyance is next but this is also dubious. The German mystic Rudolf Steiner warned that people might see something that they would rather not have seen.

Telepathy or knowing people's thoughts is usually next. This also is a difficult area. It is wise to ask, are we better off for knowing such things?

Seeing auras is also on the list for some people and this is probably a very useful ability. By practicing, it is possible to learn what the colors and lights mean, and obtain a clear insight into a person's character. Other people do not appreciate this ability, and again it is wiser to say nothing about it. If a modern day Swedenborg said half the things Swedenborg said, no one would believe him. Even St Teresa, writing with the approval of the Church, complained that her counselors could not accept anything out of the ordinary. Buddha said that the best method is intuition. This conveys an inner certainty without the outward personal difficulties.

Apart from the phenomena mentioned above, there is the ability to see things at a distance and to see things that are about to happen in the near future. As already described, these are the siddhis, and are referred to as "the powers". Both Buddhist and Yoga teachings give them little attention, saying they create obstacles to true awareness of the Self-Nature, or Universal Spirit.

Cross Cultural Evidence

A cross cultural comparison by Dr Allan Kellehear in his book *Experiences Near Death (1996)* offers different insights into the phenomenon of a near-death experience. The author compares experiences from all over the world, looking for similarities, and differences, and makes some pertinent comments on how cultural expectations affect the experience. He indicates that some subjects probably see what they expect to see but notes the similarities even where there is no cultural similarity in the social conditions. This shows a common substratum that the subjects experience. He questions whether only medical or religious views can define such experiences and takes a sociological view. In this, he relates the experience to a crisis, especially where there is some trauma from external conditions. He quotes solitary confinement as one cause of a near-death experience. This is of interest because solitary confinement is a partial deprivation of the senses. Meditation disciplines aim at transcending the senses and body identification. This isolation is how the inner experiences of the bright light, a being of light and the tunnel etc are sometimes experienced, as for example, with Saint John of the Cross, when he was in prison.

Dr Kellehear's findings support Dr Sutherland's standpoint and show that there are definitely deep after effects from the experiences of western subjects. However, there is another implied aspect that is also significant. This is that some native cultures regularly attain "out-of-the-body" experiences by the use of drugs, as with certain shaman practices. Such subjects would not then see a near-death experience in the same way, and there would probably be no following trauma. Nevertheless, an investigation of shaman experiences shows that they are generally *only psychic*. That is they are not necessarily genuine spiritual experiences. The reports in the books (by Harner, Larsen and Kalweit) on shaman experiences indicate that there are different levels of experience. Some shamans only operate on the level of animal spirits, others rely on help from an ancestor and a few rare ones appeal to the

Great Spirit for guidance and help. There are also other degrees of shaman ability. The point here is that one near-death experience may only relate to a lower psychic level, while others are more subtly spiritual. There are near-death experiences describing heavenly scenes and near death experiences describing hellish scenes. It is therefore inaccurate to assume that there is only one door into one other dimension. There are different degrees and levels, and controlled meditation leads to an experience of them. As most researchers do not approach the subject by that process, they have to rely on reports. This would be more informative with an adequate frame of reference, such as in the Yoga and Buddhist descriptions. There would then be a better means of evaluating the individual experiences. Even so, it is still doubtful whether any researcher can evaluate something without the personal experience. How can we evaluate subjective experience by objective criteria not based on actual experience? Anthropologists on field research often take the specific herb drug to experience the effects, but near-death investigators cannot do that. As already mentioned, they are trying to describe the inside of the house from the outside, without going into the house. Although meditation disciplines can resolve this problem, it requires years of intense effort. The objective is to attain a level of insight beyond the psychic level of shamanism.

The critical point is that there are different levels of experience, and there are two distinct points of identity. The tunnel or passageway and narrow lane etc is the connection between the two main levels and therefore also between the two points of identity. The core position is that man is a spiritual being and all the experience relates to that *on one level or another*. Some are easier to describe than others are and one may be spontaneous whereas another is under control, as with ordered meditation. The two following examples show how there can be a spontaneous experience that is related to ordered contemplation and meditation.

Near Death of a Yogi and a Mystic

To end this section there are two most remarkable accounts of near death experiences. The first is of Ramana Maharshi. Ramana was born in 1879 and died on Easter Friday in 1950. He lived in the south of India and had Christian values. In his mid-teens he abruptly left home, leaving a note to say that he was going "in search of my Father." He set out for a temple near a place that mysteriously attracted him. Eventually, on his arrival, he said, "Father, I have come." Thereafter he suffered many hardships as he struggled with his inner spiritual experiences. One day, when returning to the cave where he lived and meditated, he had a remarkable near-death experience which he later described. It is below in his words.

"Suddenly the view of nature in front of me disappeared and was covered up like a sheet of white cloth. But the disappearance of the one and the appearance of the other were gradual, so part of one and part of the other appeared before me at the same time. Soon after, the view of nature disappeared completely and I stopped walking. I resumed the walk as the sight of the whiteness disappeared completely. It happened a second time and my physical weakness increased. I had therefore to lean

on the tortoise rock for support. As it happened again for a third time, I sat on the rock. All around me was the view of the white cloth. My head was reeling. The circulation of the blood and the beating of the heart stopped. My body began to get dark in colour, same as what happens to a dead body. As that slowly increased Vasu (a friend) thought that I was dead and began to weep, and embraced me. I was conscious of the change in the colour of my body, of Vasu's embrace and the shivering of his body. In addition, the talk of the others around me and of my hands and feet getting chill, and the stopping of the beats of the heart, but I had no fear in me. The flow of my thoughts and the consciousness of the Self were not lost and I was not worried about the condition of my body. Suddenly energy permeated throughout my body. The circulation of the blood and the beating of the heart commenced."

(*Sayings of Sri Ramana Maharshi*. Further details of Ramana Maharshi are in Chapters 12 and 13).

The other amazing description is by that remarkable western mystic Emanuel Swedenborg; details of his life and teaching were in Chapter Eight. His original account of the experience is in *Heaven and Hell* (449), translated from the Latin. This extract, from the more modern and abridged presentation by Julian Duckworth and Trevor Moffat provides easier reading. Swedenborg writes about the after life experience that he says happens to everybody, saying;

"I myself was given the experience of this awakening which enables me now to describe how it happens. I went into an unconscious state as far as my physical senses were concerned, and I was virtually like a person who was dying. Yet, all my inner senses remained unimpaired so that I was able to see and remember everything that happened to me – things that happen to people when they are awake after death.

I noticed that my breathing was almost non-existent but that the inward breathing of the spirit continued, with a slight and still breathing of the body. After this, there was a communication between my heartbeat and the celestial kingdom, because that kingdom corresponds to the heart. I saw angels from the kingdom with me; some were at a distance and two were sitting near my head. This led to the removal of all my feelings of affection and yet my thought and perception continued. I was like this for some hours. The spirits who were around me then left saying that I was dead."

(*The Shorter Heaven and Hell*, P 92-93, other details followed).

Swedenborg goes on to describe other details of heaven and hell. Most of these were from his further inner experiences. One important point common to these amazingly similar experiences is that they were not the result of a near-death situation, as with an accident or a serious operation. Ramana Maharshi's experience was more spontaneous, but Swedenborg's appears more controlled. This is the

standard of all Swedenborg's experiences as the earlier descriptions indicate. A further evaluation of these different near death experiences is in the next chapter.

Saint Teresa of Avila also refers to a similar experience, but she did not describe it in detail.

CHAPTER ELEVEN – TWO BIRDS ON ONE TREE

Who is the Witness?

The near-death experience gives an extra insight into the nature of the soul, but as we have seen, the experiences are not completely revealing unless there is some knowledge of the inner activities of the soul. The most important of the near-death experiences is the vision of the "Shining Being". Reports in other texts dealing with after-death experiences show a common reaction. All the reports indicate wonder, astonishment, awe and amazement, with varying conclusions, usually according to cultural trends. However, not one report posed the question, "who is watching this inner experience?"

The Bhagavad Gita uses an analogy of Two Birds on One Tree; one bird is enjoying the fruit and the other is watching. The bird enjoying the fruits is the ego and the bird watching is the soul. If we analyse this situation, we can eliminate at least one potential witness. The body-person on the operating table, at the crash scene, or wherever there is the near death experience, is the first we can dismiss. In this situation, the body is unconscious, that is, without consciousness. As far as the body is concerned the consciousness has been switched off, but it has only been switched off from awareness of the three dimensional world in which we spend our waking consciousness. The consciousness is still operating in another dimension.

This "switching off" of consciousness is happening all the time. It happens every night when we fall asleep, but most people are unaware of it. Some people have dreams but they usually only operate on a very restricted level. Generally most dreams are "reflection dreams", which reflect fragments of daytime impressions, or anxieties. They are "surface dreams" and are not significant. Other dreams are experiences on an inner level, but most people are unable to "bring them through". It takes years of practice to keep the focus and know the level of the "dream". The ability to control the focus is "continuity of consciousness". In this condition, the body is asleep, with the physical focus of consciousness knowingly switched off. The inner-self is able to observe and remember all that occurs in some other dimension. Of course, no one can provide objective evidence to support such statements. In the realm of "many mansions", objective details are impossible.

These experiences show one common aspect: consciousness. This consciousness has to operate through a focal point. Switching off the external brain focal point prevents consciousness

operating through the body, and we say the body is unconscious. This is true, but the central entity is in another dimension.

This focussing in another dimension is an effect in the meditation process. Meditation quiets the mind to a state where it is as quiescent as possible. At this point, the consciousness can shift and other worlds can be experienced. Swedenborg had such remarkable control that he could do this at will. Yogi or Zen monks are not particularly concerned with doing this, because their focus is on attaining an awareness of the true inner identity. Swedenborg undoubtedly attained this; otherwise, he could not have penetrated the higher levels.

On this inner journey, the specific task is transcending the ego. We have advice to experience our spiritual identity, and then experience the nature of that identity. It follows from this that the stages are,

- To become aware of the ego,
- Transcend the ego and become aware of the spiritual Self
- Then, if the seeker wishes to do so, penetrate into the very nature of the Self.

From this, we can establish reference points to ascertain who is observing. Then we can see who the Shining Being really is. To do so, we have to return to the Zen standpoint of the Host and the Guest. This is also called the Fundamental and the Phenomenal.

<i>TRUE SELF</i>	<i>EGO</i>
<i>Fundamental</i>	<i>Phenomenal</i>
<i>Host</i>	<i>Guest</i>
<i>Prince</i>	<i>Minister</i>

It is essential to grasp the proposition that there are two points of identity, the ego-self and the spiritual Self. Rejecting that standpoint leaves no hope of any explanation. The conventional view that the body is the real man is wrong. In the above table, the Fundamental is the Spirit, or the Soul, and the Phenomenal is the extension known as the ego. The body is only the three dimensional sheath for use in this worldly dimension, and when the focus of consciousness is shifted away, it operates in another dimension through one of the other “bodies” or sheaths. Whether in a near-death state, or in “dreams”, or in subtle meditation experiences, the important questions are, What am I seeing? Who is the witness? What level am I on?

To make this clearer, we can now consider the progressive steps of the Ts’ao Tsung Sect as described by Charles Luk in dealing with the Prince and the Minister. The description here is adapted and simplified because the subject is so enigmatic. The first step is to experience the initial stage as the Guest or Minister and then progress through the variations to the final state of spiritual awareness.

Other teachings use different examples and different names, but they are all saying the same thing. It is very difficult for the western mind to grasp this concept, because the western view identifies with the body so much. Some say that the soul is a myth, or only a superstitious concept. The spiritual situation is that the soul is not quite the simple structure that early Christian thinkers imagined. Furthermore, the shift from body identification to soul awareness follows a structured sequence. Plants do not burst into blossom as soon as we plant the seed and neither does the soul.

The Stages in Zen

Zen describes the steps and stages in terms of the Guest and the Host. In sequence they are as follows:

- Guest meets Guest.

This means that the seeker experiences initial identity as the ego. Some Yoga texts describe this as an key realization, and it is a conscious awareness of individual existence. It is only a beginning, and in effect is the first step in transcending the everyday body identification. There is then an awareness of individuality not based on the body. It is also a big step toward realizing “I am not a person”. The sense of “person-hood” is a combination of ego and body identification. One of the specific Zen stages is the realization that identity is not a person. This initial stage gives a much more definite sense of confidence. The mentally focused individual may apply the new sense of forcefulness to “success” in the external world rather than to further spiritual action. This drive activates many “successful” people, but it is outgoing only, and not directed to inner development. For the seeker, a further experience follows.

- Guest sees Host

This is the experience of the seeker, as an ego identity, seeing the Host, true Self, or Soul. The awakened ego sees the Shining Being. This is the specific meaning of the near-death “Being of Light” experience. Meditation and other methods can also produce this effect. However, the individual still operates in the ego as an identity, and the next shift to the higher position takes repeated meditation and effort. In becoming aware of this position, an individual may perhaps take the view that he, or she, is becoming aware of his, or her, higher Self. The person might then speak of “my higher Self”, or “my other self”, and so on. This is well enough, as a start, but the fact is that it is not the ordinary self, or ego-person-self that has a higher self. It is the higher Self that has an ego-person self and a permanent shift of consciousness in this direction must occur.

Zen says, “remember the essence of mind at all times.” The essence of mind is the Spirit, and its focal point is the spiritual-Self. We therefore have to focus in that viewpoint and learn to take the Host position. We are first aware of it as something separate, but eventually we become aware of it by *being* it. We can then say, “I am that Self” and the experiences of seeing the Host and the Guest are steps towards this.

- Host sees Guest

The Host seeing the Guest represents a temporary shift in the two points of identity. The consciousness focuses in the True self and identifies briefly with the Shining Being. The devotee who has enough knowledge and trained awareness might say, "I am the Shining Being" and realize "I am not the ego", because he is observing the ego.

This is theoretically the case, but in the new position, a clear view of the ego-self is difficult to achieve and understand. If the individual can grasp this "objective" view of the ego, he is then aware that there are indeed two points of identity. The realization gradually strengthens until a more definite shift of focus takes place. Lin Chi's remarks (in Chapter Three) described this process. Charles Luk said the battle between the Guest and the Host might be short or long, because the ego (guest) does not wish to concede authority to the Self (Host). Eventually the next step occurs.

- Host meets Host

The Host meeting the Host is the true Self-realization in which the seeker knows intuitively that the core identity is truly that of the Soul, Self, Prince, or Host. The awareness is then "I am the Self". The Host has become that Self in conscious awareness. This experience may occur before that of the Host seeing the Guest. There is not a strict sequence as to how the seeker realizes his new identity, and some seekers have advanced flashes long before they have a firm experience. When this position stabilizes, the seeker has overcome the shifting positions as described above. The next step is even more abstract.

- Host transcends Host

Zen scriptures describe the Host transcending the Host in more enigmatic terms, expressing it as "I am not a Living Being," (i.e. The Shining Being). This means that the seeker jumps past the individual Self-identity as the Soul or Prince, and experiences the Self-Nature. In Yoga terms they would say, "I am That". The seeker realizes the inner nature is the same as that of the Supreme Spirit, as if one drop of water realizes it is the same as the water in the ocean.

With intense devotional methods, this experience may overwhelm the Yogi so that he has difficulty in refraining from enthusiastic assertions of his unique identity. In some cases, it is highly dramatic but usually it is a gradual and almost imperceptible change, especially when it first begins to occur. The final definite signs of this stage are in the descriptions of Zen experiences.

A simplified version has the following steps; I am – (an ego), then, I am a Living Spirit, and finally, I am part of the Greater Spirit.

The Dual Identity

The above explanations indicate that there are indeed two points of identity. The Vedanta history, dating back at least five thousand years, traditionally kept these details secret. Only selected

disciples learned of them by word of mouth. In this present age, modern translations of ancient manuscripts are beginning to explain these mysteries. In the area of Zen Buddhism, Charles Luk has especially devoted his efforts to translating the ancient Tao and Ch'an writings so that their truths will not be lost. In parallel, new works are also appearing. By comparing these, and matching them with the western writings, we can confirm these truths. The simplest framework is that there are two points of identity and three stages of self-realization, i.e. the ego self, the spiritual Self and the God-Self. Apart from this, there are five main levels of consciousness, related to the seven centers of consciousness.

In general, most religions do not aim at the final stage of God realization. Most of them put the emphasis on the heart center, although they do not always speak in such terms. There are various reasons why this is so. To start with, the attainment of self-awareness at the ego level is relatively simple, and the attainment of the heart level usually goes with it. The firm attainment of the heart level requires some purification, and controls of the ego self. Therefore, it is a good position. From the heart position it is possible to experience the stage of "Guest sees Host", that is the ego self becomes aware of the higher Self. There is then some broader awareness of the existence of the Lord, in any terms.

At this stage, there are no serious difficulties and no real distress, because we can attain the heart center without undue effects. These usually start when there is a conscious effort to transcend the ego and make a definite change to the Host position, as described by Charles Luk. In terms of other teachings, the soul can then receive instruction, after death, as a means of moving to a more celestial heaven. In Yoga terms, the Self receives help to evolve and moves to a higher loka. In Christian terms, the Prodigal Son can move right into the Father's House. In a more combined description, from St Teresa's *The Interior Castle*, the soul can move from the fourth mansion to the seventh mansion, where it can commune with the Lord. This, as St Teresa said, is in the uppermost part of the head, i.e. in the Sahasrar center where access to Paramatma is possible (See Figure 6). If we consider the Guest and Host in this manner, we can see why the heart center is so important. As we are here using Zen to endorse these points, some further details on Zen advice, and the experiences of Chinese Zen Masters may be helpful.

From the above, we can see that the ego is the initial observer, after it has become self aware on its own level. The next step is a shift of identification to that of the soul as the observer. This is as far as many teachers go, because the rest is too difficult for seekers who live in the world of normal activity. The move towards a universal self realization usually follows a complete renunciation of worldly attachments.

Descriptions of Zen Awakenings

Charles Luk's work, *Chinese Meditation*, is especially useful. In the opening paragraph, he says that theory is useless if we do not put it into practice. "If we do not have an experience of it, it will be alien to us and we will never awaken to it in spite of our book learning." On the next page, he quotes Lin-Chi, who says, "There is not a living being that cannot be liberated".

Luk explains in detail that the first step is to control the wandering mind and says the great teachers only want you to look into your Self, meaning your own Soul. The greatest obstacle to this is the tendency to preserve the ego. In other words, we value our own concept of ourselves. We have to overcome this preoccupation with the worldly sense of self by our own efforts. This is a recurring theme, and is the basis of the necessary approach. The key factor is that all these disciplines are an aid to individual evolution. The whole process of human experience is for the evolution of humanity to a more enlightened state. The meditation systems are a type of hot house method of increasing the growth of awareness. All mankind will and must evolve eventually, or be discarded. These systems are therefore a means of helping individual seekers to evolve.

Among the general descriptions in these writings are references to individual experiences. Luk quotes the experiences of Master Han Shan (1546-1623) and explains that the Master used the koan, "who is the repeater of Buddha's name?" chanted repeatedly. By this method he succeeded in attaining singleness of thought and did not notice the presence of the community for three months. Han Shan was twenty-eight years old at the time. One day he went into the mountains and his head felt as if it burst open with a loud noise like thunder. His perception of his surroundings disappeared. This state of void lasted for half an hour. Then he experienced an indescribable sense of weightlessness and bliss.

Charles Luk refers to the "Ch'an illness". Sometimes, after a major awakening, there is an irresistible urge to dance, jump, gesticulate, hum, talk and act strangely without any apparent reason. Han Shan cured himself of this by meditating for five days and nights without stopping, after which he again experienced exceptional bliss. This restless effect is not described as an illness in Yoga, but there are references to the urge to dance.

There is also a description of Master San Feng's awakening. He lived in the same period, (1573-1635). The description is similar, but brief. He also mentions a noise like a clap of thunder. This occurrence is of special importance because it happens during the final realization. An intense light often accompanies it, and both St Teresa and Emanuel Swedenborg as well as Yoga writings refer to an intense brightness. "Illumination" is the technical term for experiencing this light.

The same references mention profuse perspiration, which always precedes awakening. As already noted, the follower of Jnana Yoga can follow his progress because he learns about the steps and stages in order to recognize the signs. These signs are important in the sense that an absence of such an experience indicates that the seeker has not yet attained the final stage. The other signs discussed previously might not all occur, but the final stage is quite clear. Luk also lists various troubles that hinder the seeker. These are desire, anger and resentment, drowsiness and doubt caused by stupidity; and restlessness and grief. Stupidity and ignorance are the main faults, because they lead to the others.

Charles Luk makes special mention of the method of faith, which he says is appropriate for people in all occupations. The method consists of silently repeating the Buddha's name, and is similar to calling on the Lord's Name in any religious system. Luk says, "Faith alone can enable one to enter

the Buddha Dharma and without faith, no benefit can derive from it". Entering the Buddha Dharma is another name for entering the Kingdom of Heaven. Combining these remarks about faith with Patanjali's Sutra that says, "the shortest method is intense devotion to Ishvara", (the Lord) provides a unique method. In this context, Christian devotees can also attain these experiences, and it is likely many do, but they often remain silent. Luk makes the point that attainment is realizable by many methods, and one should not assume that there is only one way.

According to Luk, various encouraging signs indicate the final realization is in progress. He says the student feels light in body and mind, has auspicious dreams, sees remarkable things, develops intuition and is able to penetrate the meaning of the scriptures. Regarding the last stage, Luk explains that the Ultimate Mind is inscrutable and that the Eternal is indescribable. However, there is a more definite awareness, after what he refers to as the "Alaya Vijnana". In comparative terms, this is the Buddhi intuitional level, the stage beyond Manas, or Mind. He says many reach this stage but are unable to progress further because of inherent faults or wrong methods.

Charles Luk quotes the writings of Yin Shih Tsu, who lived at the beginning of the twentieth century and wrote a number of books on the subject of enlightenment. His remarks may appear strange to the uninformed reader, but they are invaluable for anyone who has awakened the Divine Fire or Kundalini energy. The following descriptions of subtle physical and nervous effects are highly significant to any seeker using a method that involves the awakening of the secret power of Kundalini Shakti. Master Yin Shih Tsu tells of experiencing vibrations in the lower belly, and explains that such vibrations indicate that there is adequate psychic force, (Shakti in Kundalini terms). Different experiences of this may be far apart in time, and vary with different students. Yin Shih Tsu describes how he eventually felt the heat (of the Shakti) rise to the top of his head, and makes the comment that all his old ailments disappeared. Elsewhere Yin Shih Tsu says that relief of illnesses precedes the final awakening, but this should not be the primary motive. He says many came to him for this reason, but out of thousands only one or two succeeded. This was because the majority did not manage to calm the mind.

Yin Shih Tsu says there are eight physical sensations caused by the flow of the energy. They are pain, itching, coldness, warmth, weightlessness, heaviness, roughness and smoothness. Involuntary movements occur with some of these sensations. There is a sensation of roughness and itching on the head, and there is a sensation of the hair being pulled out on the top, as well as a piercing sensation at the crown of the head. The increased flow of energy along the subtle nerves in the energy body, as well as in the physical nerves, causes this sensation.

Yin Shih Tsu explains that usually the unpleasant sensations are at the back of the head and sometimes to the side. On the other hand, sensations at the front of the crown are pleasant. He says that if the meditator succeeds in achieving complete stillness of mind, the energy will become bright and noticeable.

Another observable sign is an increase of saliva. He says that after the increase of saliva, he saw a red brightness. The vibrations became stronger and he felt the energy flow to the point between the eyebrows and then to the crown of the head.

The methods described sometimes refer to the energy going up through the occiput, at the back of the head, and to the energy going to the point between the eyebrows before proceeding to the crown. This indicates that there are two methods. The most frequent references, especially in Yoga, are to the path through the Ajna center, between the eyebrows. Students should investigate carefully, and ensure they are using a reliable and safe method.

Yin Shih Tsu goes on to describe the movement of the “bright pearl” and the way he helped to direct it to the crown of the head. He says he felt the bright pearl boring through the crown (the Brahmarandra). However, he still felt the presence of the ego. He describes various light phenomena and radiation, and finishes with the advice that it is wrong to keep the vital energy in the lower belly and stop it from flowing freely through the psychic channels.

Luk adds to this and again makes a specific reference to the difficulty of passing the occiput. On this, it is wise to ascertain if this is the best approach. The descriptions in other works suggest that there could be some overheating of the nerves in the occiput area, and it may be that this is related to the visual difficulties mentioned elsewhere. In comparisons, the direction of the energy to the point between the eyebrows seems to be better, but the indication is that the energy tries to take a short cut to the crown of the head. Yet, other references indicate that this is an older method that is not suitable for modern man. Alternatively it seems that the increase of the psychic nervous energy can occur naturally as life progresses, because spiritual evolution is a natural process. The point here is that there might be unusual physical effects that are clinically baffling.

Irrespective of these comments, Luk maintains that persistence will bring results. The prana (energy) eventually ascends to the crown of the head and the “circuit” is complete. Luk says that some of these happenings are independent of our will. St Teresa said the “grace of the Lord is necessary”, perhaps as a trigger, or to provide the inspiration to continue.

Finally, Luk makes reference to the spiritual insight of the inner self. He states that if the devotee observes the precepts, “... His inner excellent qualities will manifest and his inmost teacher will appear to guide him. He adds that this teacher is but his own wisdom now freed from feelings and passions, and he says no teacher is more reliable than the self-natured prajna” (wisdom).

Some of the details mentioned above were in the chapter dealing with Kundalini Yoga. The foregoing details are relevant to assist evaluation of what is happening and establish the position on the Path. The details given are more integrated by relating all the descriptions to each other. While dissected for the sake of explanation and discussion, in operation they intertwine.

The phase of transcending the ego is the essential experience, but it is not the final stage, and must be kept firm. This is why Zen Masters asks subtle questions to ascertain whether monks can maintain the Host position. The slightest mental conceptualization or a tiny ripple of anger can reinstate

the ego. As for desire, any type of longing, wanting or ambition sabotages this subtle new insight. Simply put, the instructions of the Masters are to purify the mind and maintain that state of purity. Zen specifically says that there is nothing to attain; it is only a matter of removing wrong thinking from the mind. Raja Yoga says that after attainment there is a tendency for wrong thinking to return, due to habit. Using the “Two Birds on One Tree” analogy, identification with the bird enjoying the fruits is a habit.

After the jump to the Host position, which is the bird that is watching, the seeker must work hard to avoid slipping back. Superceding the ego is indeed difficult, as is holding the new position. Time and effort are required. Note that the ego although now pure still exists. Eventually the spiritual Self becomes the operative center of consciousness. The individual is aware that he is indeed the Soul, and as such is part of the overall Spirit that is everywhere. These effects are not just applicable to Zen monks; they can happen to any serious devotee. We are all on the same path, of spiritual evolution, and whatever method we use the process of awakening is the same.

In the beginning all these comments seem unimportant, but as the seeker progresses and experiences some of the effects they begin to take on more meaning. One of the most frustrating problems for the western man is that intellectual analysis will not yield results. Most of the effect seems to occur more readily with faith, devotion and meditation. This is why many sincere Christians experience genuine spiritual insight because faith and devotion are included with their other efforts. It is not an academic subject or a technical skill that we have to learn. It is a process that we have to apply, and one of the most common difficulties is that there are not enough enlightened teachers to help us. As Jesus said, “The fields are ripe for the harvest, but the labourers are few.’ We therefore have to fall back on book knowledge, and the above references are given for that purpose. It is very helpful to have an enlightened teacher, but really they are all telling us to find the guru within. Since that depends on our own efforts an external teacher cannot do very much. He points the way to the “Kingdom”, which is within, and it is we who must do the “inward looking’, as the Buddhists put it. It is there that the evidence will be found; by personal experience.

CHAPTER TWELVE– THOU ART A GOD

Many Methods

There is no single way of discovering our inner spiritual identity as a soul. Some people do insist that there is only one method, but this is often the result of social conditioning. Spiritually there are many methods, but only one path. It is the path of spiritual awakening. There are many ways to achieve this, such as the teaching of Christ, or of Buddha, or of Krishna, but the methods are numberless. They include prayer, meditation, devotion, chanting, a desire for truth, faith or fasting and discipline, and so on. Since there is no best method, any method tends to be a combination selected as

suitable or acceptable. The teaching becomes the one maintained by popular support. The important thing is to consider the main theme, and to understand the difference between the method and the truth.

Some Analogies

The common objective in all the great teachings is in the "Parable of the Prodigal Son". In this parable, the son is trying to return home to the Father's House. The soul has left home, and it has descended into matter to gain experience. It returns after a long cycle of experiences. Saint Teresa says that the soul is allowed to roam in the mansions for the purpose of attaining self knowledge. When it has done this, it returns to the Lord.

The Hindu Scriptures have their own analogies. One is about Indra. In this story, the gods look down at the world and marvel at the strange life forms. Indra points to one and asks, "What is that?" He learns that it is an elephant. Then he asks again, and each time he marvels at the strangeness of such animals. Then he sees a pig.

"I wonder what it is like to be a pig?" he says.

"Why don't you try it?" his fellow god replies.

"I will," says Indra, and goes down into the pig.

As soon as he enters the pig, he forgets that he is a god. As it happens the pig is a sow, but Indra does not mind. He rather enjoys it, as he thinks he *is* the sow. His friends watch in amusement and wait for his return, but he is happy as a pig, and carries on being one. His fellow gods become worried, and one of them goes to speak to Indra, in the pig.

"Wake up Indra, Thou art a god."

"Oink Oink!" is the reply.

Indra is asleep inside the pig, and in any case, he thinks he is a pig.

The god goes back and reports what has happened. Another god tries and is not successful. Concerned, the gods hold a meeting.

"There is only one way," they decide, "we'll have to kill the pig."

So one of the gods kills the pig, and as it dies, Indra wakes up and laughs. Indra finds it amusing that he thought he was a pig.

Is there a need to explain this story? Perhaps there is, because for centuries different teachers have been trying to tell their own versions, telling us to wake up. All the scriptures have their own stories and their own methods. We have discussed many of them in the preceding chapters. For various reasons the east has preserved theirs in their scriptures. In the west we have similar themes but they are considered to be fairy stories, for children. The inner meaning has become obscured, and we have become so identified with the body, that like Indra, we don't want to listen.

The Tinderbox

Another symbolic story that has an inner meaning is the story of *The Tinder Box*, by Hans Christian Anderson. Anderson lived in Denmark from 1805 to 1875, and he wrote down the stories that

his father told him. Perhaps he never saw any meaning in the stories, and not all of his stories have an inner meaning, but some of them have. Various writers have analyzed these stories but for the most part, they are only seen as entertainment.

In the story of *The Tinderbox*, a soldier is returning home from war. He meets a wicked witch, who asks him to climb down into a cave where there is a hoard of treasure. She says he can have anything he wants as long as he brings back a tinderbox. The soldier agrees and climbs down into the cave, only to see three huge dogs in separate caves. Each is guarding a treasure, but with the aid of the witch's magic apron he fills his bag with gold and jewels and goes back. He takes the tinderbox and asks the witch why she wants it. She refuses to tell him, so in the best tradition of children's stories he chops off her head and puts the tinderbox in his pocket.

The soldier goes to the city, where he lives in style with all his gold. He does not know it, but the tinderbox has magic powers. He eventually discovers the magic, and is able to call on the three huge dogs for help. They bring him more gold whenever he needs it. In the meantime, he falls in love with the King's daughter. The King is not pleased, and puts him in prison. It is a long story, but with the help of his magic powers and the dogs the soldier defeats the King, marries his daughter and rules over half of the kingdom.

The soldier returning from war is a classical theme. It is the Prodigal Son or Ulysses, who has gone exploring. In addition, it is the Soul that descends to a lower world. Now the soul is returning from these lower worlds. The witch is a demon, or alternatively a symbol of the ego, who is trying to seize the magic powers of the tinderbox, which represents the higher powers. The three caves of treasure are three inner worlds, described earlier. The King is the Lord within and the daughter is the Spirit. When he unites with the Spirit, he is able to rule over part of the Lord's Kingdom. There are other stories that have a similar theme and the Indian scriptures are full of stories with the same idea.

The Ox herder

Ten Oxherding Pictures, published by Rider, with a commentary by D.T.Suzuki, is a classical Zen short story. It tells how an oxherder has lost his ox and searches everywhere for it. The ox is a symbol of the inner Self. By asking and searching, he finds traces of the ox. Slowly he begins to find ways of catching the ox. Eventually he controls the ox by controlling its mind. Finally, both ox herder and ox become invisible because they are no longer a duality, as they are now united.

The ox herder attempts to go back to the Source, and here, in true Zen manner, this is considered to be a mistake, for there is no need to do that. The point here is that the ox was never lost. The Spirit is everywhere, and therefore there is no need to go anywhere. The ox-herder now lives quietly in his hut. Nothing disturbs him, because he knows the truth. He was actually riding on the ox all the time. This is a classic example of the Zen saying that there is nowhere to go and nowhere to come from, because we are already in the spirit. As Saint Paul says, "In Him we live and move and have our being." We exist in God, but we have forgotten that because we identify with the body.

Symbols of the Sleeping Soul

In the story of Indra, it is clear that the god identified with the body of the pig. This is what we are doing. We identify with our bodies, and think we are the body. Jesus said, "You are gods." This was His way of saying that we are spiritual beings and not just bodies. However, because of conditioning, in which we accept the body as our identity we have difficulty in breaking free from identification with it.

One reason why we are unable to break free is the general materialism that prevails everywhere. This materialism sees the soul portrayed as a myth, reinforced by the fact that modern scientists continually speak of the body as the only reality. At the other end of the scale, we have lost our faith and sense of wonder at the miraculous. Rigid thinking based on a literal interpretation of the scriptures has pushed any spiritual mystery into the background. Now, more than ever, we are in danger of stronger body identification with externally imposed values as our criteria. Fortunately, some signposts have managed to survive and reappear to guide us.

The story of "*Sleeping Beauty*" is a typically allegorical story. It symbolizes the sleeping Spirit that the Prince of Love awakens. "*Beauty and the Beast*" is another symbolic story in which love transforms the beast. Again, it is the theme of the Spirit identified with the body and therefore becoming a beast. The message is to wake up and stop identifying with the body. It is the "Indra syndrome" from which we must break free.

If we compare these different stories, we can see that they indicate different stages of development. Some have explanations, and others try to explain the whole process. In the beginning, we can pick up odd clues, but it is only by persistence that we can untangle the inner teachings. It may be easier to learn if we have no prior teaching, rather than override years of established beliefs. It all depends on the viewpoint. Regardless of the details, it is essential to break free from conditioning and see a teaching in its own right. Then look to see if it is really helping us to be free and discover our basic spiritual nature.

In considering these stories, we must think symbolically, or in terms of analogy. We cannot express these subtle truths in literal statements. All the great teachings use parables and allegorical stories. We therefore have to develop insight by contemplation and inner seeking.

Chakras and Lokas

A comparison of the various terms used in the Indian systems demonstrates how they relate to everything said so far. It is difficult to fit everything into one table. Three different descriptions that are difficult to match are the descriptions by different Yogis, the traditional Buddhist framework, and the general Christian idea. However, allowing for linguistic differences and religious conventions, there is still a rational connection.

The Buddhist list starts at the lowest centers, in areas related to the very lowest chakras and lokas, as indicated in the expanded diagram in Figure 6. In the Buddhist list the lowest is hell, where beings work off their very bad karma, caused by evil living. Next is the realm of hungry ghosts,

tormented by their desires and attachments. Above that is the realm of animals and bestial spirits. The next is a realm of demons or Asuras. Then there are those who spend their time on warfare; called Titans. Above this area is the human dimension. Above this is the realm of gods, or spiritual beings that experience relatively long periods of happiness. This is the first of the four heavens.

If we consider the table below, we can begin to see how the levels, realms and centers correspond to each other. Altogether, the Buddhists speak of four heavens and six worlds. The human world, Bhuloka, is the highest of the six worlds. Some lists describe two hells and put the Asuras and the Titans together, but these lower worlds are not on the table below.

<u>Chakras</u>	<u>Lokas</u>	<u>Qualities</u>	<u>Consciousness</u>	<u>Sheaths</u>
Sahasrar	Satyaloka	Spirit	Atma	Anandamaya
Ajna	Tapaloka	Intelligence	Buddhi	Vijnanamaya
Vishudda	Janaloka	Reason	Manas	Manamaya
Anahata	Mahaloka	Emotions	Astral (1)	Pranamaya
Manipura	Swarloka	Feelings	Astral (2)	-
Swadisthana	Bhuvraloka	Desire Nature	Energy	-
Muladhara	Bhuloka	Gross Matter	Physical	Anamaya

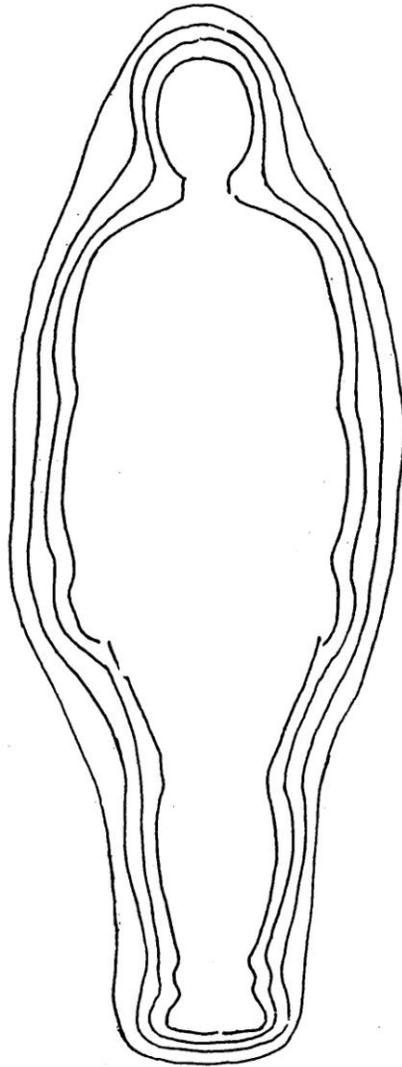
Figure 7 A Comparative Table

The hell worlds are below the ones shown here and the heavens start in the astral levels. The highest heavens are in Buddhi and Atma and the most supreme is in Paramatma, which is above the other levels, but not shown on the list.

The last two lists only have five sections, whereas the others have seven. The seven relate to the chakras and the five relate to the sheaths. The Pranamaya sheath operates through three chakras and three lokas, and that is how the five divisions relate to the seven lokas.

Blavatsky used the name "Astral" for the section below Manas (mind), and Sri Auribindo used the term "Vital". The sheath is here, the Pranamaya. Prana is the Energy or Shakti, hence Auribindo's use of the word "Vital". Some metaphysical writers say that there is a specific energy body, called the "Ethereic" body, or subtle body. However, writers refer to five bodies, classified as spiritual, intelligence,

mental, emotional, and physical. Dr Kilner, a medical specialist in a London Hospital during the early part of the twentieth century, studied the lower three bodies, and with the help of specialized equipment, he could see them.



The Mental, Emotional and Health-Energy Auras
described by Dr W J Kilner in *The Human Aura*

Figure 8 The Invisible Bodies

Dr Kilner defined these bodies as the physical, the health or energy body, the emotional and the mental bodies. They are in Figure 8. He said that they showed signs of disorder when a patient was ill or disturbed in the relevant areas. Although his work showed great promise, no one else was willing to support his research. Medical specialists concluded that conventional methods were more reliable.

Later his ideas came into public focus by the development of Kirlian photography. Research in biophysics is now following up some of these little known subjects.

In the diagram as shown in Figure 7, the human world is Bhuloka, shown as the physical level and the astral level is the first of the higher worlds. As previously explained this covers more than one loka and does not match easily, because there are seven lokas. In such diagrams, the ego is halfway in Manas or Mind. The Jivatma or spiritual Self is initially above Atma, but comes down to midway between Buddhi and Atma. The human consciousness can experience it by transcending the ego. This jump past the ego does not destroy the ego, and there is an awareness of the two points of identity. One is the ordinary human identity, in this world, and the other is a spiritual identity in the higher worlds. As already mentioned, many attain this level of awareness, but they do not always understand it. In any case, they usually say little about it, because modern values tend to ignore anything to do with the spirit. Yet, as already noted, Patanjali says that it is natural for the human being to seek higher consciousness, and in all the systems, there are levels above us.

The Kali Yuga

There is one subject in Jnana Yoga that often attracts attention. This is the question of the change from one age or period of evolution to another. Popular literature tends to suggest that we are on the brink of a wonderful new age that could happen instantaneously. Alternatively, supporters of the Armageddon concept anticipate a dramatic end to the world in the immediate future. However, previous predictions and assumptions, going right back to well before the Middle Ages have repeatedly proved to be wrong. Furthermore, the Armageddon concept is a totally Western idea, and a product of Biblical interpretation. Yet, nature indicates that nothing happens overnight, and everything proceeds in a rhythmic fashion. There are cycles of drought, cycles of flood, weather, plant and animal growth; everything has a cycle. As the Old Testament says, there is a season for all things. In this context, we can say that we are at present in a season of change.

Jesus predicted the end of an era and His disciples asked when this would be. He said, "Where the corpses are that is where the eagles will be". There are variations on the meaning of this according to the interpreter, because there were two types of eagle. One was on the standards of the Romans, indicating the eagles would be the Roman eagles. The other interpretation of "eagles" is that they are kite hawks or vultures, attracted to the corpses. As well as that, the eagle was the symbol of the Nazis.

The actual event that relates to Jesus' statement was the resistance of the Zealots to the Roman occupation. Forced to flee, they took refuge in one of Herod's old fortresses, on a cliff. The Romans could not attack because of the position, so they camped outside to starve out the Zealots. The Zealots all died or killed themselves rather than endure capture. The Roman eagles were outside and carrion eagles circled above. According to the history books, the Romans then went into the city and entered the Temple. Until then, they had let the status quo prevail. This was the beginning of the

dispersion of the Jews and the end of that era. As just mentioned, some other interpretations say that the eagles refer to the eagles on the Nazi standards.

However, there is only one reference to Armageddon in the Bible, and that concerns a battle on the Plain of Megiddo. In summation this means the end of an era, whether then or now, and not the end of the world. One of Jesus' statements supports the idea of the end of that era. He said, "The present generation will live to see it all", (Matthew 24/35). This refers to the existing generation at that time and the existing generation did see the disintegration of the current system. The principle of destruction before creation is a natural one, and the present disintegration of empires and states is part of this principle. It indicates that renewal will follow, but it can only be a better situation if we awaken and become "interior men" and not just "external men". It is a time to awaken.

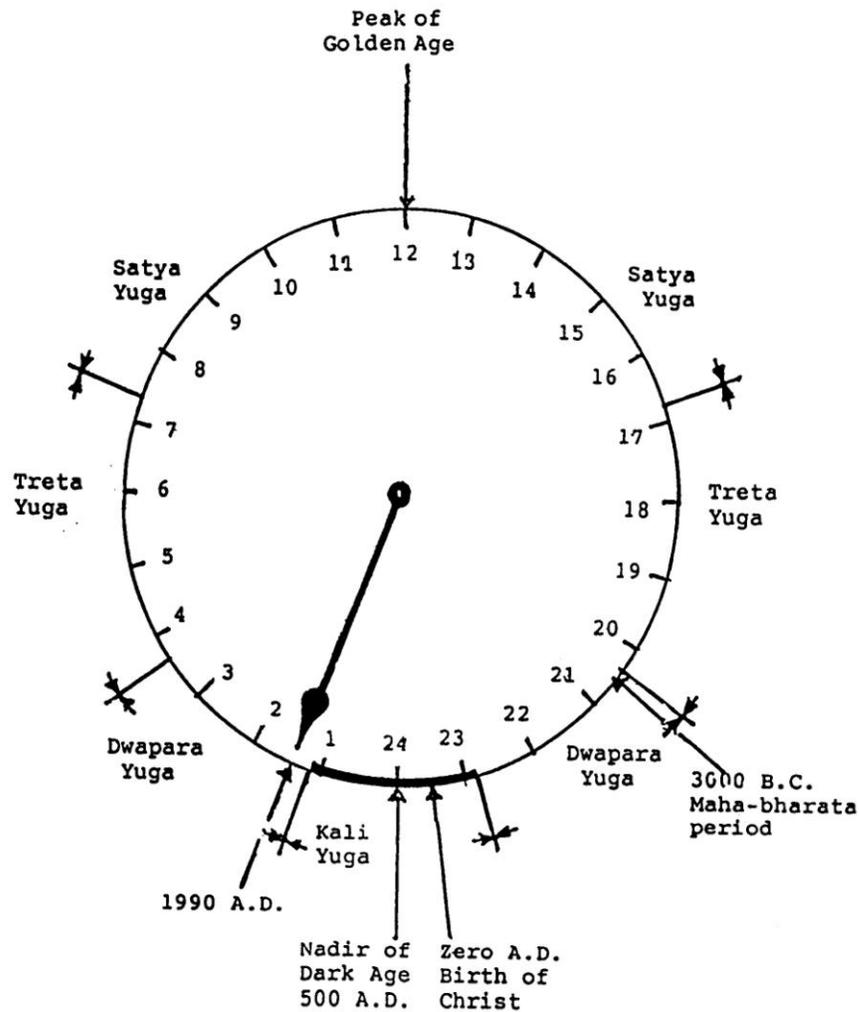
Some historians say that there are regular rhythms and changes and we are at present in the chaos of a new change. Such changes, whether the onset of an ice age, or the decline of the dinosaurs, happened over a lengthy period. Some are relatively short but they still take many years. As Buddhism puts it, we are in a "Dharma ending period". This means that we are in a period of decline in spiritual values. The positive side is that as one season ends another must begin. The details below are given in that sense.

At the beginning of Sri Yukteswar's book, *The Holy Science*, is a diagram indicating the way the earth progresses through the various Ages. According to this, we are currently in a Dark Age, called a "Kali Yuga". Yukteswar says that there is a cyclic period in these changes of approximately 24000 years.

This period apparently relates to the Precession of the Equinox, and astronomical books give a period of about 25800 years. In a modified interpretation, a twenty-four hour clock represents the cycle. This gives just over one thousand years for each hour on the clock. Such a diagram would show the various ages.

By the accounts, the Kali Yuga is a short age with an intermediate period on each side. Writers on the subject say we are just leaving the Dark Age, and therefore just entering the Dwapara Yuga. There is some disagreement on the dates and times, but the general principle is the same. The common point is that we are in a period of change. There are transitional difficulties, but whatever the outcome it seems that it will be gradual. Any talk of sudden drama is therefore misplaced. On such a "24 hour" diagram, Christ appears at the beginning of the Kali Yuga, and would be the new Saviour for that period. In the same way, it is implied that there should be a new Saviour for the coming new age.

Sri Yukteswar also uses the term "Dharma", defining it as mental virtue, and explaining how it matures or declines as these ages progress. This matches the Buddhist statements about being in a Dharma ending age. We have apparently declined from the time of Buddha. From these examples, we can assume that we are moving towards a new and better age. The outline of this concept is shown in Figure 9.



The complete cycle is 25,800 years. On a 24-hour clock, each hour is just over 1,000 years. The middle of the Dark Age or Kali Yuga is at 24:00 hours, or "midnight". According to this system, we are at present just after "one o'clock", and now leaving the Kali Yuga.

Figure 9 The Cycles of Yugas

Review

We have considered the nature of the Soul and allegorical analogies that show how we have to return to the Godhead. All this is only information, or knowledge that will lead to wisdom. To make use of that knowledge we also need a method. The following is a brief comparison of two methods. This demonstrates the wide approach to the path of spiritual insight. We have already considered the main

methods of knowledge, wisdom, contemplation, meditation, faith, devotion and discipline. To understand more fully the meaning and purpose of these methods, we can look at them again with the aim of identifying the attitudes and approaches.

The answers to the questions of “what” and “why” are often intertwined. For example, a typical Yoga scripture may contain praise, explanations and chanting that is a method for attainment. Such songs of praise and affirmations go on for pages. Some sound like the Songs of Praise in the Psalms and others are specifically emphasizing that the Divine Spirit is already in us. In this case, devotion and wisdom methods blend. The aim is to calm the mind, purify the mind and transcend the mind. Jnana Yoga explains the ego as an extension of the mind. In this method, there is an attempt to transcend the ego by discipline, as well as by devotion and knowledge.

It is interesting to compare this approach with some pronouncements of the Zen Masters. They say; “Have faith in your own Mind and recognize that the inability to know the Mind is caused by desire”. They stress that all desire leads to woe, and when passions are roused wisdom departs, and so on.

These blunt statements continually aim at making the seeker look to the spirit within, defined as the Mind, and at transcending the lower nature that keeps us in bondage. The first method is devotional and emotional. The other is rational and mental, yet they are both aiming at the same outcome, spiritual awareness. The teaching of Jesus is a balance between these two approaches. It is both devotional and explanatory, although true understanding is often secondary to the devotion.

Ultimately both wisdom and devotion, as well as faith, are necessary. The Biblical and Buddhist scriptures are not just academic subjects. They are different approaches to a common aim. Methods are only methods. All the scriptures say, “Put your own house in order”. That is to say, we should concentrate on dealing with our own mind. Jesus did not suggest any social action or change. He only taught inner action and a mental change to the new spiritual values.

In considering the different examples and teachings given to us over the centuries, it is disturbing to realize that we still have not understood the message. We seem to be content to accept a superficial level of beliefs, and do not attempt to see into the deeper meaning. In broad terms, we can say that we are souls, but we should try to experience our identity as a soul. The very first step is knowledge, and to awaken we must have a method. In the west the most effective method, if applied, is the teaching of Jesus. Both Saint Teresa and Emanuel Swedenborg are testimony to this. There are other saints, but they have not all left writings on these subjects.

A well-known description of the difficulties involved in transcending the lower nature is that of the “Temptation of St Anthony”. He lived between AD 251 and 356, in Upper Egypt. His letters describe his temptations and artists have painted works depicting them. It is a classic example of the difficulties facing the soul on its return to the Father’s House. The temptations are the dramatic human tests in the Battle of Kurukshetra as allegorically described in the *Bhagavad Gita*. However, most seekers do not have such an acute experience. The spiritual growing pains tend to spread out over a lifetime, and the extent depends on the method used. For westerners, living the life of a “Householder”,

the Teaching of Jesus or the “Middle Way” of Buddhism is probably more suitable. Since the spirit is the same for everyone, it really does not matter which method we choose. The approach is much more important. According to Swedenborg, this is the nature of the secret intent and the private values, because we gravitate to what we are in our inner nature.

All the great eastern disciplines aim at changing and purifying the inner nature, and unless we do that, nothing else can possibly change. Fortunately, we are not working alone. The spiritual Self is watching and waiting for us to make a move, and then, as Charles Luk explains, that inner Guru will lead and guide us, “and chastise us whenever we stray from the holy path.”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN –THE MESSAGE OF A MYSTIC

I Am That

From time to time, a new book emerges on the theme of spiritual awakening. The subject is the spiritual nature of man and the existence of an inner identity that we call the soul. These books are usually by or about Indian mystics who, having attained their final realization, decide to speak. The books are often in Hindustani, and sometimes in English. They make a quiet appearance, with no fanfare and no autographed copies on their first presentation. If written in English, traveling seekers from the west find them, take them home and pass them on to their friends.

One text, entitled *I Am That*, is just such a book. By word of mouth and recommendation, its popularity has grown, and it is now in the west. This important book, first in Bombay in 1973, contains the sayings of Sri Nisargadatta, and is emerging as a clear signpost on the path of spiritual discovery.

Who is Nisargadatta?

The introduction to the book bears the title, “Who is Nisargadatta Maharaj?” The first sentence provides the whole tone. It says that when asked about his date of his birth he stated that he was never born. This is a typical Indian Yoga reply. One brief sentence shatters the concept of body. It implies that another Self, the Spiritual Self, or Spiritual Soul is beyond birth and death. The answer is of one that knows, and is not just quoting scriptures. To the westerner that tends to think that the body is the real individual, it is a frustrating answer. It says, in effect, ‘I am not the body, I am That; i.e. I am abstract Spirit’. These words are inadequate, for Nisargadatta goes beyond the concept of a mystic individuality. Like pure Mahayana Buddhism, or the ancient Tao, there is no mention of a personal God. He says, “God” is beyond conceptualizing. Nisargadatta’s words epitomize the essence of all that is in the other great teachings. His teaching stands out as an incredible pronouncement of eternal truths and makes us wonder who he was.

Nisargadatta was born about 1897. That is, his body was born, and it died about 1980. The details are vague, as he did not think they mattered. However, there are many known facts about his

physical life. He lived the life of a Householder, in a simple home, and worked as a small trader in Bombay. Devotees gathered round him and listened to his teachings. He was always willing to explain and answer questions. He said that he gained his liberation and insight by believing what his guru told him. That was, “you are not the body.” He pondered on this continually until he had an inner awakening. Nisargadatta never wrote anything. It was Maurice Frydman, who lived in Bombay and saw him frequently, who taped and published Nisargadatta’s spoken answers.

A brief biography says that he grew up almost without education. Nevertheless, he could read and write because he worked for a time as an insignificant junior clerk. He was uneducated by western standards, but an important point to note is that many great Indian saints had no real formal education. The Chinese Zen Master, Hui-Neng was illiterate. Sri Nityananda was another example that spiritual awareness does not depend on an advanced education, although there are also many cases in which enlightened Yogis and Seers are highly educated. This point demonstrates that the essential factor is not an advanced education, but the right approach. Of course, it all depends what we want out of life, and what we think life really is. Nisargadatta clearly tells us what we should seek, and how we should understand life as a spiritual expression.

Find the I Am

In the first chapter of his teachings, Nisargadatta says the sense of being, of “I am”, is the first to emerge. He explains that when the mind stays in the “I am”, without moving, that we enter a state which cannot be verbalized, only experienced. He says that the greatest obstacle to experiencing this state is the obsession with the body. His explanations reinforce all the other great teachers have said. He often says that he believed his guru when he said “I am nothing but my self”.

Nisargadatta says that he has no such thing as a “mind”. He explains that there is only consciousness. Maurice Frydman found a lot of this difficult to accept and asked numerous questions. Nisargadatta frequently tried to explain that all our woes come from identification with the body, and the desires and fears that we have created. He says that desires have their basis in memory, and our imagination causes our fears. Because we remember pleasant experiences, we desire to repeat them. This creates attachment, trapping us in a roundabout of longing and desire that does not find fulfillment. Even if there is fulfillment, it creates a stronger desire to repeat the pleasurable experience. In fear we identify with the imagined negative outcome and cause ourselves distress. Nisargadatta tries to point out that the real solution is to live in the present and deal wholeheartedly with what is happening at the time. This is a pure Zen attitude. Jesus also said, ‘whatever you do, do it with all your might.’

Another point that Nisargadatta constantly emphasizes is that the essential active ingredient is earnestness. Earnestness is the liberating factor and not mere knowledge. This repeated theme makes the listener understand that intellectual curiosity is not the way. Mere clever mental cognition is unacceptable, as is the western idea that the mind is the supreme faculty. Nisargadatta says that the mind continually misleads us, and points out that the mind creates a sense of reality. By identifying with this sense of reality, we think it is real. Our desires and fears make things real. Nisargadatta warns us

not to dwell on desire or fear, and explains that the mind becomes what it thinks. There is only cognition, and to know our identity (as a soul) we must go beyond the mind. There are so many amazing statements that it is difficult to know which to select from the five hundred pages of questions and answers, but in analysis, Nisargadatta is always saying the same thing.

On the subject of gurus, he says that we should go beyond the need of a guru and find our own self or Soul. He emphasizes that we are never without a guru, because the guru is in our own heart. Nisargadatta is emphatic that the role of the external guru is only as a stepping stone on the path. He says, "The guru only tells you the good news about your real Self and shows you the way back to it." In one answer to a question about finding a guru, Nisargadatta replies that the greatest guru is the inner Self. This is the supreme teacher. This inner self, the Soul, can take us to our goal, and we should learn to trust it. If we can do this, we need no outer guru. We only need an outer guru because by habit we look outwards for that which we are seeking.

Some visitors asked Nisargadatta about God. His answers are almost an echo of those about gurus. He tells us that God is the guru, and God is within. He never once speaks of external entities. God is the Supreme Reality, and God is within you. Nisargadatta insists that searching for an external God is going in the wrong direction. He advises that we must have faith in the inner God.

Sometimes Nisargadatta's replies are difficult to comprehend. He explains that the universe without and within, are in the great mind of God, and that everything is within our own self. However, he points out that the Supreme is beyond all distinctions and definitions. He explains that our troubles in understanding come from our tendency to put everything in neat packages, and our obsession with personalizing everything. We have created the concept that God is a "person", and that somewhere there is a Supreme Being answering our prayers, and issuing blessings for the righteous and punishment for the wicked. In response to this type of attitude, Nisargadatta speaks of "Consciousness and Awareness". "Awareness" is beyond God, because God is a concept created by the mind to try to define whatever is beyond it. He says the "Universal Mind" makes and unmakes everything. The "Supreme" imparts reality to whatever comes into being. "Universal Love" may be the nearest description; it is love that makes everything real, beautiful and desirable.

Nisargadatta does not use the word "spirit". This could be one reason why westerners have difficulty in accepting teachings that use terms like "mind", "consciousness", and "awareness". Even using the term "spirit", there are still degrees of expression. There is not just spirit and matter. In Jnana Yoga, there is "spirit", "intelligence" "reason", and "mind". In Buddhism, there is only "mind" in different degrees. In the west, there is the spirit, but it is a separate concept. Yet, every eastern teaching states that the spirit is in all things. The West tends to personify everything. For them, God is not interpenetrating. He is separate, and presides over the cosmos from a remote position.

Nisargadatta puts all such views aside. He insists that we are part of the Supreme Reality, and because of our conditioned way of seeing things, we have to learn the truth. As the scriptures say, "In Him we live, move and have our being". We exist in God. Where then do we find that God?

People traveled from all over the world to visit Nisargadatta, eager for new and enlightening knowledge. When they arrived, he would ask them where they had come from and why they had come to see him. Nisargadatta offered a variety of statements, and some were very revealing. One person might say, "I have had an experience and I wonder what it means." Nisargadatta would listen carefully to the description, and depending on the type of experience, he would occasionally ask whether it happened suddenly or gradually. This is of special significance. It indicates that some people awaken slowly, and some have a sudden awakening. It is also clear that all kinds of people can have an awakening. As Hui-Neng said, "you do not have to stay in a monastery". Like all the great teachers, Nisargadatta insisted that God is everywhere and wherever you are, whatever you are doing, that is where God is.

Nisargadatta always answered his visitors in terms the person could understand. He spoke in their own personal concepts, but he always directed them to one goal: "Seek the Lord within. Seek your inner Self". Some of his answers were so full of eloquent insight that his listeners were surprised that someone who was not highly educated could speak in such a way. Frydman asked him how he knew what to say. Nisargadatta's answer was revealing. He said, "When I hear the question the answer comes into my mind." He also said that he did not know how it works. Yoga explains that it works in a very simple manner. In this case, Nisargadatta transcends the rational mind and operates from the intuitive level. On that level, there is immediate insight into the subject at hand. It is very rare for an ordinary person to attain such insight, because of our acquired analytical and intellectual traits. Yet, we could attain that approach by meditation.

True Awareness is beyond Consciousness

Nisargadatta often spoke of consciousness, but maintained that there is a higher state than consciousness. He says, "Consciousness is always of something. Awareness is absolute; Consciousness is relative to its content". Our own problem is that we live in a relative state, seeing everything in relative terms. Therefore, we cannot know the Absolute. Philosophically speaking, the Absolute is only an inference. Once we are one with the Absolute, it is impossible to speak in relative terms. Nisargadatta spoke as if he was at times in an Absolute state, saying, "I am beyond all dualities and relativity". He explained that consciousness, immersed in duality, leads to conflict between the opposites. Some of his questioners were academic specialists but Nisargadatta never became engaged in debate. His outlook was simple; he insisted that all we have to do is to be natural, and the Supreme will do everything.

Nisargadatta continually told his followers that they must go beyond the mind and tune in to the Spirit. He only referred to "awareness", and did not consider "consciousness" as the central factor. In effect he said, "Just stop thinking and let 'IT' take over". We identify so much with our own concept of our identity that we cannot rise above it. Nisargadatta did agree that all this inner growth takes time. We must aim to achieve a state of living awareness in our everyday lives, and we cannot do that while we accept the physical world as the only reality; the "spirit" must be included.

The Ramana Gita

Another remarkable teaching is that of Ramana Maharshi. Ramana Maharshi lived from 1879 to 1950. He is one of the greatest spiritual teachers of modern India. The English writer, Paul Brunton, visited him and commented in his writings that Ramana attained his great spiritual insight by sacrificing everything else. Very few people are willing to do this, yet all the teachings assure us that it is worth it.

Ramana kept his teaching simple. It centers round the question, “who am I?” The *Ramana Gita* is perhaps the most important work from Ramana, because it has direct sayings in answer to specific questions from seekers who were well acquainted with the traditional teachings. The answers are therefore concise and equally specific.

Ramana states that the Jnani (a Jnana Yogi) always has his roots in the Self, and tells us that Self-abidance alone can release one from bondage. He says that mere critical study of scriptures cannot liberate the one seeking truth. There has to be spiritual practice. The main spiritual practice he advised was Self-inquiry. He insisted that the true “I” is experienced in the heart by the process of this inquiry. However, the term “heart” is misleading, as it does not mean the physical heart but a center of consciousness near the heart. The true “I” is the Self whereas the ordinary sense of “I” is the ego. He affirms that anyone who can experience the true self, i.e. the spiritual Soul, will never again have doubts.

Ramana describes how the light of consciousness flows from the heart, through the Sushumna spinal channel to the Sahasrar, at the crown of the head. This is particularly important because Ramana speaks so much of the heart center and very rarely mentions any other. In all of the many books about Ramana, the emphasis is on the Heart center. Sometimes there is an extra remark, such as “when you go further, to the Ajna”, and passing references to different “stages”. Ramana was clearly aware of the higher stages. However, he put almost all the emphasis on an awakening in the heart, because without it further progress is impossible.

Ramana does occasionally use the term “spirit”, and in many cases, this makes his message much easier to follow. If we substitute the term “spirit”, the meaning may become clearer. For example, Ramana said, “the heart is the light of the mind”. This becomes “the spirit is the light of the mind”. In this way, his message matches the other teachings, and especially the teaching of Jesus.

The Body is not the Self

In comparison, Ramana’s words are very similar to all the others. He makes it clear that the body is not the True Self; the ordinary sense of self is only the mind or ego. There has to be an awakening in the heart, and there are steps and stages on the way to achieving it. Yet, some commentators write as if an awakening in the heart center is the final awakening. This is because they have not understood that there is a further awakening beyond the heart center. A comparative analysis of all the teachings shows that there are definite sequential stages. Ramana had traveled the whole journey, of course. Others have done so as well, and they agree that Jesus operated on the highest possible level in a human body.

The very last section in the *Ramana Gita* is entitled “The Glory of the Siddhas”. It contains twenty-six verses of praise for Ramana, and is from one of his devotees, Ganapati Muni. As already explained, a Siddha is an enlightened Master, and he may be a Jnani or a Bhakti or from some other discipline. Ramana, having achieved full attainment is worthy of the title of a Master. He undoubtedly knew more than he ever spoke about, and usually put the emphasis on attaining the individual Self-awareness experience at the heart level.

There is no mention of Kundalini, but Ramana does mention Shakti, so he was probably aware of the ramifications of Kundalini development. Although he knew the Jnana teachings and understood Vedanta thoroughly, he did not offer any general teaching, instead putting the main emphasis on Self-realization by means of Self-Inquiry. It is obvious that there are many ways of leading a seeker to the realization of his spiritual identity.

Ask, “Who am I?”

The method used by Ramana is very simple. The following example illustrates Ramana’s teaching. It is the story of Zen Master Lin-Chi planting pine trees to make an avenue leading to the monastery. Someone asked why he planted the trees. He said, “So that those who come in the future may recognize that which sees them.” This is a brilliant statement. That which sees the trees is the Self. The Zen method is to use the question “Who?” to emphasize this. “Who is seeing the trees? Who is listening? What is it that hears?” It is the Self.

Ramana’s method is even more direct. He says the seeker should ask, “Who am I?” The emphasis is on the realization of the “I” as the “I am” experience. He says that after the initial experience, pursuing this method will lead to deeper realization. It is useful to relate this statement to Nisargadatta’s standpoint. We can start with Ramana’s question “who am I?” The intuitive answer lies in the “I am” realization. However, this is only the first essential step. It is only the “Guest” position in Zen. The next experience is at the Ajna, as Ramana mentions. This is the “I am the Self” experience, or the true individual Self-realization, the “Host” position in Zen. After that is what Yoga calls God-realization, often expressed as “I am That.” The ultimate stage is to become aware of Oneness, and is very rare, even in the seclusion of an ashram.

To clarify this we work through three main stages. In the beginning there is “I am” at the heart center, then “I am the Self” at the Ajna center between the eyebrows, followed by “I am That” at the Sahasrar center at the crown of the head. This relates to St Teresa’s remarks, about communing with the Lord in the uppermost part of the head, and supports Nisargadatta’s position. Most written works on this subject emphasize Self-realization at the Ajna center. However, many only go to the initial experience at the heart center. Even so, it is meaningless to talk of the final experience without the individual Self-realization. There are three definite stages, and Ramana’s inquiry, if pursued, will operate in all the stages.

In reviewing all the systems, Ramana’s method of Direct Inquiry is one of the simplest. The question, “who am I?” does not confront any religious views. It is equally appropriate for any sect. It

easily lends itself to the teaching of Jesus, and is compatible with all the Yoga systems. A Zen Buddhist can use the question as a *koan* until the monkey mind collapses under the persistent inquiry. The question can be in meditation, in contemplation or in odd moments during the routine day. The question can help to achieve the first step and then continued for a deeper Self- realization. Even after the first realization, the seeker will find that life takes on a more meaningful sense of direction. On any level, the benefits of Ramana's method are worth the effort.

Although mystic philosophies do not concern themselves with science, this viewpoint has a strange implication for science. Scientists say that the basic characteristic of everything is energy. If the spirit of consciousness is in everything, it is also in the most abstract expression of energy. In other words the basis of everything is really "conscious energy", and the true motive power is spirit.

Science is unlikely to arrive at such a conclusion, and theologians generally accept the concept of a separate Lord of the Universe. Since such teachings, discussions and explanations can only be in relative terms, the suggestion of an indefinable Absolute is an anathema to orthodox theology and treated accordingly. These arguments achieve nothing. The best solution with such mysteries is to discover our own inner identity, and then all the rest will follow. This also sounds strange to the western outward looking mind, and there is difficulty in understanding that knowledge can be gained by insight. We are so conditioned to apply objective examination that the suggestion of subjective insight seems too impractical.

However, all the principles we have discussed are in the area of abstract nouns, such as love, happiness, awareness, joy, consciousness, spirit and so on. In the practical reality of everyday life we tend to become identified with objects. This is why Jesus advised his listeners not to worry about things that moth and rust can destroy". The teachings say that the secret is in balancing the opposites, and the indication is that this is what we must learn to do.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN – THE LAST FRONTIER

Sri Ramakrishna

Very few attain the final glimpse over the mountain top, and most remain silent. In the world of activity the average seeker is not likely to attempt such a task, and the more realistic aim of spiritual Self realization would be success enough. Yet, some do go further and Ramakrishna was one of them. His story is well known. He lived in the latter half of the nineteenth century, from 1836 to 1886, and was a priest in the temple of Kali. His attempts to attain true realization were frustrating him and he took down the sword of Kali, thinking that it would be better to die rather than continue to live without attaining God-realization. Grasping the sword, he fell down in a trance-like condition. He remained in the trance for weeks, and finally, when his disciples saw that his body was wasting away they applied massage and awoke him from the trance. Upon waking, Sri Ramakrishna expressed his famous analogy about a salt

doll. He described his experience as a salt doll wishing to go into the sea and experience the sea. When it enters the water it begins to dissolve as it starts to become one with the ocean. This is the Soul returning to its source and merging with it completely.

Both Buddhism and Yoga says that at this point the seeker should stop and return to the world as a means of helping others. A Bodhisattva makes this great sacrifice. The action of Ramakrishna's disciples stopped the final merging from happening. Thereafter whenever he tried to describe his spiritual experiences, he lapsed into a state of Samadhi.

There are other cases of the intention to put an end to life acting as the final trigger. One Zen Master attained his final awakening because he too decided to end his life in frustration at not being able to attain true enlightenment. He climbed the gate tower and started to climb over the parapet with the intention of throwing himself down. At that moment, he gained full realization. This suggests that the act of deciding to end life was an expression of extreme non-attachment and lack of worldly desire. Once the mental activity stopped, the mind ceased interfering and the spirit was able to shine through.

Ramana Maharshi

A more detailed study of Ramana's awakening reveals that he showed unusual signs at an early age. In particular he had the ability to immerse himself in such deep sleep that his fellow students could easily move him without waking him. This is significant because deep sleep is beyond the dreaming state, and is the level beyond the mind. Transcending the mind attains higher consciousness, so Ramana's deep sleep indicates that he was naturally inclined to move to a higher state.

At the age of seventeen Ramana had a spontaneous "death experience", already described. Therefore, he became immersed in introspection, which led him to the realization that the spirit transcends the body, and does not die. Comparative study implies that this experience is probably the destruction of ego attachment. Transformation of the ego is by purification or by discipline, but totally absorbing the ego is not a suitable method for anyone on the Path of a Householder in the ordinary world. Ramana was clearly a remarkable exception. However, he was not destined to pursue the role of a Householder, and renounced everything. He spent long periods in deep Samadhi, and someone had to look after him. He remained silent for years, but eventually spoke and an ashram developed around him.

We have to wonder what might have happened to someone like Ramana, or Ramakrishna, if they had lived in the west. Westerners would certainly not accept this behavior as normal. People displaying such signs would probably be given drugs or electric shock therapy to "cure" them."

The examples provided are undoubtedly extreme. They are not an indication of what happens to every seeker of spiritual truth. Yet, even Swedenborg's death experience was hardly ordinary. Most devotees apparently have relatively modest experiences, and are able to continue with their normal lives, although they do withdraw from excessive social interaction. As an example, Charles Luk lived in Hong Kong and spent most of his time writing for the benefit of others. Swedenborg did the same and

he published much of his work at his own expense. In doing so, he was pursuing the typical path of service in this role.

Ardent devotees of various sects experience mystic states for which they often need explanations. This is a common scenario. Many people certainly do experience an awakening at the Heart level, but fewer experience the awakening at the Ajna center, mostly because they do not know what to do, or are not sure how to make the extra effort. Nevertheless, many do attain this stage, and it is well within the range of a householder who is willing to make the extra effort.

As for the final stage, all the teachings agree that very few are able to sustain the effort and degree of renunciation that leads to a final realization. To provide some insight into this process, extra details on the final stages follow.

The Final Stage

According to the descriptions, there are seven stages from the Ajna to the Sahasra. These are apparently a reflection of the seven stages in the Greater System of Chakras, as there are apparently seven centers in the head that correspond to the seven main centers. Of the final seven stages, the first two or three can be comprehended by the mind, but the others are increasingly abstract and impressions are likely to be symbolic rather than intellectually cognizable. This is perhaps more understandable if we consider the last phase in three stages of Buddhi, Atma and Paramatma. Buddhi is still overlapping into the mental area, and inner developments are therefore cognized. After that, the Atma level of spirit is quite abstract. Any clues are consequently elusively symbolic. As for the final stage of Paramatma, descriptions say there are no words to describe it. Near that final experience the descriptions are of “golden light” and the “sound of thunder”. Further descriptions are apparently impossible.

In review, we can see that the earlier physical signs of the activity in the head are observable. Some people may develop subtle abilities, such as divine sight, divine hearing, knowledge of past lives, knowing others’ minds and divine revelation. The divine revelation is an ability to read a visual impression of the past and certain main trends in the future, as well as having insight into the many “mansions”. The extra sensory abilities can develop by discipline, but this will not bring God-realization. Patanjali, and others, insist that concern for these powers or “siddhis” is an obstacle to the final realization. The attainment occurs according to the degree of devotion, the motive, the attitude and the intent, as well as the degree of faith.

The descriptions indicate that services and rituals can help to calm the mind, but we have to go beyond that. Ultimately we get what we focus on, and unfailingly reap what we sow. This assures us that all sincere effort to make progress on the spiritual path will bear fruit at the right time.

The Essential Step

Many of the details considered may seem strange or difficult to understand, but one definite step can unlock the door to all these mysteries. Jesus said, “Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and all

the rest will be added.” With slight alteration, in terms of spiritual understanding, the dictum is “First discover your own spiritual identity and everything else will follow.

This study did not make an analysis of the teachings of Islam because there was not the same contact as with the other teachings. Nevertheless, as a conclusion, it is worth quoting the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* description of the Sufis. The Sufis are the mystical orders of Islam, and the description says that the aim of the Sufis is to transcend the ego and experience the Spirit of God. In addition, it says there are four stages. These are belief, a search for knowledge, understanding and realization. This is so concise that it is difficult to improve on it. Yet, Buddhism has one other stage after attaining understanding. This is application, and they say that it is the ones who apply the teachings that have the essential experience. In the past, this was generally only available to seekers who entered a monastery, but today, because of better education and the availability of good books many are seeking. It is therefore hoped that this present work will offer guidelines on their path. Finally, we can ask what we get out of it. The answer to that is that apart from an inner certainty and an awareness of deep sense of identity, there is the opportunity for a permanent state of love and faith and tranquillity.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Advaita	The Yoga Philosophy of Monism.
Ajna	The sixth chakra, between the eyebrows.
Anahata	The Fourth chakra, in the heart area.
Anamaya	One of the five sheaths. The physical body.
Anandamaya	The spiritual sheath, related to Atma.
Antahkarana	The bridge to the Higher Self, past the Ego.
Arjuna	The hero in the Bhagavad Gita, guided by Krishna.
Ashram	A residential spiritual community where disciples receive guidance.
Astral Body	The psychic desire body. One of the invisible sheaths.
Atma	Pure Spirit.
Atman	The Spiritual Self. The Jivatma, or Monad.
Aura	The corona around a person.
Bhagavad Gita	The allegorical Hindu scripture in which Krishna guides Arjuna.
Bhakti	Love, devotion, especially to God.
Bhuloka	The loka related to the Muladhara chakra.
Bhuhariloka	The loka related to the Swadisthana chakra.
Bindu	A tiny point of blue light visible at the advanced stages of meditation. A manifestation of the True Self.
Blue Star	The Blue Bindu. The Blue Pearl described by Muktananda.
Buddhi	Intuition. The fourth level of Consciousness, related to the sixth chakra.
Causal Body	The Egoic Body or Egoic lotus. The main centre of the human being in the subtle body. It contains the Blue Star.
Ch'an	A Chinese adaption of Buddhism (Zen in Japan).
Chakra	An energy centre in the subtle body. A centre of Consciousness.
Consciousness	Awareness and perception relative to the stage of development.
Darshan	The blessing from a Guru or Saint.
Deva	A spiritual being, an angel.
Dharma	Spiritual Truth. The Absolute. The Spirit.
Dhyana	Meditation by focussed concentration. A form of Yoga described in the sixth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita.

Ego	The lower point of identity, or selfhood.
Esoteric	Secret or hidden, as with knowledge.
Etheric Body	The energy body, bio-field, or subtle body.
Fire	Kundalini Fire, Cosmic Fire, Shakti.
Gita	A Hindu scripture, as in the Bhagavad Gita.
Guru	A spiritual teacher.
Host	A Zen term for the Self. The Prince. The Spiritual Self.
Householder	A spiritual devotee who lives in the ordinary world.
Ida	The cool subtle nerve or nadi on the left of the Sushumna.
Indra	A god in Hindu scriptures.
Inner awareness	The awareness of the spiritual Self, inner worlds or inner state of experience.
Janaloka	The loka relating to the Vishudda chakra.
Japa	Chanting of a mantra or the Lord's name.
Jivatma	The spiritual Self. The True Self as opposed to the Ego sense of self.
Jnana	Knowledge, wisdom and spiritual insight.
Jnani	One who follows the Path of spiritual knowledge.
Karma	Cause and effect in the actions of personal life.
Krishna	An incarnation of Vishnu. The teacher in the Bhagavad Gita.
Kundalini	The basic cosmic energy or cosmic fire. The Shakti that resides in the base chakra and rises to stimulate other Chakras.
Liberation	Spiritual freedom from rebirth in this world.
Logos	The Lord of the Planet, or The Lord of the Sun.
Loka	An inner dimension. A subtle world or level of awareness.
Mahaloka	The loka related to the Anahata chakra. Literally, the Great Loka.
Manamaya	One of the sheaths. The mental sheath.
Manas Mind.	The mental faculty.
Manipura	The third chakra.
Mantra	A sacred affirmation.

Maya	Illusion that the world is the only reality. The illusion that solid, tangible objects exist is created by the senses.
Minister	A Zen term for the Ego. Its duty is to minister to the Prince or Self.
Monad	A term used by Leibnitz and Blavatsky to define the Spiritual Self.
Muladhara	The chakra at the base of the spine.
Nadis	The invisible nerves in the subtle body.
Near Death Experience	A temporary cessation of physical consciousness.
Nirvana	The Buddhist term for spiritual liberation and bliss.
OM or Aum	The Holy Sound of Creation.
OM Shanti	A blessing: "Peace be with you".
Out of the Body Experience	A state of awareness not dependant on the body.
Personality	The persona or mask and façade that hides the true Self and the spiritual nature. The sense of selfhood in ordinary life.
Pingala	The nadi on the right side of the Sushumna.
Prana	The primal cosmic energy. An aspect of Shakti.
Pranamaya	The Astral body, called the Vital by Auribindu. The astral sheath.
Prince	A Zen term for the Self. The Host.
Raja Yoga	The Royal Yoga. A system of mental discipline set out by Patanjali.
Rama	A traditional Hindu name for God.
Sadhana	The Path of spiritual discipline.
Sadhaka	One who seeks spiritual unfoldment.
Sahasrar	The spiritual centre at the crown of the head.
Satsang	A gathering of devotees to listen to spiritual instruction.
Satyaloka	The loka related to the Sahasrar center.
Self	The Spiritual Self or Jivatama. The inner identity beyond the Ego.
Self-Nature	The Spiritual Nature of the Self. The God-Nature.
Shakti	Kundalini Energy.
Shiva	The Supreme Deity. A Hindu name for God.
Siddha	A fully enlightened Yogi. An Enlightened Master.
Siddhis	Supernatural powers.

Supreme Self the Sun.	The All Embracing Spirit that is the ultimate Self in all beings. Surya, Lord of A Hindu name for God.
Sushumna	The central nadi or subtle nerve in the spine.
Sutra	A religious aphorism. A Scriptural Rule.
Swadisthana	The second chakra below the navel.
Swarloka	The loka relating to the Manipura chakra.
Swami	A spiritual teacher.
Tapaloka	The loka relating to the Ajna chakra.
Turya	A transcendental state of Consciousness beyond deep sleep.
Turytita	The state beyond Turya.Spiritual Consciousness.
Upasaka	A Zen term for a lay disciple.
Vedanta	The spiritual philosophy of the Vedas.
Vedas	The great Hindu scriptures.
Vijnanamaya	One of the sheaths. The intelligence sheath equated with Buddhi.
Vishudda	The fifth chakra near the throat.
Vyasa	A philosopher and poet, said to be the author of the Bhagavad Gita.
Yama	The Lord of Death.
Yoga	A discipline aimed at union with God.
Zen	A Japanese adaptation of Chinese Ch'an (Buddhism).

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