

STUDY ROOM

RETREAT

Retreat

ISSUE No. SEVEN

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VIBRATIONS
IN FOOD

PUTTING
SPIRITUALITY
INTO ACTION

CHAOS AS
THE ENZYME
OF CHANGE

ACTORS EGO

and

THE DEVIL
HIMSELF!



Are you Living Values?

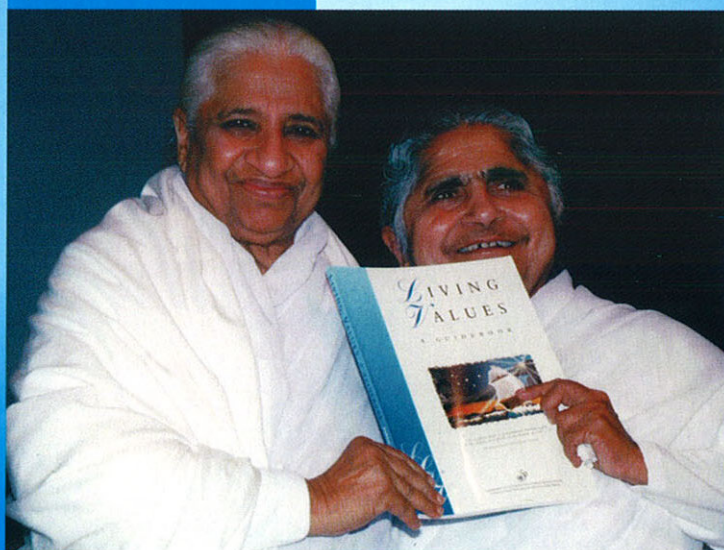


“At the heart of our modern human dilemmas, whether it is poverty, homelessness, mass persecution or interpersonal conflict there is a crisis of values.” Values are defined by the things we care about most in terms of people, processes and objects, and most significantly, our personal experiences. Our values are revealed by the direction of our attention and the quality of our care. Human life is an expression of attending and caring, so our ability to value never dies. However it does deteriorate.”

Invitation to The Mt Abu Forum 1996
on Living Values in an Interdependent World.

“Is love a value or a virtue? Certainly, love is the most sought after feeling and most valuable human experience. The paradox is that we already have what we seek because the human spirit is made of spiritual love. It is the primary virtue of everyone of us. Now dimly lit in our awareness, only the love of God can rekindle the flame of true love for ourselves and for others. This is when your virtue has true value and you value the virtue in others.”

Dadi Prakashmani



“Our values guide our thoughts and our thoughts are the seeds of our words and actions. It is so important that each one of us should ask ourselves, ‘what are my values in life?’ Only then might we stop using our energy in the criticism of the actions of others. Acceptance of others can only be unconditional when we see and value them as they really are, spiritual beings, and not based on what they have done.”

Dadi Janki

As the crisis in human affairs continue to increase in number and frequency on all five continents the Brahma Kumaris continue to pursue their purpose of restoring peace to the world.

In celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the UN the Brahma Kumaris third international project “Sharing Our Values for a Better World” is reaching into communities in over 60 countries with the aim of providing people with the opportunity to rediscover and develop spiritual values in their lives. This is being achieved to a large extent through the recent publication of a Guidebook entitled “Living Values.”

“Living Values” is a source of ancient and recent wisdom on values, and a resource of educational tools and processes. Twelve key spiritual values are given definition, and there are over forty workshop processes and formats which can be used to facilitate the development of spiritual values in the context of organisation, community, school and family life.

The Living Values Guidebook is now available through the National Co-ordinating Office of the Brahma Kumaris in your country or directly from BK Literature, Global Co-operation House, 65 Pound Lane, London NW10 2HH
Tel 0181 459 1400 Fax 0181 459 6793

Dadi Prakashmani and Dadi Janki, the Joint Administrative Heads of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University opening and presenting the BKs gift to a troubled world - The Living Values Guidebook at a celebration of the Sharing our Values for a Better World Project in London. Both Dadis have spent their lives studying, demonstrating and teaching spiritual values worldwide.

LIVING
VALUES
A GUIDEBOOK



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RETREAT



ISSUE No. 7

COVER

Cover illustration by Paula Kenevan, originally painted on silk using a 'resist technique'.

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PRINTED BY

Waterside Litho,

Chesham, UK

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ISSN 1353 - 811X

The Return to Simplicity

There's a revolution going on in the workplace. Many people now have first hand experience of the effects of downsizing, rightsizing and flattening, as organisations transform their structures and systems. With the trend towards fewer people doing more work in less time many have lost their job in what is described in nineties-speak as 'freeing up your future'!

Meanwhile another revolution, not unconnected, is happening in the arena of personal lifestyle. In the context of accelerating change, a new way of freeing up the future has emerged and is gathering pace known as 'downshifting'. Totally disillusioned by fast and ruthless city lifestyles, thousands are now choosing to simplify their lives in radical but not outlandish ways. Out is the home full of personal possessions, out are massive savings at the bank, out is career ambition, out is city life and out is an identity based on what you do, what you have or who you know. But this is not a drop out culture. It is a move from city to country as part of an intelligent choice of those who simply want to uncomplicate and slow down their lives after a decade of exponential growth, and an increasing takeover by technology.

Downshifting, they say, is not a cop out, not a rejection of society but simply a recognition of a basic need to live at a proper pace, in right relationship with time and space. It is an expression of a need to reconnect with others and most of all the self. It is also motivated by a need to rekindle the spark of personal creativity.

Downshifting your lifestyle is a return to natural spirituality - the rediscovery of simplicity and balance, and the achievement of contentment without dependence on achievement.

This issue of Retreat Magazine sets out to feed that need in us all. A need for simple truths, simple insights, simply expressed and simply understood.

Welcome to No 7. It's simply great to have you with us.

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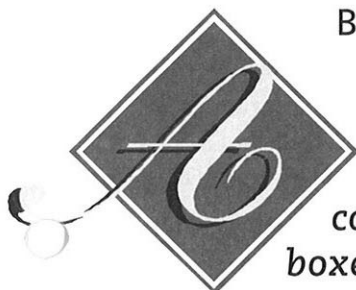
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Food for Thought



Barbara Ramsay reflects on what's good in food and best in diet



Always read the fine print, used to refer to mortgages, contracts and important business deals. Now it's cereal boxes, soup cans and bottles of juice. We stand in supermarkets peering at labels, trying to decipher strange codes with numbers attached, and search for things that are 'poly' or 'mono' or 'un'. When Linus refused to eat his peanut butter sandwich and Lucy demanded to know why, he looked at her with horror and said, "Look at the label on the jar. This thing is full of ingredients!"

The food pundits have a lot to answer for. They say we shouldn't eat dairy foods. They cause mucus. Vegies are okay but watch out for the dreaded eggplant. It has the same cellular structure as a cancer cell. A tomato? Well, that's part of the deadly nightshade family. Follow 'Pritikin' and you'll eat lots

of grain before noon. Be macrobiotic and you'll eat almost nothing else all day. "Live mostly on fruit but always cook it," they say. Except, of course, for the ones who say, "live mostly on fruit, but never, under any circumstances, cook it." And it's not only eating that's fraught with danger.

Drinking is almost as complicated. Hot chocolate is out, after all, it's made with milk. Coffee? You might as well say 'arsenic'.



Tea is almost worse than coffee because it not only has caffeine, it also has tannic acid. Soft drinks don't have tannic acid, but they do have the caffeine. They also have sugar, except for the diet type, and they're all mini chemical factories just looking for a stomach to pollute. Juice should be freshly squeezed or it has no nutritional value at all and for heaven's sake don't drink it with anything else. Of course, there's always water, but the stuff from the tap is full of dreadful things and the stuff that bubbles up from springs - well, who knows what's in the ground these days. There's always mineral water, but then the minerals aren't really all that good for you. Listen to it all and you'll end up living on distilled water and windfall apples, and I'm not too sure about the apples.



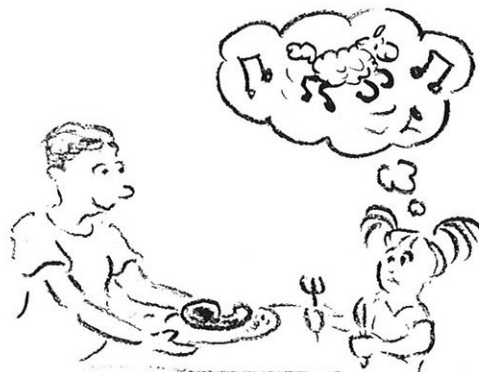
Then there's the 'vegetarian' question, a subject that has caused many a long discussion with friends. For me, when my daughter was small and we'd just been singing 'Mary had a little lamb' and then there were chops for dinner, it gripped my mind and wouldn't let go. But... if I say I don't eat anything that thinks, or is conscious, huge debates spring up filled with facts about carrots that scream when you cut them, and questions like "how can you prove a fish thinks?" To save the trouble, I just say I don't eat anything that has a face. No matter what our food choices or opinions of all the arguments, with all the

facts and figures, the speculations and investigations, something very important is usually left out.



Food feeds more than just the stomach and it nourishes more than just the body. Food comforts the heart as well. After all, how many mothers offer a cookie as well as a hug when a child falls down? When food is given with loving hands, it has the power to soothe a crying child. Even when we're grown, its power to comfort is still there. In many cultures, when someone is bereaved, it's traditional for neighbours and friends to bring food to the house. Far more than simply saving the mourning from having to cook, it means "I care ... I'm here ... there is life after this".

Celebrations too, often have food at their heart. We invite people to share a meal as a sign of friendship, and we celebrate birthdays with a cake. And what is nicer, warmer or more friendly than to bake something sweet for people you care about?



Life being what it is, there are lots of special treats for the palate and the tummy and the heart that will never disappear, whether or not they're good for us, and the most important of these are the things that are made by hand, by someone you know.



Sure, cakes and biscuits from the supermarket, or frozen dinners and tins of things save people lots of time. There's no reading of recipes or spending extra time in the kitchen or washing up afterwards. But you can't make them carefully, with love, and they will never fill the kitchen with the good smells of culinary care and cosiness. You can't serve them still warm from the oven and you can't bake them with your children.

But there is even more to home cooked food than the way it tastes and the way it smells. More, even, than the act of sharing. Though it's true that "We are what we eat", it's even more true that "We are what we think", for the human mind is a powerful thing. Few people these days would doubt that our minds send out vibrations constantly and that these vibrations affect the world. It's something that people seem to have sensed on an instinctive level.

Once when I was small, I remember overhearing my mother talk about a quarrel and the

atmosphere it left. "You could cut the air with a knife," she said. To my child's mind this was incredibly vivid. I could almost see that air ... thick and kind of gluey. It would be hard to walk against such air, I thought, and impossible to run or skip. For a long time whenever there was a quarrel, I looked hard, trying to actually see the air in the room, but I didn't have to get much older before I understood what she meant.



they arrive as pictures and sound, clear enough for anyone to see.

The only reason we don't look at television as a little cosmic, the only reason we don't view it with scepticism, is because we're used to it.

With the click of a switch, light happens, and we never waste any time considering how impossible that seems. Indeed, if it depended on our belief, we'd probably still be living in the dark. Some miracles we're used to and some are simply still new to us.

When we are cooking, our minds are working, minds do that all the time, whether we want them to or not. That's what our minds do. When we are stirring and rolling and baking, we're thinking, and thinking creates vibrations, whether we want it to or not, because that's what thoughts do. If we are thinking positive thoughts, then our vibrations are happy, peaceful ones and these affect the food, so they will affect the people who eat the food.

Except in places where survival is so hard that food simply holds the body and the soul together, the sharing of it has always been part of deeply significant moments ... milestones in life; the wedding breakfast, the christening feast, the funeral feast, the shared feast of

thanksgiving that commemorates an older sharing of food between two cultures. Even the words 'breaking bread', signify friendship and peace. Deeply spiritual moments use food as their coin of passage, whether in the West, where Christ and his disciples shared the Last Supper, or in the East, where worshippers are given food that has been offered in temples or cooked in remembrance of God.

Thoughts are powerful and the vibrations created by what we think affect Life. If our thoughts are filled with negativity, if we cook when we are angry or upset, we run the risk, like an old wives' tale, of metaphorically 'curdling the sauce'. Cook with care, cook with



love and know that this is one miracle you have control over ... one miracle you can perform.

It's in our power to give this miracle, like a gift, to the people who eat what we cook. It's in our power to give them food that holds peace and love and warmth and even a little bit of magic. We must never forget that in the best of recipes, love is the secret ingredient.

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Barbara Ramsay is a Freelance Writer based in Melbourne, Australia



In the days of the happy hippies and the flower children, people said, 'Good vibes, man', or 'heavy'. It made total sense. An atmosphere filled with antagonism or jealousy or anger is heavy and it does create a feeling you can almost cut with a knife. We all know these things. There are endless numbers of books written on how to use the right thoughts to create your own life, to change it into what you want it to be. Everyone agrees that thoughts are powerful. It is accepted that our moods can affect the atmosphere. And if the way we think affects the vibrations, it also affects the food we cook. Every day we deal with vibrations that we can't see and yet completely accept. Many of these vibrations travel incredible distances and are picked up so clearly and so strongly that

SPIRITUALITY IN ACTION

Sister Mohini explains how spirituality can powerfully influence every area of your life.



What does it mean to be spiritual?

Does it mean to be no longer concerned with the world of the physical? That you deprive yourself of worldly pleasures and devote the self to the ethereal? What is the purpose of spirituality?

Not to have a clear understanding of these questions is to deny yourself a vital ingredient for your effectiveness and well-being. True spirituality is completely separate from all the channelling, supernatural and occult powers that are so popular nowadays. It is even different from religion. True spirituality is about awareness and behaviour. Very simply, it means to have a good awareness of your own eternal spiritual identity and the kind of values you need to be

living. It means to be totally clear about your inherent worth, and how this can be reflected in your everyday life. Spiritual people are simply people who are succeeding in applying an elevated sense of themselves into the way they are living their lives. The very purpose of spirituality is to make us more effective, by helping us improve our act. Spirituality and action work together! Spirituality brings meaning to our actions, and actions bring purpose to our spirituality.

As vital a part that spirituality plays in our everyday life, nevertheless, effort is required to begin the process. Seeking is a first step. It is natural to seek, to discover what is true, real, immortal. However, there is a step after seeking, which is to start basing everything about you - your thoughts, words, actions, relationships, etc, on what you have found; that is, what it is you have come to know. This is where the effort begins. Take for example, thinking positively. You might, in



the course of your spiritual search, come to understand the power of thought; which kinds of thought are good for you and which not. A positive thought has patience, love or any virtue inherent in it. It is this virtue which makes the thought positive. However, it is only when that virtue is expressed in your attitude, speech or behaviour that spirituality in action begins.

Spirituality in action means to use your spiritual understanding in everyday life. This is what takes effort. There are many who believe that we shouldn't lead lives of effort - that life is for living. They want to keep things easy and use everything around to keep themselves happy. However, is this real? Are we sure we have the wherewithal to really fulfil the need to be happy? From where are such resources being drawn? The reality is quite a different picture. Those resources which are truly able to

fulfil our needs are generally, at this point in time, in a state of great depletion. There is scarcity of both kinds — that which we need internally as well as externally to be really happy. So although life might be ‘just for living’, currently there is something else we need to be doing with it, something we need to be creating and bringing to life. This is something people need to understand: that in addition to life being ‘just for living’, life is also something to make, to create. I’m not saying that simply enjoying life is wrong, but enjoying it and being in charge of it as well - learning to shape and direct it — allows you to get more out of it. For this you need a clear understanding of your inner resources, of how the energies of thought and feeling are formed and what is the source of these energies. This is where a spiritual education can be helpful, which enables you to understand the essential needs of your inner being and fulfil them.

Bringing spirituality into action has a direct and positive effect on at least four specific areas of your life: your (inner) well-being, your effectiveness as a person, your leadership potential and your professional profile. Note how all four of these arenas feed directly into life and your ability to live it! This is in contrast to the popularly held assumption that spirituality should somehow take place separately from life, that the aim of a spiritual practice, indeed the practice itself, needs to happen in isolation from life. In fact, all four of these aspects are examples of how spirituality is to be used in life, how spirituality and action are connected.

Inner Well-Being

The development of inner well-being begins as you learn to take care of two basic (inner) facilities:

the intellect and the mind. The intellect is your intelligence, your ability to make decisions and also, through the ability to focus, to see things clearly. The mind controls thoughts and emotions. The first thing to do is understand what the mind and intellect want. Understanding how they operate helps you to start directing them. In this you also come to understand how you want them to work, what you want out of them. Change begins here.

As you get to know yourself at this level of your being, you will definitely experience inner positive changes, the kind that come from feeling more in charge. These changes lead to progress - a kind of constant personal growth, which is very refreshing. In fact, you can quickly come to feel that life without this kind of energy flow becomes routine, boring and overwhelmed by difficulties. People have been living with inner conflict for so long, many think it is natural and even normal to be in conflict. But actually this kind of inner tension creates a huge loss in your subtle energies. It is as if there is a leak, so that no matter how OK or happy you might be feeling at one moment, in the very next you flip into feelings of frustration, tiredness, loss. Once you start managing the energies of thought better, you will begin to see your problems in a different light. In point of fact, problems are our own creation. The very same situation which is the cause of so much trouble can be turned around and experienced as a tailor-made lesson in life especially designed to help you move forward. Once we start appreciating what, within a problem, is revealing itself as something we need to develop for our own self-progress, we actually grow to like problems, because we see them as a means to move forward. Love is an important factor in this. We need to stop

being so hard on ourselves, and instead bring understanding and respect to our efforts of self-realization. Love goes a long way in resolving conflict - even inner conflict - replacing it with the higher energies of happiness, peace and power.

Personal Effectiveness

The second area which is positively affected by spirituality concerns our ability to manage our everyday responsibilities. In this, concentration and the ability to learn are very important. These are parts of the self that need to grow. It is surprising how many people have difficulty with either or both of these nowadays, because in fact concentration is a natural quality; we are all naturally endowed with the ability to concentrate. However, something has happened to that original nature, lessening our experience of it. What that ‘something’ is, is ego. Ego is what has happened to us. There is so much ego nowadays. This ego is what blocks us, so that we lose our ability to learn or concentrate. Of course this interferes with our ability to be responsible. It makes us less efficient. Spiritual practice teaches you how to dismantle your ego and replace it with self-respect. A spiritual education makes you clear about many things and this clarity becomes a basis for good concentration and learning. It enhances efficiency. Whereas it might have taken you half a day to get a certain task done, you will find you can finish it in less than half an hour. Even work becomes more enjoyable as it takes less time to do more. Whatever skills you have are enhanced.

Leadership Potential

The third area that spirituality affects positively is your leadership potential. A good leader is one who

leads through his/her own example. Spirituality puts you back in touch with your inner resources. As you experiment with these energies (such as patience, far-sightedness, flexibility — all the spiritual values) merging these qualities into your experience and behaviour, there is definitely a positive influence on those around you. The purpose of examining your own spirituality is so that your attitude, outlook and level of energy improves. High energy and a quality performance are two more practical and direct benefits of a spiritual practice.

Professional Development

The final arena which is affected positively by spirituality is your professional life. Here again it will not be a question of sitting back in your 'peace', letting all opportunities for advancement ride by you. There is nothing wrong in being devoted to spiritual progress, and enjoying progress in the physical world as well. On the contrary, year after year I see how many of the people affiliated with this Spiritual University are the ones who are offered promotions. This is because truly spiritual individuals are the most useful and effective employees. Our organisation has been asked so many times to help in the organising and manning of major projects at the United Nations. I believe this is not only because when we work, we work to get the job done, but that work is done from the heart - so it is easy for others to enjoy and appreciate our presence and the work we do. It is another example of spirituality in action. In all four areas of your life, you can see how spirituality enhances your ability to act.

What are the efforts we need to be making in order to introduce into our actions a reliable form of spirituality? The first effort is to

choose some thoughts which will allow you to practise what we call 'the consciousness of your true identity', or soul-consciousness. Try to hold such thoughts in your mind throughout the day. Working with thoughts like these will help you transform your identity from the body to the soul. If you do this even for one week, you will definitely start to feel yourself as a soul: a tiny point of light and energy which is separate from the body. To this practice you can add an hour or half an hour in the morning and evening, of just sitting in the experience of yourself as spirit, turning yourself over completely to your spiritual personality traits of peace and love. Each week you can focus on another aspect of this consciousness - for example the aspect of the relationship between you, the sparkling pure spirit and God, the Supreme power. Ask yourself if you can see that connection, feel it from within. See God's qualities and imagine yourself being filled with them. Efforts like these bring so much in return. Not only do you begin to fill from within and feel the transformation, but whatever you want to achieve begins to happen for you. Honestly, it works!

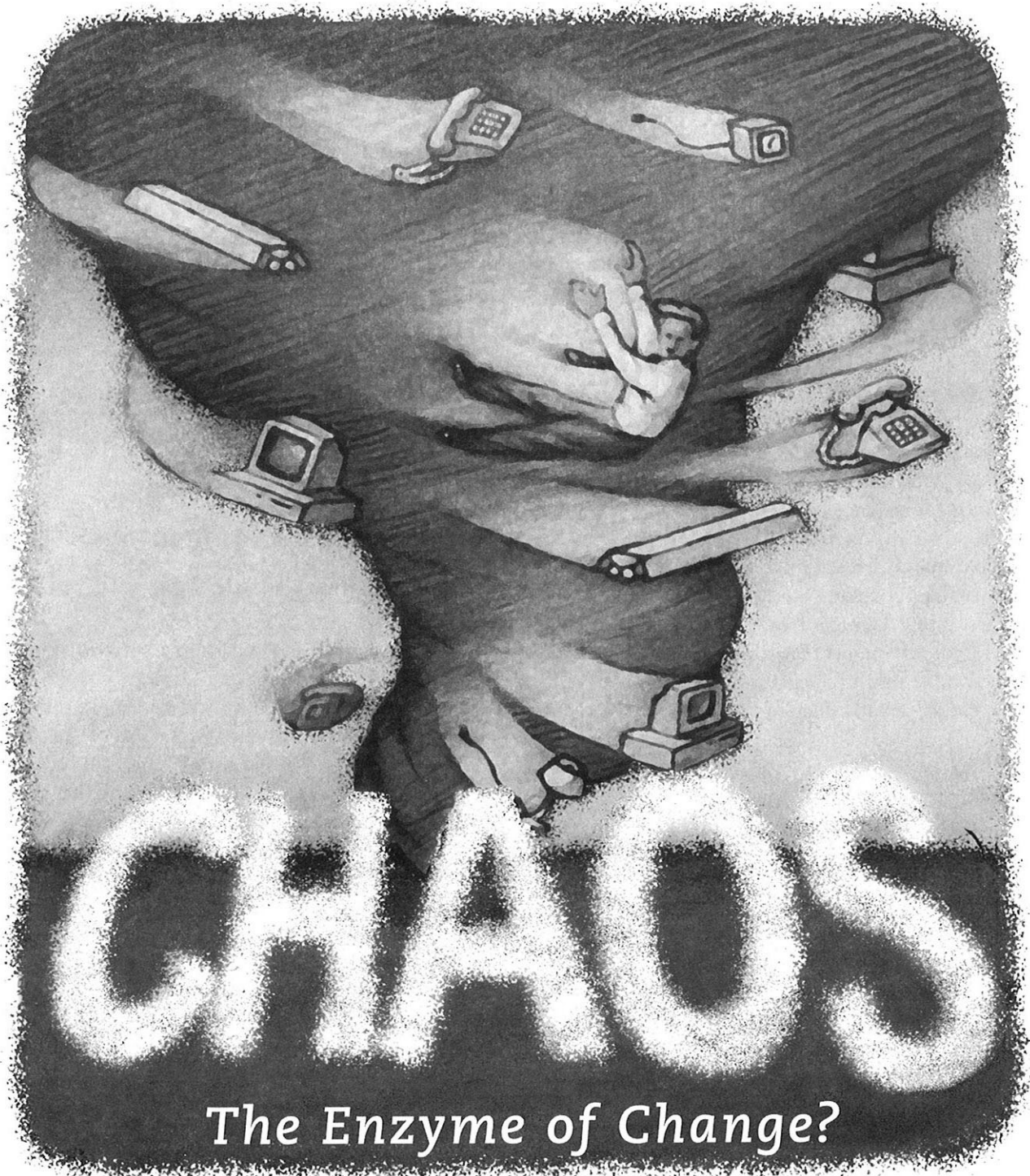
The key is this link with the Supreme, the Source of all light and might. Understand this process. How does the energy of a generator reach the outlets in a home? Wires need to be connected. Before that, the plastic or rubber 'coat' has to be removed, so the link can be made properly, the current can flow and the energy can then be distributed everywhere. The right method has to be applied. In the same way, concerning the Supreme power, God, why is it so difficult to connect with that energy? It is because the 'coat' of body-consciousness still needs to be removed. Otherwise the 'wires'

can't connect. So the first step is to remove the 'rubber insulator' encasing the soul, which we call body-consciousness, i.e. the experience of yourself as a physical identity. This is done through thoughts, as it is through thoughts that consciousness is created. As you create this consciousness of your spiritual identity, you will begin to feel that connection within a few minutes. If you stay in that consciousness for a while you will definitely experience new feelings deep inside. These new feelings will gradually have an influence not just on the way you see things, but on the way you behave, as well.

Spirituality is for helping you to understand and transform yourself. It is for helping you make the most out of your life. It clarifies your ideas and ideals so you can know what you truly want and need. The real changes we all want to see in the world - justice, freedom, equality, abundance, love - will happen when enough individuals again begin living with humanitarian values, from hearts and minds that have been opened and connected. This kind of change happens through spirituality. Simply understand the first step - of connecting yourself. Practise this and just see how your attitudes and inner strength will develop, and how this in turn will influence positively the way you live your life - the way you are. We are an action-oriented species, but we are also very spiritual. Our future depends on how successful we will be in putting the spiritual theory into physical practice.

®

Based in New York, Sister Mohini is the Director of Brahma Kumaris Centres in North and South America



The Enzyme of Change?

Joan Vitello-Cicciu reflects on the dramatic changes taking place in most large organisations



Chaos is everywhere. Virtually every organisation around us is experiencing major shifts. In their book, Breakpoint and Beyond, George Land and Beth Barman tell us that, as we approach the 21st century, we are experiencing breakpoint change.

Breakpoint change is breaking the bond with the past, sweeping us into a massive transformation that vastly alters how we do things.

Have you noticed how every day significant numbers of corporate CEOs are losing their jobs. Have you read about how businesses are reengineering, redesigning or restructuring themselves to become leaner, more profitable and, supposedly, more productive?

The World as a Machine

To understand these changes we have to look back 300 years or so, at how modern science evolved, and we'll see a direct link with current concepts of leadership and organisational development. Modern science is based on a seventeenth century model that saw nature as divided into two separate and independent realms: mind and matter.

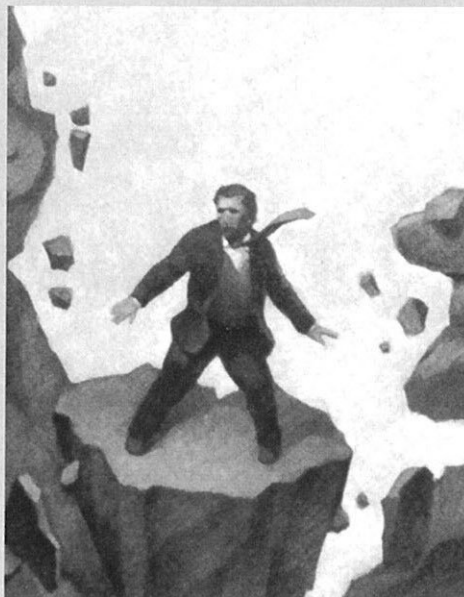
This model sees the material world as distinct pieces assembled into a huge machine. Sir Isaac Newton used the concept when he described classical physics. Scientists used this machine age model to predict and control future outcomes with linear concepts like cause and effect.

Many organisations drew from this image of science. They constructed systems to manage and control themselves as if they were machines. They separated things into parts. This made it easier to measure and control their functions. In these organisational machines, people were seen as equipment. And like equipment, people were best understood by reducing them to finite parts, like an extra pair of hands.

Roles were created to maintain order. Lines of authority were drawn to define limits of influence. Scientific data collection and

analysis tools became management tools. Decisions were based entirely upon numbers that were thought to reflect cause and effect and enabled organisations to predict their results. Overall, this emphasis on structure and parts served organisations well. They grew and they thrived for quite a long time.

But here's what happened to so-called modern science. Twentieth century scientists were rudely forced to recognise the limitations



of Newton's basic concepts when they struggled to describe what was happening at the level of the atom. In his book, *The Turning Point*, physicist Fritjof Capra tells us how confused these scientists became.

Every time they asked nature a question in an atomic experiment, nature replied with a paradox. The more they tried to clarify the situation, the sharper the paradoxes became. It grew from being just an intellectual problem into an intense emotional and existential issue.

In their struggle to understand this new reality, scientists became painfully aware that their fundamental concepts, their language and their whole way of thinking are entirely inadequate to describe what happens at the level of an atom. As a result, these altered perceptions led to a new physics with a profound change in how scientists conceive space, time, cause and effect.

Grounding Organisations in Today's Science

Today, organisations that were designed around Newtonian concepts are confronting the same paradoxes faced by scientists. Managers involved in organisational change described it as "being mired in the habit of solutions that once worked yet are now totally inappropriate, of having rug after rug pulled from beneath us, whether by a corporate merger, reorganisation, downsizing or a level of personal disorientation."

Margaret Wheatley, a well known organisational development expert and author of *Leadership and the New Science*, teaches us to embrace whatever despair we may be feeling as a step back on the road to wisdom, encouraging us to sit in the unfamiliar seat of not knowing and opening ourselves to radically new ideas. She says that if we tolerate the confusion, then one day we will begin to see a whole new landscape, one of bright illumination that will dispel the oppressive shadows of our ignorance. We will then be able to see how our own actions create the problems we encounter.

Chaos: An Enzyme for Hospitals?

With a specific focus on hospitals, which is the organisational context I am most familiar with, I see hospitals as living systems whose primary protoplasm is the nurse. This perspective requires us to examine the natural processes by which living systems grow and thrive. Believe it or not, one of these processes is a periodic dive into chaos. Chaos is a significant enzyme in the process that living systems use to evolve in their environment.

We are terrified by chaos because we interpret it as loss, especially loss of control. But the chaos in healthcare today gives hospitals an *e n v i a b l e* opportunity to adapt and change, because it creates the kind of tension needed to grow.

The only hospitals that will be able to discover the endless possibilities that exist in chaotic situations are the ones where people have become flexible, creative and resilient. Hospitals that reflect the machine age theories of Sir Isaac Newton will drown in the seas of change. Their efforts to adapt will amount to nothing more than rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.

Margaret Wheatley goes on to tell us that when a system is in chaos, information needs to be open and abundant, not protected by organisational chastity belts where only those who need to know have the key. Because information is power, it needs to flow through

organisations. Power cannot be limited to people in certain positions or levels. Leaders who make information freely available know that this is the way to bring order to a chaotic situation.

We have all met people who use information as a tool to give them power. Traditionally they were trained to see information as power that is controlled, filtered and fed to select people in small doses. Isn't it time for managers and



administrators to understand that information is the fuel that living systems use to transform themselves for the betterment of all?

Hospitals with strong values and a clear core mission, the ones that encourage all members to form shared visions based upon that mission and those values, are the ones that will be able to cope with dynamic change. Anyone who works in those hospitals will be able to answer questions like: Why does our hospital exist? What are we trying to accomplish? They won't have memorised a hospital's mission statement because the Joint Commission is coming next week. They will be co-creators of the mission statement.

Redefining an Organisation

I was recently pointed towards a wonderful description by Theodore Lowe and Gerald McBean of an organisation that has redefined itself according to the new science of our time. Here's what it says:

Let's imagine a place to work where fear is replaced by hope, trust and honesty. Where we define our customers and not the boundaries to our job. Where we control processes not people. Where power is replaced by accountability. Where we view problems as opportunities and where we address them by learning what is wrong, not who is wrong. Where we measure systems instead of people and define procedures instead of authority. Where we ask, "How can I help?" rather than "It's not my job." Imagine and believe!

I believe that for organisations to truly be driven by customers' needs, managers and administrators must abolish dysfunctional hierarchies, relinquish command and control practices, and create an environment that truly empowers people and promotes connectedness.

®

Joan Vitello-Cicciu, RN, MSN, CCRN, CS, FAAN is a surgical clinical nurse specialist in critical care at Boston University Medical Center Hospital. She served as the 1994-95 President of the American Association of Critical Care Nurses, the world's largest speciality nursing organisation.

This article is an edited extract from a paper delivered to the 1995 National Teaching Institute and Critical Care Exposition, New Orleans.

My God

LC: Trinity Church is the oldest church in America. It was founded in 1693. And it sits right at the head of Wall Street, the financial centre of the world. It is very wealthy, probably only second to the Vatican. Being assigned there I felt I could accomplish tremendous things. And I guess being an African American in a predominantly white denomination made it even more special. The disadvantage of being related to such an institution is, however, that I had to be very careful about what I said and how I said it. I sometimes found myself at odds both at the level of spirituality I was trying to engender and also at the level of commitment to peace and justice. That made it very difficult for me. I found after a while that I was in a vision-clash between myself and some of the powers-that-be in Trinity. And so in the spring of '93 there was a mutual parting of ways.

TT: That must have been a painful experience.

LC: It was really painful. I felt that the direction I was heading in as leader in the Episcopal church had been turned. I felt derailed. I wish that after that experience I had gone into a period of rest and

Lloyd Casson has been a priest to the Anglican Church for thirty years. His commitment to peace and justice has not made his career an easy one, but he believes it has brought him closer to God. During a recent visit to the Global Retreat Centre in Oxford he talked to Dutch Journalist Tijn Touber about meditation, prayer and his relationship with God.

meditation.

But what I did is what we all so often do when we have these kind of problems: I emerged myself in an immediate frenzy of work. I sought interviews. I tried to find elsewhere in the church where I might be assigned. I even looked outside the church, wondering whether I ought to work for the UN. I really went through a lot of pain.

TT: What for you is the difference between meditation and prayer?

LC: Prayer for me is talking to God, which is a wonderful thing to do. And I do pray, I pray formally, with the regular prayers of the church on a daily basis, morning and evening prayer. I pray when I am in situations of distress: "Oh God, help me." Sometimes it is a longer prayer than that. I pray when I am with people who are in distress.

We sit down and I say: "Let's pray." We hold hands and become quiet, then I may lead a prayer asking God to be with us in this time of despair or pain. As a child I prayed that I would pass an examination.

Meditation requires more listening to God. Meditation turns me inward. It is a time for remembrance. In a way it might even be called a déjà vu experience. One remembers beyond the present. One remembers the long past, remembers that God always has been. We have a prayer in our Church which is called the Gloria: "As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever." In meditation I experience God who was, is now

and will be forever, because in the final analysis this is what sustains us. This is why and how we can move on in our lives. No matter what circumstances we may find ourselves in, whether we are poor or oppressed, in a class that is discriminated against, sick, anything, knowing that all these things, my body, my life, will all fall away, but that God always is.

There is something about meditation that helps us to get in touch with other realities. To get in touch with the fact that this earthbound existence is not forever and that there is a way to make contact with the eternal. And to experience my own eternity, my own imperishable soul and to give grateful thanks to God for that.

TT: How do you see God?

LC: That's a hard question. I see God with more than my eyes. I have learned to see God as the Supreme Soul, as a spark of energy which is ongoing and forever, and who is the source of all light and love and energy and peace. That's helpful for me, to have a visual sense of God. Certainly God is not the old man up in the sky with the white beard. But I also have a sense of God that I really have a hard time describing. I can only say: vast, and that isn't enough. I can only say: eternal, forever, and that isn't enough.

TT: In religion we sometimes learn that God is so far away. We learn He is vast and beyond and that it is impossible for us 'small human beings' to ever reach out and

communicate with God. Is it possible for everyone to get in touch with God?

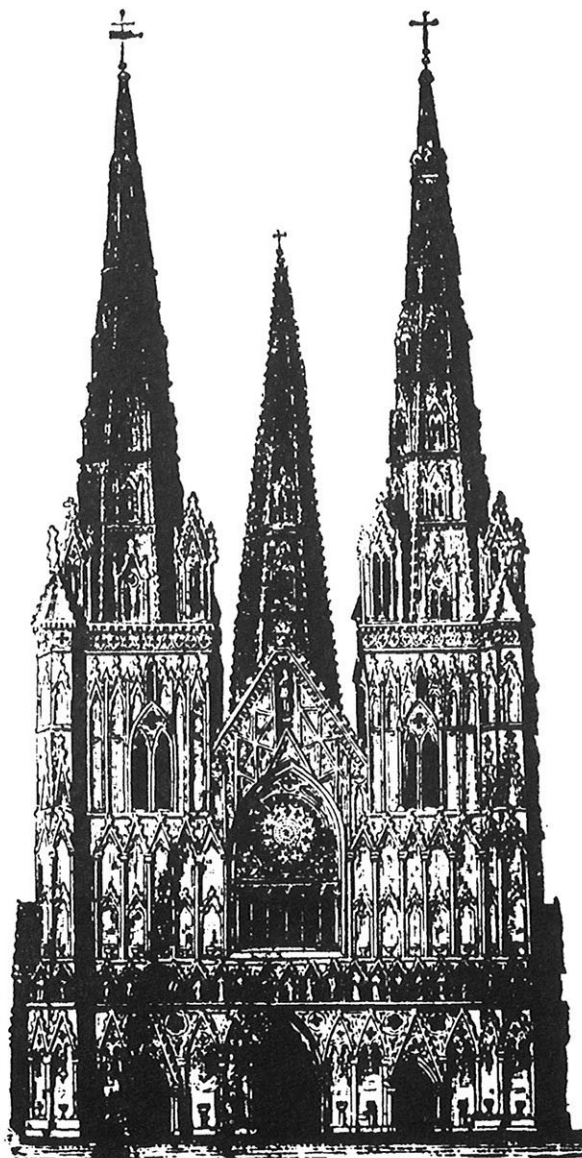
LC: I believe we can all get in touch with God. Jesus referred to God as Abba. That word means Daddy. Call God Daddy. Be a son, a child of God. God loves you like a father, like a mother. So, we can use words like eternal, vast and unreachable but the same God is the Father of each of us and loves each one of us almost as if there were no other person. There are other endearing names for God. Names that make you feel

embraced by God. That you are nursed by God as a mother nurses her children. And that you are in the arms of a strong father. God is for us precisely what we need at any given moment. There are times when we need God as father. There are times when we need God as mother, as teacher, lover, friend. And God is all of these.

Thanks to the feminist movement, we have become more aware of not only using the words 'he' and 'him', but also 'she' or even 'it'. I am often reminded in my work that to use the image of father for God is not always good, because human fathers have often not been good. But I do think however that it is a mistake to project earthly things onto God. It should be the other way around. We should say: Yes, it is true that often earthly fathers have not really been very nice. But do you really want to know what father is like? Do you really want to know what mother is like? Do you want to know what parenting really is? Go to God!

TT: What was the greatest lesson you learnt in the process of letting go of your position at Trinity Church?

LC: I have come to understand that when we allow anything like position to define us, that we are on the wrong track. Ultimately the real definition of ourselves has nothing to do with any of these things. Whether it is a position, our race, our name, class, possessions... none of these are really the source of our identity. Now, I had



known that before intellectually, I have even said this in sermons. But when you are in the hot seat, you don't always see what others can see and help you to see. But thank God I was helped to see this from friends.

TT: Has this experience brought you closer to God?

LC: Very much so. I am grateful for the experience. For a long time I was really angry. I had visions of Trinity Church blowing up. Isn't that terrible? It reminded me of my own humanness, my own weakness. Lest I forget that I am not God. God does wish for me perfection and I am on my way, but I have certainly not arrived yet. I do feel so much closer to God now. I feel led through the whole process. I don't mean that I believe that God creates these awful experiences: "I am going to teach Lloyd a lesson, I am going to topple him from his great position at Trinity Church." No, it doesn't happen that way. But God supercedes, overcomes the power of any event and asserts divine power and divine light. And so through the event, no matter what the event is, God's light is shed upon us. In God's light we don't stumble, we walk a straight path. I feel that I am becoming more what God intends me to be.

TT: Many religious traditions today feel threatened by spiritual movements. How do you feel about this?

LC: Mainline traditional religions, like other institutions, have become institutions. And like many institutions the mission of the

institution unfortunately becomes secondary to what becomes the primary mission: to survive as an institution. And so the structures become its primary concern. After a while they forget that they are to be living, to be fire, to be transformers of society. They become identical with society. It is so easy for us to become so identified to society that we lose



sight of our real self. We become more conscious of our physical bodies and our institutions, the extensions of our own physical bodies. The church in my view has become very body conscious, very conscious of its earthly structures. I think that if we would maintain our connection with our spiritual identity that we would not feel threatened by spiritual groups. There is such a hunger these days. People are longing for real meaning in life. They are often turned off by the churches because we don't

seem to be providing answers to their deepest questions. The deep, longing questions that are piercing people's hearts today have to do with "What is the meaning of it all?" And often our answers come back in: "Women should not be priests", or "the liturgy should be celebrated in this way", or "we must not get involved in life-issues." etc, etc.

TT: Is it because the church-leaders don't know the answers to these questions or that they do not take time for themselves to formulate these questions and to answer them?

LC: I think that there are leaders who do have the answers and who do know, who are lights and who are making efforts in that direction. They do open their arms to some of the spiritual movements that they recognise as being a gift to call us back to something. But my guess is that many of the leaders in our churches are people who are really just part of this world and are grounded in it. And I hesitate to say this, because I really don't want to sound as if I am down on the church - I

love the church and I will always probably be in the church and a servant of the church - but my guess is that many of us are blind to those realities, are caught, are trapped in our bodies; trapped in our material understanding. And so when we see the global recession that we are experiencing, we become as frightened as the rest of them. Our concern becomes to keep the church together, whatever it takes.

TT: In Christianity there is the idea

that we should fear God. Many people have been brought up with tremendous feelings of guilt and shame; like a heavy load has been put on our shoulders. We feel that God will punish us for our sins. Is this the correct view of God?

LC: I can only tell you how I feel personally. The word fear was translated from the Hebrew Bible, but also from the Greek New Testament. The word for fear most often meant awe, respect, reverence for God, which turned into fear, being afraid of Big Daddy who's going to punish us and beat us. And there may perhaps - and this is pretty heavy - even have been political purposes behind this sort of thing. Religion was often used as a way of controlling people. Which is unfortunate, but true. That's not true in every generation, it is not even true of every church all the time. But there have been times when the Church amassed a lot of power and used that power to control the minds, hearts and bodies of people. We must understand that God's love is unambiguous and unconditional. And God's forgiveness is unconditional. Christians say that the suffering of Christ was a way in which God demonstrated His unconditional love to the world. The worst that humanity could do to humanity was done. And yet it did not accomplish its goal. That's what the resurrection means. It is essential that people experience forgiveness so that they can get on with their lives. One of the problems with guilt is that, as a result, people don't get on with their lives. Often they are so defined by the guilt that they can't change, they can't grow. Life becomes one massive cover-up. And not only do they cover up their own guilt from themselves, but somehow they take their own guilt and project it onto others and try to destroy what they hate in themselves in other people. It is

what is referred to as the shadow. We project our shadows onto other people and then hate other people for what we hate in ourselves. I often refer to this to demonstrate what it means to say: Christ died for our sins, he bore our sins. That crowd of people saw this perfect human being and projected all of their own shadow on to him. They demonised him, criminalised him. And so he bore all of their sins. His resurrection demonstrates that he took that sin into himself and because he lives all that sin has been done away with. So that's the worst you can do, and even then God forgives.

TT: *Speaking of forgiveness: could it be that what brought us so far away from God is maybe that we cannot forgive ourselves?*

LC: Precisely. That is the big problem. It is hard for us to imagine that we can be forgiven when we do not really have love for ourselves. Jesus said: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all of your heart, mind, strength, soul and you shall love your neighbour as you love yourself". We often overlook the 'as you love yourself.' You cannot love your neighbour, if you do not love yourself. And you cannot accept forgiveness if you do not love yourself. We can define ourselves by our sin and say 'I am unworthy' long after God pronounces us worthy. And so we continue to act unworthy. But, this vicious cycle can be broken at any moment.

TT: *How?*

LC: Simply by remembering God's unconditional love. And remembering that sin is not our natural form. There has been a lot of confusion about this in the church down through the ages. We have taken the notion that somehow evil is inherent in us, and that it takes something outside of

us to make us right; that it took Christ to make us better. But that is not so. I repeat: that is not so. What is so, is that Jesus came to demonstrate that deep down inside we are good. And he wanted to call us back to who we are. It wasn't a new idea. He came to remind us of a very old idea. It's as old as we are. It even says so in the scriptures, that God created us and called us good.

TT: *How can we find God again?*

LC: The answer my friend is blowing in the wind.

TT: *What do you mean?*

LC: I mean it is around, it is there for us to see. I think it is blowing in the wind today, because everything is breaking up before our very eyes: the institution of the Church, governments, nations are fragmenting. None of the things that used to define us are stable any more. And I think it's our good fortune, because we have to ask: All right, if not this, then what? The answer is really not all that hard. The answer is the peace and the love and the light which is God and which is in each of us. And if we are ever able to really, truly discover who we are, I think the transformation of this world into the kingdom of God - as we Christians refer to it, but call it Golden Age, New Life - is assured.

But I do think we have got to go through something before that. But it's not different from what every human being has to go through. We will each experience our own Armageddon, our own apocalyptic time, when everything is turned upside down. But then, out of those ashes rises the Phoenix of new life. ®

Tijn Touber is a Freelance Journalist based in Amsterdam

The Dreams are Not Lost

The peace, lightness, and contentment experienced with a spiritual orientation to life is wonderful.

The times of complete inner harmony increase.

There is a natural appreciation of the beauty of nature and others. Coping with difficult situations becomes easy. There is joy in knowing I am becoming what I always dreamed I could. Depression seems far away.

Diane Tillman reveals the causes and cures for an increasingly common and frequent experience.

Depression

And then... old habits of critical thinking or ways of reacting re-emerge. Understanding the lows can be very useful in shortening those periods of time, so that the highs enjoyed so much can be experienced again.

Depression is a difficult 'low' as the pain, misery or sadness can be intense and is often accompanied by the feeling of permanence - that we will always feel this way. In the counselling I do with children, depression often occurs as a response to loss, or to a perceived negative change of environment. The children might be grieving over the loss of a parent, reacting to an unnurturing or unsafe atmosphere, or feeling rejected by their peers. Depression is part of the grieving process, grieving the loss of a dream. It seems that all

people I have ever worked with share a common dream: a desire to be happy and content within, to be loved and valued in relationships — to be part of a secure world. Spiritual knowledge adds new elements to the traditional understanding of psychology in this area. The teachings of Raja Yoga advise that our natural state is to be peaceful and full. Hence, the first relationships enacted within the dimension of soul-consciousness operate with the laws of love. When people begin a spiritual

path there is instant relief in the initial freedom from the dynamics of ego and power that seem to rule the modern world. The dream of being complete is experienced through meditation, and the hope that is generated fuels a spiritual high. The dynamic of feeling a loss of love, security and hope is the same for all people experiencing depression.

In a state of deep depression or intense emotional pain the feelings can be overwhelming. There is almost a 'wailing' inside. This intense suffering is usually out of proportion to the situation which occurred. Spiritual knowledge again provides a new explanation. It is understood that the pain is much larger than the precipitating event as we have triggered an old personality tendency developed over many births. The pain is so deep as it is a compilation of the feelings undergone when feeling abandoned. This is why the experience of grieving over the loss of love feels so 'old', so eternal. Once this is understood, it is easier to put the current precipitating event in perspective and focus on healing that well of hurt. The energy of love experienced through meditation and the change in the perception of the self are invaluable aids in healing that buried pain. In California, more and more psychologists are linking into spiritual practices to deal with areas that resist change with traditional psychological methods.

The stages that many people go through when dealing with grief are denial, depression, anger, negotiation and acceptance. People who are chronically depressed have unresolved traumas and/or chemical imbalances. When people have been depressed for years of their life, feel heavy constantly or

are suicidal, psychological treatment is imperative. In my work with people who are not chemically imbalanced, it seems that depression is the result of being stuck in the grieving process. They often feel something missing and/or the inability to resolve the internal issues alone. I have occasionally seen wonderful people on a spiritual path get mired in depression for several months or longer — unnecessarily. Many were able to go beyond it quickly with a bit of understanding. In talking with them, I discovered that there are a few common pitfalls for souls on a spiritual path.

'Old souls' on a spiritual path are apt to be sensitive, with high personal goals and a deep commitment to peace and spiritual values. As they enjoy the inner richness that a meditative practice brings, they find they can easily overcome most difficult situations by transforming negative or wasteful thoughts into powerful, pure thoughts. While this works the vast majority of the time, some thoughts or emotions are deeply linked to core personality perceptions. A common pitfall is to deny negative feelings in an effort to be 'good'. While a spiritual goal is to be so full of contentment and self-respect that negativity cannot touch one, to deny emotions is harmful. The energy of love and peace from meditating naturally reduces negative tendencies. However, old habits must occasionally re-emerge so that there can be a complete transformational process. When negative emotions are denied, they often take up more and more emotional energy. More energy is then required to maintain the former level of happiness. If an event comes up at that time which elicits this unresolved perception, negative reactions emerge. One

person may react angrily, others fear that they will not be successful. For others, a feeling of unworthiness or hopelessness comes and this leads to depression. Depression can be prolonged when there is denial of feelings. Denial of anger can be common in people who are trying so hard to be good. Yet there is great benefit in recognising anger as it is only then that we can look at the root, break through the process and transform. Anger is a secondary or tertiary emotion. Underneath there is hurt or fear. With the awareness that anger is only a reflection of hurt or fear, it can be understood and dealt with constructively, rather than rejected.

Sometimes souls re-enact old family dynamics and decide that an important mentor in their life, or God, does not really value or love them. At other times, souls are angry with the Supreme or another person because of their dissatisfaction with their current situation. Rather than understand the universal laws, they rant. The danger of being angry with God, or denying anger with God, is that a block is created in accepting God's love.

Another pitfall along the spiritual path is deciding God has a human personality and projecting reactions onto Him/Her when one's own imperfections are noticed. Some souls decide that God cannot love them as they are imperfect. There is guilt rather than understanding the process of transformation and being gentle with the self. Not feeling worthy to take love until one is perfect places the self in a double bind as love is needed in order to become full.

God never blames. He would not have a role to play if we had not

become negative. Feeling guilty and criticising the self lowers energy; recognising and appreciating each emerging quality allows us to lighten up.

An invaluable method in conquering depression is to develop self-esteem based on the eternal core qualities of the self. Meditate on the virtues. Humility and self-respect are invaluable in avoiding arrogance — a frequent precursor to feeling foolish and consequently unworthy. Enjoy contentment, lightness, benevolence and patience. Take a spiritual phrase that makes you feel wonderful and enjoy being that during the days as you work, cook and walk. Feed the mind with beautiful thoughts. The mind is naturally active and will bring up the old if it is not fed more nourishing food.

Another way to transform a tendency toward depression is to develop a gentle parent within. Look at the way you treat yourself in self-talk. Recognise any internalised critical, depreciating, guilt-inducing or blaming communications. Enjoy developing the gentle parent. And, do not compare yourself with others. Only in 'body-consciousness' are there feelings of superiority and inferiority. Both types of comparisons occur when people try to take their worth from the outside, instead of staying

centred within. Simple acceptance of the self in the present moment empowers.

When one is depressed, walking and exercise help maintain chemical balance. Getting enough sleep and maintaining a healthy diet low in sugar and caffeine is important. Talking with someone who values you can bring about pressure-relieving perspective.



If you decide to look at an emotional root, look gently. Allow yourself to

experience what you are feeling at that moment in time, surround yourself with the light of love, and allow God to help. Find a relationship with God where love and strength can be accepted. Once love is experienced in yoga within one relationship with God, then it can be yours in other relationships. Within each event, there is always something beautiful to learn. It may be a new awareness of the importance and beauty of a virtue. With each realisation, we get closer to our dream.

®

Diane Tillman is a Child Educational Psychologist based in Seal Beach, California

BETWEEN THE 'I's

My super-duper guru
His whole life taught through looks;
And as he never, never spoke
His Word's beyond all books.

I used to go up to his cave
To gaze into his eyes
And in them, there reflected,
I always saw two 'I's.

I saw there Love and Laughter
And Wisdom and surprise,
But clearly, too, reflected,
I always saw two 'I's.

My super-duper guru
Was full of Joy and wise
And though he never spoke one word
Yet still I saw two 'I's.

For years he saw my puzzlement,
For years he heard my sighs,
For years I knew that he knew too
That I was still two 'I's.

His Patience was unfailing;
He'd never criticise,
But shone with light to see the fight
Going on between my 'I's.

And as the years and years passed by
I came to realise
That every living guru
Eventually dies.

When last I gazed upon his face
And saw that he must die,
He very slowly winked at me
And closed one laughing eye.

Only then did I perceive
In his one open eye
There was no alter ego
And I was wholly I.

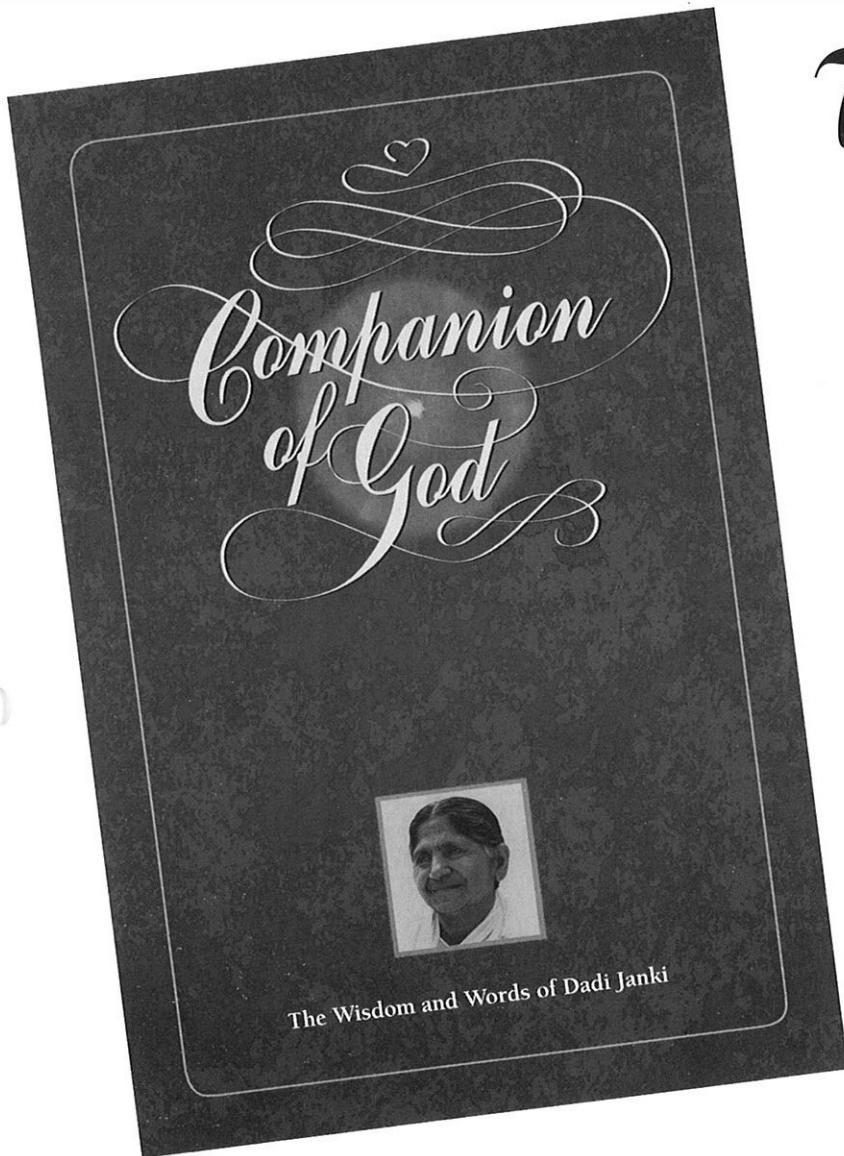
In all embracing Silence
My guru passed away
And now my Eye is single
I see as clear as day.

Francis Boston
Flashes of Silence

Walking the Talk

The Wisdom and the
Words
of Dadi Janki

Extracts from
Dadi's recently
published
'Companion of God'



There are many sources of spiritual wisdom today. Most are available in an instant through technology. Few espousers of such wisdom are able to demonstrate consistently in practical action, the truth they share.

One woman has, for the last five decades, achieved a high level of success. Her wisdom is drawn from her experience and a spiritual education which is unique in the world. Her name is Dadi Janki. She is not a guru and will not allow others to perceive her so. She is not a 'living master' demanding unquestioning obedience from a faithful few. And she is not a saint ...yet! She is a woman who has set out to empower others through their own awakening of truth and the expansion of personal capacity.

Now at the age of eighty, after fifty years of 'walking her talk', Dadi Janki's words of wisdom are jewels of priceless value. They have been essencefully set in a book of spiritual reflections and poetical meditations, 'Companion of God', eight of which are reprinted here.

Success



Success means to reach such a constant level of positive thoughts that pure actions happen naturally. Pure actions are like good seeds which, when planted, produce healthy, sweet fruit

'As you sow, so you shall reap'

Concern for the quality of my actions today ensures the success of my tomorrow

Virtues are a mainstay in this because Success like this requires Hope And Hope, in today's kind of world, requires Courage

It is a matter of working from the strength of your convictions

Which is a spiritual kind of Honesty
Balance these qualities and your path will be easy

You will only move forward. Your success will be assured

Courage alone does not bring success
If there's only courage, there will be ego

It's courage plus honesty which brings
God's help

and that is what guarantees the Success

'God is getting it done through me'
'I am simply an instrument in this task'

These are honest thoughts which
produce

God's help and protection

Humility is the result of such honesty
and courage

A life of enthusiasm, courage, honesty
and humility is inspirational

It's a way of helping others become
Successful, too

Thoughts



Through our thoughts, we are either
gaining power or losing it.

With pure thoughts, power is
generated and with impure thoughts
power is destroyed.

Pure thoughts are those that express
our spiritual personality. Impure
thoughts are all the others. They
have nothing to do with our truth.

Thought is the vehicle which takes us
from our non-spiritual self
to our truth.

Spiritual knowledge is like a sieve,
through which we can filter out the
untrue. Running our thoughts
through it constantly ensures that
we're heading in the right direction.

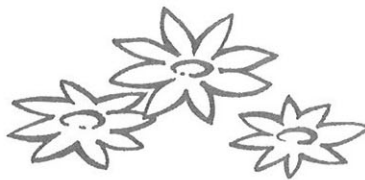
When thoughts are brought into
action, they can be seen immediately.

When the mind is filled with virtues,
they will be revealed in our actions.

By elevating our thoughts, we can
literally end up purifying the self and
inspiring others to do likewise. Our
life in itself will be the inspiration for
them to change. There won't even
be the need to say anything.

Our vibrations of pure thought can
reach out and touch the whole
world. Our very lives can do the
work of lighthouses.

Influences



Let me be humble and
let me harmonise and work well with
all others
But let me not become like them

Others may be influenced
by their own arrogance,
or by their own negativity,
or by ordinariness in the mind
But this does not mean that I
have to be

There should be so much truth in me
that others become truthful

My inner state should be such that
not only am I not influenced
by the negativity of others

but my very presence is a positive
influence
on all negativity
(This is true, spiritual detachment)

It is so exhilarating
to experience myself as a Spiritual
Being

I should never hide it,
that sparkle on the face that comes
from having come to God

Everything I used to do on the basis
of ego
can now be done out of love

Drama of Life



Every passing moment
is like a passing act, in a play
We each of us are the Actors
playing our parts very well
An actor is never focused on another
actor's part
Continually criticising it
He just gets on with his own part,
Playing it as best he can

The Drama of Life is eternal,
predestined and accurate
Whatever anybody says and does is
their role
Not mine
My task is to play my part right

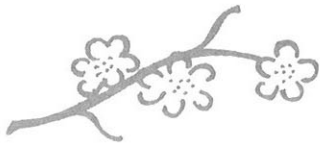
Right thoughts restore rightness to
the whole play

Practise detaching from your role
and experiencing the truth, behind
the role

And you will find yourself loving
every instant of your role
And the Drama, too

And the question, "Why has this
happened?"
will be answered

Checking the Self



No matter how good a car or its driver
If the car isn't regularly checked
there will be problems

In the same way,
If one moment I am happy, but in the
next moment I'm not
Something is wrong
with the vehicle of my mind
And I will need to check it out

Check the smoothness of its flow
Is there purity? Has there been
truth?

What about ego versus self-generated
respect?
How much grief am I
causing another?
Where are my weaknesses? How
can I grow?

Checking these regularly and keeping
them in shape
will deliver you to the destination

Carelessness in this will slow you
down
Like getting stuck in a storm
You will feel yourself ruttled

So instead keep yourself tuned and
ever ready
Meditate at length, take power and
love

Teach yourself how to be generous-
spirited
And never stop giving

Introversion



Introversion comes with solitude,
the deep and silent company of God
which benefits the soul so profoundly

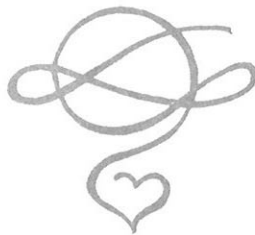
Introversion

creates that stage of poise where
I think before I speak
I don't just speak
I can put my own nature aside
and easily avoid conflict with others

It does need practice
Like speaking only when necessary
And putting an end to excuses
about never having the time

With introversion, I can take charge
of my mind,
purify the intellect and change any
habit I want to
Spirituality takes root and I am
transformed

Talking to the Self



When you talk to yourself in your
mind, which self do you
address? And how? Usually people
do not talk to their divinity,
but to the most superficial aspects of
their everyday personality.
And often it's a stream of fears,
complaints and a mindless
repetition of old things. If we talked
that way to another human
being, we'd have to apologise

Learning to talk properly to the self is
a spiritual endeavour.
Thoughts from the past and worries
about the future do not create
good conversation. Instead learn to
talk to your mind as if it were
a little child. Talk to it with love. If
you just force a child to sit
down, he won't. A good mother
knows how to get her child to do
what she wants. Be a good mother
to your mind, teach it good,
positive thoughts so that when you
tell it to sit quietly, it will.
Love your mind. Stay happy.

Ruler of the Self



There is a connection between a
mind which is peaceful and
behaviour which is good. It is
interesting to note how the sensory
apparatus - sight, touch, hearing, taste
and smell - are involved
in this.

For example, suppose I make a
promise not to get angry any more,
because I've understood the harm it
causes. But then later in the
day I 'see' or 'hear' something
negative. If I allow myself to forget
my promise; that is, my level of
awareness goes back to what it has
always been, then my immediate
reaction will probably be equally
as negative. If, however, I remember
my promise, the same stimuli
will most likely produce a wiser,
more resourceful response.

With spiritual study, my mind grows
strong in its commitment to
peace and truth in actions. This
strength allows me to gain control
over the sense organs. I simply don't
allow them any more to
proceed as per usual - according to
my conditioning. I remain
consciously present, monitoring
whatever they do. It is the first
step in becoming a Master - ruler of
the Kingdom of the Self.



Companion of God is now available from
Brahma Kumaris Literature. Please send
for details to Global Co-operation House,
65 Pound Lane, London, NW10 2HH

BEIJING -

A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

The Fourth International Conference on Women

Day 1

The omens are good. Three people have offered to take me to the airport and considering I have about 95kgs excess luggage, that's useful. I manage to get the excess through at no charge and find a spare five seats to be my bed on the plane. All seems fine.

Maybe the stories of acres of tents supported by hundreds of tonnes of mud in the extreme heat of the China sun are just some media joke or something. Maybe Beijing is going to be easier than India. That would be nice.

Day 2

As I found the gate for boarding, I saw hundreds of my sisters from the great country of India, parked on the floor. Some were sleeping while others chatted excitedly. Travelling companions. Until now it'd been just me and my luggage and my God.

They call us to board. The bright colours of saris bustle together. Almond eyes with centuries of stories shining through, and smiles which make me realise that our natural state is indeed happiness. They start to chant. The vibrations are very powerful, very emotional. They begin to sing. A mark of sisterhood, of hopes for a better world.

Touchdown. Beijing airport. Excitement ripples. Doors open. Steamy heat. Chinese greet us.

Carolyn Ward gives us a brief insight into her diary during the 'Beijing Experience'.



Responding smiles... unsure. Boxes bursting at the edges, varieties of bags, crates large and small, rolls of plastic, paper and

unidentifiable 'stuff' heave their way up and lunge onto the conveyor belt.

I'm collected. I register for the Forum. So easy.

Day 3

Today we go to Huairou. (pronounced 'hwhy Row'). Huairou is where the NGO Forum is being held. We take a taxi, three of us and 100kgs of printed matter. When we arrive at the outskirts of the town the police won't let the taxi in. This is when we start to realise the barrier of language. God is on our side. A mini bus - with a pass - comes to the rescue.

It's only a day and a half until the Forum starts and nothing is set up. Forty thousand people are about to descend on this township and it's still under construction. The map we received is tenuous at best in its relationship to the actual site. Three of our party are staying at Huairou - somewhere! No information stand, no English speaking people, no UN representatives... the next 10 days should be interesting.

Amidst the craziness, we feel God is looking after us. We find our party. One member, Susanna, speaks fluent Mandarin and has managed to secure the assistance of a very sweet and helpful Chinese local with a mini-van on call almost 24 hours a day. He's

decided we're his long lost family.

He finds us a taxi that won't cheat us, and we return to Beijing - the city which threatens to halt oxygen supply to any and every part of your body.

Most of the rooms of the delegates have been hijacked - well not ours. Some poor Swedes finding themselves suddenly without accommodation joined us at midnight. But there is benefit in everything that happens. We find ourselves with a suite for the head of our delegation as a replacement.

Confusion becomes a theme, but the Chinese are very sweet and want to help, but are most often constrained by seemingly meaningless rules of control.

Day 4

All the members of our delegation have arrived from their various countries and it's a lovely reunion. Today we stay in Beijing. The NGO Forum is spectacular. A treat for the heart and the spirit. We see glimpses of the grace and royalty of ancient China through the choreography and vibrant colour of thousands of young people with fantastic costumes and meticulous coordination. The vibration in the stadium is one of electric vision and hope. For a short time, we believe that this huge task of changing the world is actually possible.

Day 5

Day 1 of the Forum. There are hundreds or thousands, it's hard to tell, of buses travelling from Beijing to Huairou. So much internal power and external strength is needed to deal with even the simple tasks of finding out who to talk to, how to get a map of the town, how to find our exhibition booth ... Imagine this multiplied by tens of thousands of women coping with the extreme security, poor signs, no maps, unfinished buildings, half

ploughed clay fields with tents and flimsy nylon booths, limited translators, no access to Beijing until night, a shortage of taxis, and miles to walk between the activity areas.

People are tired, really tired and frustrated...but not disillusioned. We're here for causes that are greater than our exhaustion.

Day 6

Today we have our Leadership Seminar. We began with an hour or so of participative workshop where we explored the efficacy leadership, of working with the identity of the soul playing the role of a woman in lieu of the identity of 'woman'.

After the workshop, Senator Shehani from the Philippines shared her experience of being a leader and using the power of spirituality and spiritual values to support that leadership. Dadi Janki then arrived to share her story of how spiritual power and the identity of being a child of God have made her leadership possible. These personal perspectives moved and motivated the audience to discover more about spiritual identity.

Day 7-12

There have been demonstrations and street theatres, large puppets and men and women on stilts, fantastic colours and designs of the clothing of the many different nationalities. One day we saw an impromptu and highly supported protest against the yellow and red fast food tent with placards - Go home Ronald!!

There are literally thousands of activities that one could attend in addition to the numerous tents displaying stores and wares and issues and causes. Workshops abound. The Islamic women are highly mobilised. Human rights is big, as are strategies and the role of

the media in uplifting the image of women. Aids is important, patriarchy is opposed by almost all, sexuality is popular, be it lesbian or heterosexual, peace is a theme - yet it is surprising how much peacelessness there is.

Day 13

The women look exhausted. Some are working hard to sport a smile, others say they wouldn't have missed it for anything but are ready to go home.

It seems that much of the Forum was about connecting. Many of the special times people talk about are the personal connections, the chance meetings. These were the sustaining moments.

Whilst the gathering was pushed to the limits on both physical and emotional levels, the feeling of growing solidarity, of understanding and support will be a powerful memory to mark Beijing '95.

Everyone was busy saying what policies and laws and structures should be implemented to bring about equality, development and peace, but even amongst the gathering itself there was intolerance and rejection of marginalised groups. There was a lack of environmental awareness and little inner peace.

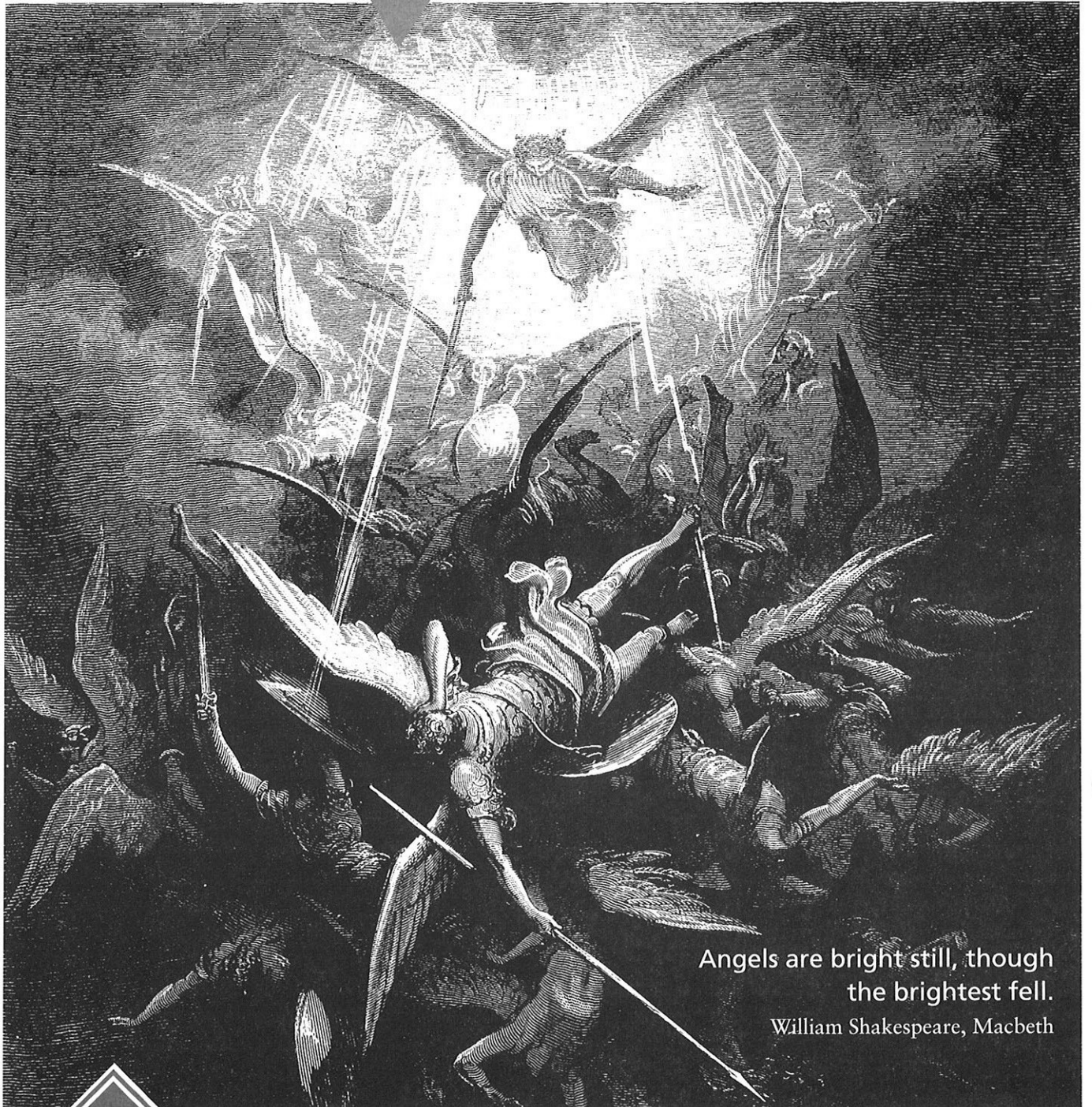
The whole event made me realise that it doesn't matter a jot if we change the laws, if we women can't change our personal laws of action.

I still believe though that women will play a significant role in establishing a new world order. And maybe it won't be tens of thousands of women, maybe it will be a handful. I think it was Margaret Mead who said, "A small group of people can change the world. In fact, that's all that ever has."

Carolyn Ward is a consultant and writer based in Sydney, Australia.

THE FALLEN ANGELS

Jillian Sawers continues her exploration into angelic realms with a brief history of the Devil



Angels are bright still, though
the brightest fell.

William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*



Our language is full of light-hearted references to the Prince of Darkness. 'Better the Devil you know ...', 'Speak of the Devil', 'The Devil looks after his own'. Though perhaps not as popular, the Devil, or Fallen Angels, are indeed as famous as their divine counterparts. And just as the Angels have their own history, they too have their story to tell.

Although there is no mention of the Devil, Fallen Angels or any sort of separate evil force in the Old Testament, the word 'ha-satan' meaning 'opponent' appears frequently. The New Testament however, describes the fall of the angelic host:

"And his tail drew the third part of the stars (Angels) of Heaven and did cast them to earth ... and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth and his Angels were cast out with him."

There are several versions of how Satan appeared and how he managed to take so many of the angelic host out of heaven and with him to hell.

One version describes the Devil as the dark side of God. The bright side of God was too fierce and bright to communicate with humans so the dark side played this role. At first this manifest through the thought, word and touch of God, but gradually this dark side or shadow side became a separate entity with a will of its own. With this separation and the dark destructive element becoming more prominent, by the time the New Testament was complete the description of a separate and totally evil force was personified in the figure of Satan, the arch-enemy of a totally good God.

Another version comes from Origen of Alexandria who was an influential theologian of the early Greek Church. Origen maintained that God had created a number of angelic beings who were equal and had free will. Amongst these angelic intelligences some chose to remain close to God in the Ethereal Regions, others moved further away to the lower air to become Angels. Those who drifted further took on human bodies, and those

who drifted the farthest became demons. Once the angelic being has started drifting away from God, he will continue to fall further and further unless he changes his ways. Origen also claimed that humans could just as easily become Angels as Angels could become humans.

Lust was the prime reason for the fall according to the works of Enoch the Scribe. He wrote of 200 Sons of God who descended onto Mount Hermon about 12,000 years ago. The purpose of their visitation was to assist the Archangels in establishing the Garden of Eden. They began to teach men the arts of civilisation, but unexpectedly ended up seducing the daughters of Adam. According to Papal Authority these mischievous band of Angels came from a separate Tenth Order of Angels which were physically unlike the other angelic orders - such a distinction was necessary as usually Angels are considered as beings of spirit, which as such cannot reproduce.

One version, which is perhaps the most well-known, is that of Lucifer's pride. This version appeared in a 13th century play in which God created Lucifer as the highest Angel.

*"I make you closest to me
Of all the powers, Master and
mirror of my might,
I create you beautiful in bliss and
name you Lucifer, Bearer of
Light."
Lucifer sees himself in the mirror
and agrees
"Aha, that I am wondrous
bright..."
and his beauteous head is turned
"A worthier lord forsooth am I
And ever worthier than He
In evidence that I am worthier*

I will go sit on God's throne."
God upon finding Lucifer seated on His throne, is none too pleased and throws the proud Angel out of Heaven.

John Milton's Paradise Lost takes up the same theme in which *"Lucifer from Heav'n, Fell with his flaming legions through the Deep, Into his place. They fell as thick as autumn leaves, with Cherub and Seraph rolling in the Flood. Nine days they fell; confounded Chaos roar'd."*

Another catalyst for an exodus of Angels from Heaven was God's abrupt expulsion of Satan after his refusal to bow to His new creation, Adam. A similar Sufi version sheds a very interesting and sympathetic light on the 'Dark One'. God had requested the Angels to bow to Adam, however Satan, remembering God's previous commandment to bow to only God and no one else, refused to bow. For his disobedience to God he was cast out of Heaven, but the real punishment for Satan was being separated from the One he truly loved. This loneliness and separation fuelled a hatred for mankind to whom God's attentions had now turned.

North American Sun Dancers see the fall as a consequence of the human spirit adopting a human costume in order to experience the limitations of the physical world. The true nature of the spirit is divine, however whilst the individual is blind to the transitory nature of the physical experiences here, it can not be connected to its higher divine self and therefore experiences loneliness and separation similar to that of Satan's separation from God. This explanation points to Angels, rather than being separate from

humans, as being the divine side of humans. The further humans drift away from 'divine awareness' into the transitory pleasures of their earthly existence, the more 'devilish' their nature becomes.

As late as the sixth century AD, in a mosaic in Ravenna depicting the Last Judgement, the Devil was still shown as a hallowed, winged being, standing at the left hand of Christ. Satan is dressed in blue robes, rather than red. Red was the colour of the upper ether, closest to God, from which Satan was expelled, whereas blue was the colour of the heaven closest to Earth, which human beings could see. By the Middle Ages, Satan had exchanged his halo and robes for horns and hooves. This was from a combination of the great Greek god Pan - half-man, half-goat - and the forest deity Cernunnos of a northern European pagan cult of that time. In the American-made 'Omen' film, Satan was depicted as the boy Damien, born inconspicuously into a middle-class white family. His true identity as the Devil is revealed only gradually to himself and others, through the discovery of a birthmark of '666' on his scalp. According to Revelations in the New Testament 666 is the number of the Beast, the Devil. Discoveries are also made that Damien has the blood type of a Jackal, just a glance from this devil in human form can make a victim go crazy. With 49% of Americans believing in the existence of Fallen Angels, or Devils, the old Devil himself has successfully adapted himself according to the time, place and culture of mankind. And whether people believe that the Devil is a personification of their own darker side, or whether they feel that 'Old Nick' is truly on the

loose and responsible for the evil goings on here on Earth, the Devil remains a figure which captures the imagination of a humanity searching for answers to its increasingly dualist personality.



This dualism is also embodied within the War Scrolls, which were part of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Scrolls, written two thousand years ago, describe the final war between the Sons of Light and Sons of Darkness. The text outlines in great detail the forty year war in which God and His Angels are finally victorious after seven major

encounters with the enemy. The Revelations of John in the New Testament also describes the battle between Archangel Michael and his army of Angels against Satan who had been misleading the entire inhabited world. The defeated Satan is duly expelled from Heaven.

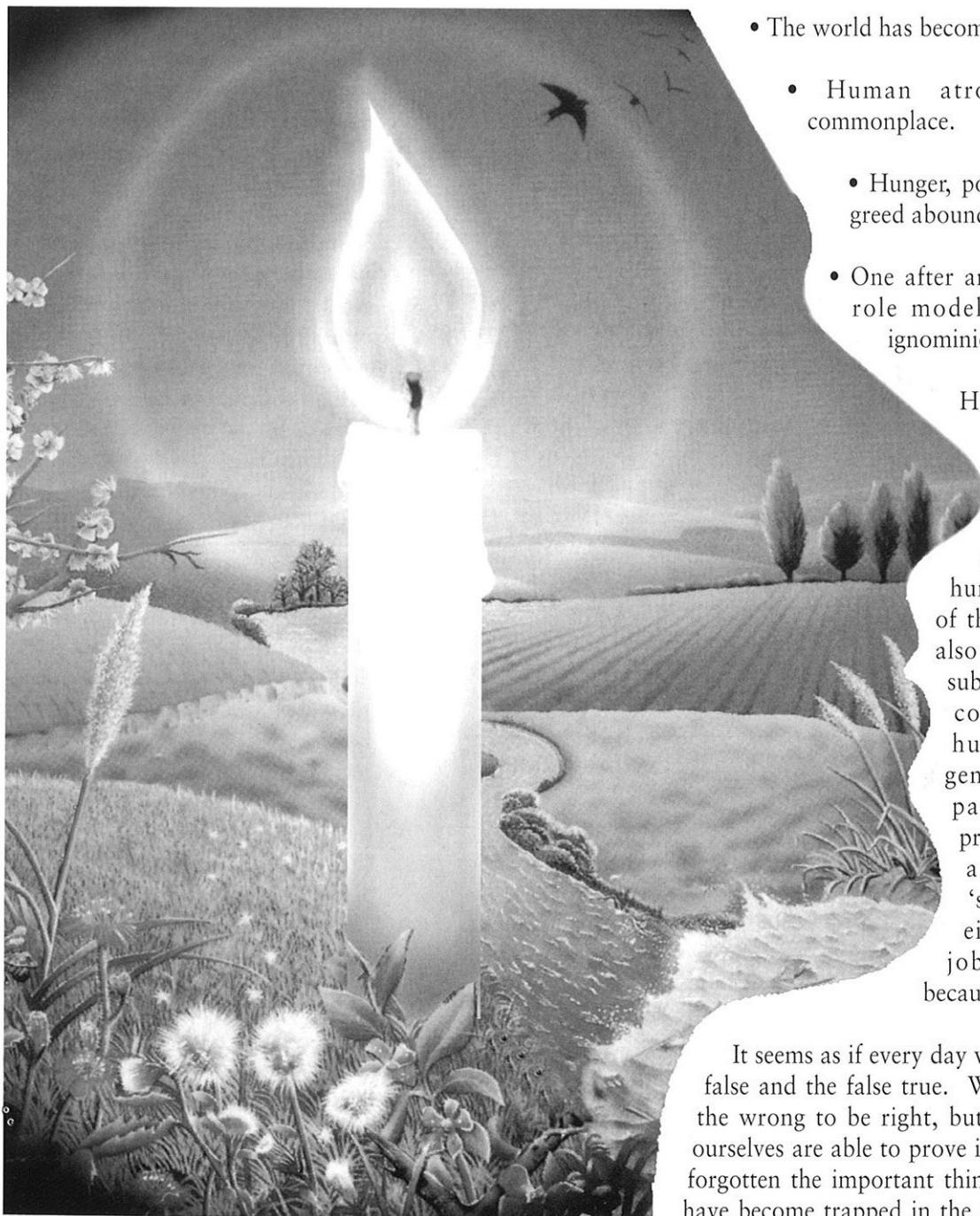
Angels in battle with the Devil is a universal theme which recurs within the Hindu scripture the 'Mahabharat' (the Great Battle of India), in which five Pandavs who have God on their side defeat an entire army of the devil-like Kauravs. However at the end of the battle, both sides go to Heaven where they enjoy each other's company. Which perhaps illustrates what many believe about the Mahabharat and about the glorious descriptions of Angels at war with Devils, that they are more likely to be colourful metaphors for the very human phenomena of battling in our own minds over whether to be 'good' or 'bad', and that there is no real external enemy, or Devil, apart from one's own projected negativity, delusion and apathy. Looking at the roots of the word 'sin', which actually derives from a Latin archery term 'sinus' which means to 'miss the target', one can get the sense, that maybe even in our 'fallen' state, we are not so much devils, or 'sinners', but Angels who in our hearts wish to be merciful, forgiving, compassionate, wise, angelic, but through lack of understanding or spiritual power simply miss the target and therefore 'sin'. Perhaps it's time to brush the dust off our wings and refocus our arrows.

®

Jillian Sawers is a teacher with the BKWSU based in London.

*Every day we see the truth proven false and the false true.
We not only experience the wrong to be right, but we are able
to prove it right. Attention to values keeps us from being
deceived and from deceiving ourselves.
Carol Gill explores the intangible subject of values.*

In Response to Living Values



- The world has become topsyturvy.
- Human atrocity has become commonplace.
- Hunger, poverty, selfishness, and greed abound.
- One after another our traditional role models of behaviour fall ignominiously from grace.

Human behaviour continues to become more and more vicious, not only demonstrated by the grossest violations of human rights as well as of the laws of nature, but also apparent at the most subtle levels. It was a sad commentary on the human condition in general and business in particular when one professional remarked to another, "They will 'stab you in the back' either to protect their jobs, to get ahead, or because they like it."

It seems as if every day we see the truth proven false and the false true. We not only experience the wrong to be right, but in our arrogance we ourselves are able to prove it right. It seems we've forgotten the important things we once knew and have become trapped in the muck and mire of this

material world. I dare say that if Truth were inviting us to lunch, we'd probably make the appointment but cancel later due to conflicting priorities.

Clarity of Values

Enter the word *values* and all it implies and evokes. Sadly, it has become an emotionally-laden buzzword of our time. Here in

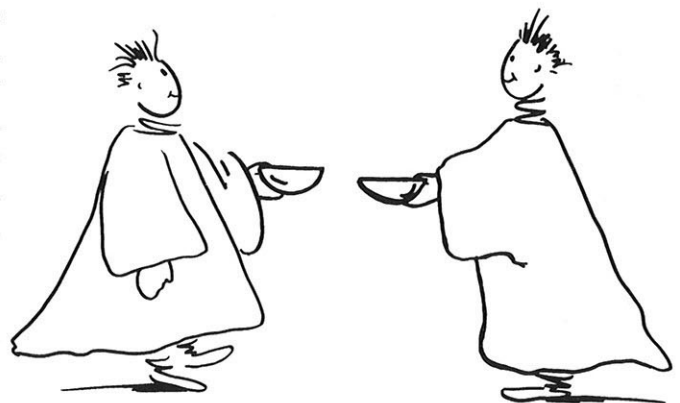


America, for instance, family values have become tied to the 'politically correct'. The concept turns many people off because so many good citizens have lost trust. And although politicians may mean what they say when they say it, external circumstances have a way of building illusions around even those with the most positive intentions let alone those less trustworthy. And so, in this day and age, values are as hotly debated as religion and politics.

To clarify, some values are instilled in or adopted by us - we've been conditioned by cultural norms, social mores, everyday experience, and the like. Those values may be wrong or right. They are subjective, depending on the beliefs of the collective or the individual. Other values are absolute - embedded so deeply and linked so directly with universal truths that they transcend all belief systems and are understood at the core of every human being. That there are core

values such as respect and responsibility, honesty and happiness, is not the issue. Such true values are etched too indelibly in a place of pure worth within each of us. How to live or embody those pure values, however, is open for debate. (Although, on second thought, in this day and age there will always be some of us who - in not recognising the interconnectedness of all values - would argue a case for which true value has more worth. Or whether honesty is a value or a virtue or a principle. Semantics usually enters the picture, but that's an expansion I wish not to pursue.)

The point is that everyone lives by values, whether they think about them or not - and generally everyone has something to say about them. It is no wonder so many feel bitter, cynical, even jaded about values. That is because not only do we experience rampant negativity and degradation as described above, but also we have lost sight of higher-order spiritual values as we focus on the attractiveness of material values such as social position, monetary worth, external appearance, personal possessions, etc. Such worldly values may appear more clear and beautiful than true values, just as white silver, which constantly sparkles, would appear more beautiful than real silver, which becomes black. How many of us would turn away expensive diamond earrings or



cufflinks, opting instead to wear the simple jewel of humility?

Value-able or Not?

In my own experience, when talking to good, wholesome, sincere people about core values, I often get the feeling that they believe in the worth of true values and perhaps think it is nice that I have devoted time and energy to values. Yet, I sense a discrepancy between what they may believe deep down and how that manifests in their thoughts, words, or actions. Sometimes I feel as if they want to pat me on the head and say, "That's nice what you're doing about values. Now run along." There's disinterest. It's as if such values have no bearing on their lives.

Some people profess to having values, but are they clear about what these values mean? So many of us are experiencing a painful and widening gap between our ideal values and the values we live by. We are forced every day to make choices that compromise or undermine our values and belief systems. Human beings are deceiving themselves if they believe they can live by different rules and values in their private lives versus their public or professional lives. That creates stress, tension, peacelessness, disharmony or conflict within, which, of course has an impact on interactions and

relations. Yet, it is not so easy to answer the question: Am I really willing to make choices in which I lose approval, attention, recognition, safety, worth and status in the external world. If I were to follow my conscience in the inner world?

Another challenging question: Is it possible to live a life embodying utmost integrity, in which our thoughts, words and actions are in alignment with fundamental values, which in turn are linked directly to universal principles governing human nature and conduct? Answering that would require deep inner exploration, including identifying values which are the motivation for our behaviour as well as examining and being honest about our intentions.

The benefit of that inner search: We, as individuals, can begin to recognise who we really are and to discover a capacity to create something for ourselves beyond the limits of our current reality. The concern: So few people see value in doing that. The irony: The process brings such benefit. Attention to intentions and reflection on breaking old moulds or patterns and creating new habits and behaviours which 'feel right' have an effect. That active process is the impetus for positive change. Positivity reflects back on an individual as surely as night turns to day. It's a law that what one sows one reaps, and it applies not only to our actions but also to our words and thoughts.

Making Change Possible

What if I were to say that the status quo is no longer acceptable, and that you had to change? How would you go

about doing that? Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, suggests we begin with the end in mind. In other words, if you knew you were going to die tomorrow, what would matter most? How would your life have made a difference? Beginning with the end in mind is large-picture thinking.

When daily activities are enacted and decisions made within that context, our choices not only reflect right values, but are also directed from deep within, with conscience serving continually. In experiencing 'the end,' would you regret all those 'should haves'? Would you wish you had 'cleaned up your act'? The writer Joseph Campbell said regrets are illuminations come too late.

So, how does one create change in one's life? How does one recognise his or her full potential in relation to the self and to the wider world?

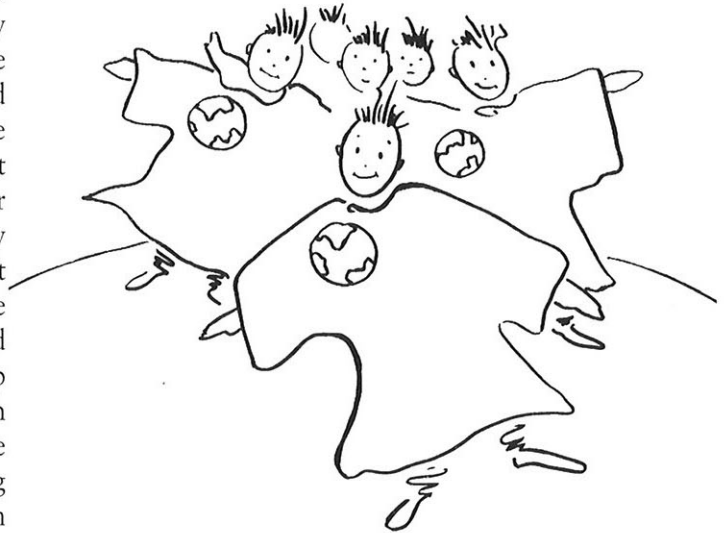
A needs self-assessment helps.

1) Ask yourself, what is my **actual state** in the following areas:

Personal (including personal growth/education, spirituality, fitness, creative self-expression);

Relationships (reflect on the self, God, family, friends, colleagues, etc.);

Lifestyle (examine balance, use of time, how lifestyle reflects values); *Service* (think about how you contribute to others, e.g. family, community, world).



Ask, what is my degree of happiness? What values do I profess? How are they manifested in my thoughts, words, or actions? How are my values compromised and why? Record enough about your current situation so you feel satisfied that you've created an accurate picture of yourself.

2) Ask yourself, what is my **ideal state**? Use your imagination to create your most perfect you - the best you can be. What would you be thinking, saying, doing? How would you feel about yourself? How would others feel about you? What values would you embody? Don't allow any part of yourself to kill that self-actualised you by emerging thoughts about why it cannot happen. And especially don't use 'not enough time' as an excuse. The ideal you has perfect control over your time and your life.

The discrepancy between your current and ideal states is identified as the need. What do you need to



do to close that gap? For best results, think in behavioural terms. For instance, you may want to wake up 15 minutes earlier to create quiet time for yourself; you



may want to walk away from gossip sessions or change the subject; or you may want to do some volunteer work in your community one day a month. By creating change via specific behaviours, you can measure the degrees of your progress. By creating goals that are challenging yet attainable, you can stretch - but you won't set yourself up for failure.

Taking Responsibility

People generally resist change because getting from here to there seems difficult, even impossible. Yet, the impossible becomes possible through small, incremental steps. Within the individual, transformation happens one step at a time. Within the collective, it

happens one individual at a time. Some people may feel dissatisfied with the notion that the world will become a better place when each individual person becomes a better person, or that peace in the world can happen when there is peace within the individual. Some may think it preposterous that world transformation can happen through individual transformation. Such notions do not negate the roles of governments, the United Nations, or other instrumental organisations. Instead, such realisations should serve as wake-up calls to individuals who may delude themselves into thinking they cannot influence the state of this world.

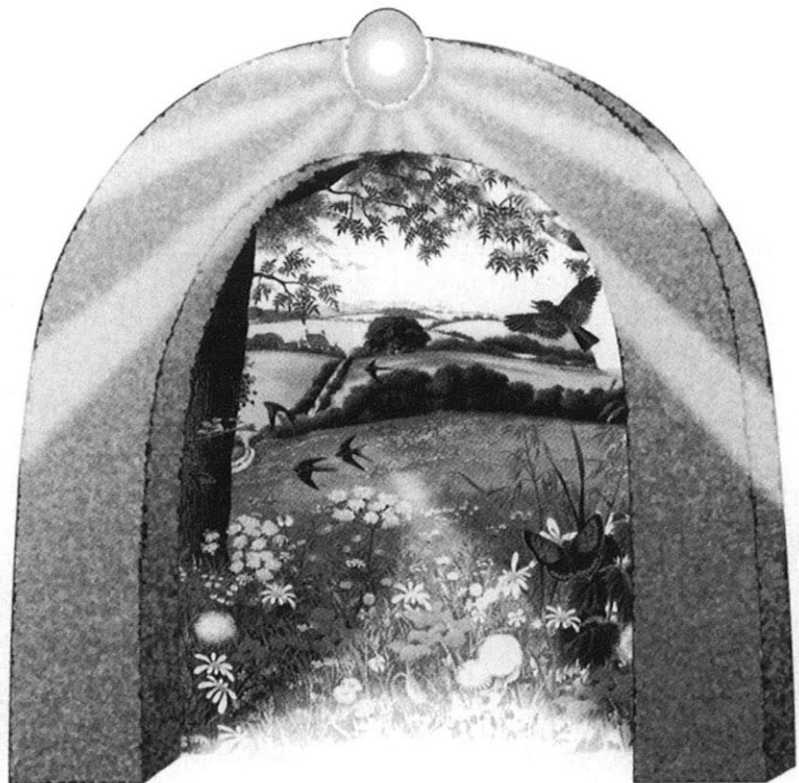
What if each individual capable of doing it were to take responsibility for and be accountable to only his or her own sphere of influence - that which he or she comes in contact with every day. And what if

each individual, for instance, were determined to use neither derogatory words about anyone else nor do anything to violate the rights of anyone else? Wishful thinking, you say? Well then, what if everyone reading this article became committed to some form of positive change, for example, 'living' the value of responsibility or by consciously and conscientiously being a role model of behaviour? How many would make an impact? The grass roots is absolutely capable of creating and sustaining an upward spiral of positive change. We would be deceiving ourselves thinking otherwise.

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Carol Gill is a training and development consultant in Manhattan, USA. She feels her most valued accomplishment to date is serving as copy editor of Living Values: A Guidebook, a Brahma Kumaris publication dedicated to the United Nations on its 50th Anniversary.

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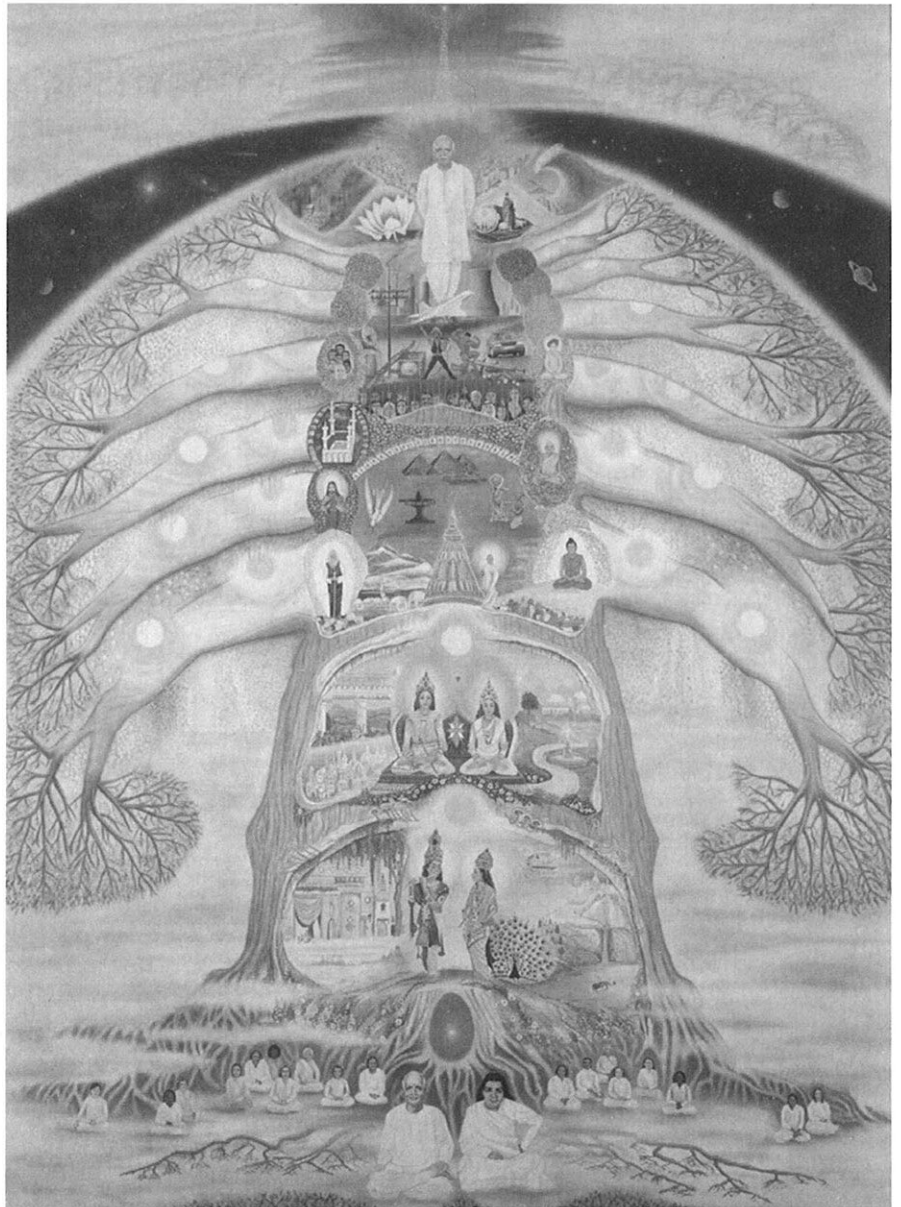


Foundation Course in Meditation

VI



We saw, in Part V on the history of the world, how the complete drama of human affairs moves very much like the seasons of the year - in cyclical fashion, turning back on itself to repeat those seasons.



THE TREE OF LIFE

In this movement through time, there are three eternal things, each connected to the other: the soul, the Supreme Soul (or God), and the material world. Without these three ingredients, life would not exist. God, as the Creator, creates the soul, not out of nothing, but by influencing or purifying the nature of the self-conscious spiritual energy which is our individual identity. We then express our natures to each other through our material bodies in this game of life. We

are able to experience each other through our physical senses, play the role of creators as we create new forms for new souls and shape the physical environment around us.

This interplay of God, soul and matter is the eternal drama of life, in which each one of us has a unique part to play. The purpose of life is to play our parts (expression) as accurately and with as much fulfilment with others (relationship) as possible.

One way to perceive this drama in its completeness is through the symbol of the tree. It symbolises the process of growth and expansion, from a tiny seed to a huge solid structure of branches, twigs and leaves. The tree is a perfect symbol of our story here on Earth.

The seed of the tree of life is, of course, the Supreme Soul, or God. He is the only one who knows the whole story, the complete drama, from beginning to end. And as the whole blueprint of a tree is contained within the seed, so the whole knowledge of how life evolves is contained within Him.

The initial stage of growth is the sapling; the Golden-Aged stage of life, when the drama is young and pure and straight. Gradually the sapling strengthens and its main branches develop. This is the Silver-Aged phase of the drama of life, when growth and expansion is gradual and certain.

Then in the Copper Age we begin to divide and separate, lose our awareness of truth and purity, go in different directions, wander off to different lands, and the great prophet souls come to share a message of truth to guide us back to the path of truth. Some listen, some follow, but it is only after these souls leave their bodies and their special roles, that what they said and did is recorded in what will become religious scriptures. These scriptures become the basis of the different branches of the tree of life. Each branch is a religious path, with its set of beliefs, rituals, codes and truths which attract many followers. But they are branches growing in different directions. The four main branches

are Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

Each religion is new; in its early days in its Golden-Aged state, and therefore powerful. Gradually, as time goes on and the population increases, the numbers on each branch increase. Like everything else, the growth and expansion of each branch takes it through its Silver-Aged stage and into the Copper-Aged stage. This is the time when each religion begins to



fragment and separate into sub-branches as individuals interpret the original message "their way" and lead others in different directions. This growth continues into the Iron Age, the night of each religion, where we see each of the four main religions totally fragmented. Like the tree, each of these fragments, or schisms, is like a twig, rather weak and delicate compared to its branch and trunk, and is sensitive and susceptible to the slightest breeze in the form of different ideas and beliefs.

Meanwhile the tree of life has been growing taller and spreading new branches represented by new religious philosophies and ideologies. Each contains values and codes of human behaviour which influence our actions and our relationships. All the time the tree is growing further from the seed, further from the trunk; the original time when truth, unity and harmony prevailed. And now, in the present day, we see the tree fully grown. Never before have we seen so much division, compartmentalisation, separation, categorisation in every area of our lives. The tree of life has matured, with tremendous diversity of branches and twigs, no two are the same, and to the eye of the beholder the tree in full bloom is a beautiful sight. But it is also at its weakest and most vulnerable as its strength is spread throughout.

This symbol of growth and expansion, this symbol of the movement from new to old, is an interpretation of all life on earth. Perhaps the most startling evidence of this process is the simple growth in population. Until only one hundred years ago there was a steady growth towards the one billion mark. And then, in the space of one hundred years, the population has grown exponentially to five and a half billion, putting a tremendous strain on the resources and life support systems of the planet.

But there are other ways to use and test the validity of this universal symbol. In fact, any area of our lives reflects the same process of growth and development.

Another example is the development of science. At the

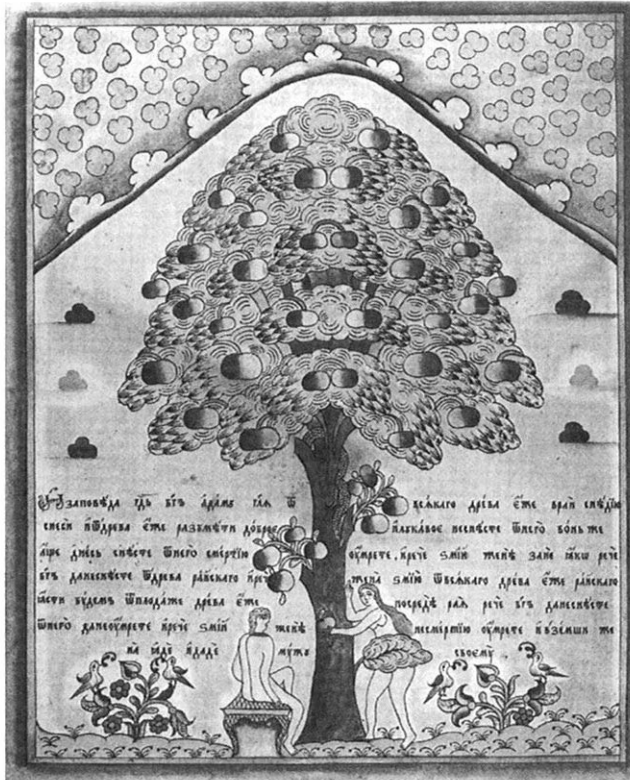
beginning of the Copper Age the process of enquiry began. Who are we? What are we? What are we doing here? How does the world work? Philosophy worked with these questions in an intellectual enquiry which was the beginning of scientific enquiry. It wasn't long before some philosophers got tired of talking and speculating, and opted for another direction: the exploration of matter. The enquiry was slow to begin with, and then a few hundred years ago it exploded as certain discoveries were made and inventions followed. Only in the last one hundred and fifty years has science fragmented into its different specialities, or branches, so that today the tree of science is now well-developed with branches burgeoning in all directions: chemistry, physics, biology, biotechnology, medicine, psychology, etc.

Similarly, politicians, doctors, engineers, lawyers, architects, artists, are all sitting on their own branch of knowledge. Each is largely unaware of what people do on the other branches and they therefore make decisions based on their limited vision of life.

All this is called progress, but is it? Perhaps we could label the expansion of technological development as 'progress in the field of technology', but does it mean progress in human consciousness? The evidence,

brought to us daily through the media, would seem to contradict this notion, as there has never been so much conflict, anger and suffering in the history of humankind.

Thus we see the nature of growth and expansion as symbolised by the tree. The movement from new to old, from strength to weakness, prevails around us. An old tree is



ubiquitous, destined to die, but not before its seeds release potential new life. And in the tree of life, this is the role of God, the eternal seed. The new tree is a spiritual one; its creation is not out of nothing but the re-creation, the renewal, the replenishment of the present spiritual energy within the old tree. And so, as we souls are restored, replenished, we become the new life, and through our connection with the seed, with the Supreme Soul, we become ready to create and serve the new growth.

This process, however, happens invisibly. The soul and God

communicate through the pure link of thought. This silent communication with God is how the soul receives the spiritual power to renew itself and to understand its role at this time. Now is the time of greatest darkness. But, underground, the roots are gathering strength, ready to support new growth above, to maintain and sustain it. The roots of the tree are directly next to the seed and it is the stability and strength of those roots which will allow the tree to grow straight and tall once again.

Now it is the time to establish that connection with the seed of life, with God. With the One who knows and contains the whole plan of future growth. This is the effort and reward of meditation, to make that connection in the final stages of the old tree's growth, and begin the role of not only helping oneself but helping others. Not only seeing and understanding the tree of life, but helping others to see it also.

Meditate on the symbol of the tree and read the drama of life. See your place in it, and you will see your role and purpose during this time of intense and significant change.

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Note: Meditation is seldom associated with history and concepts such as time and space. More it is seen as a method to escape or be free of the concepts and details of such things. Raja Yoga meditation however recognises that the natural thirst of the soul for truth and understanding, for meaning and significance, for purpose and identity, must be satisfied before the 'peace that surpasses all pleasure' can be achieved through the technique of meditation itself.

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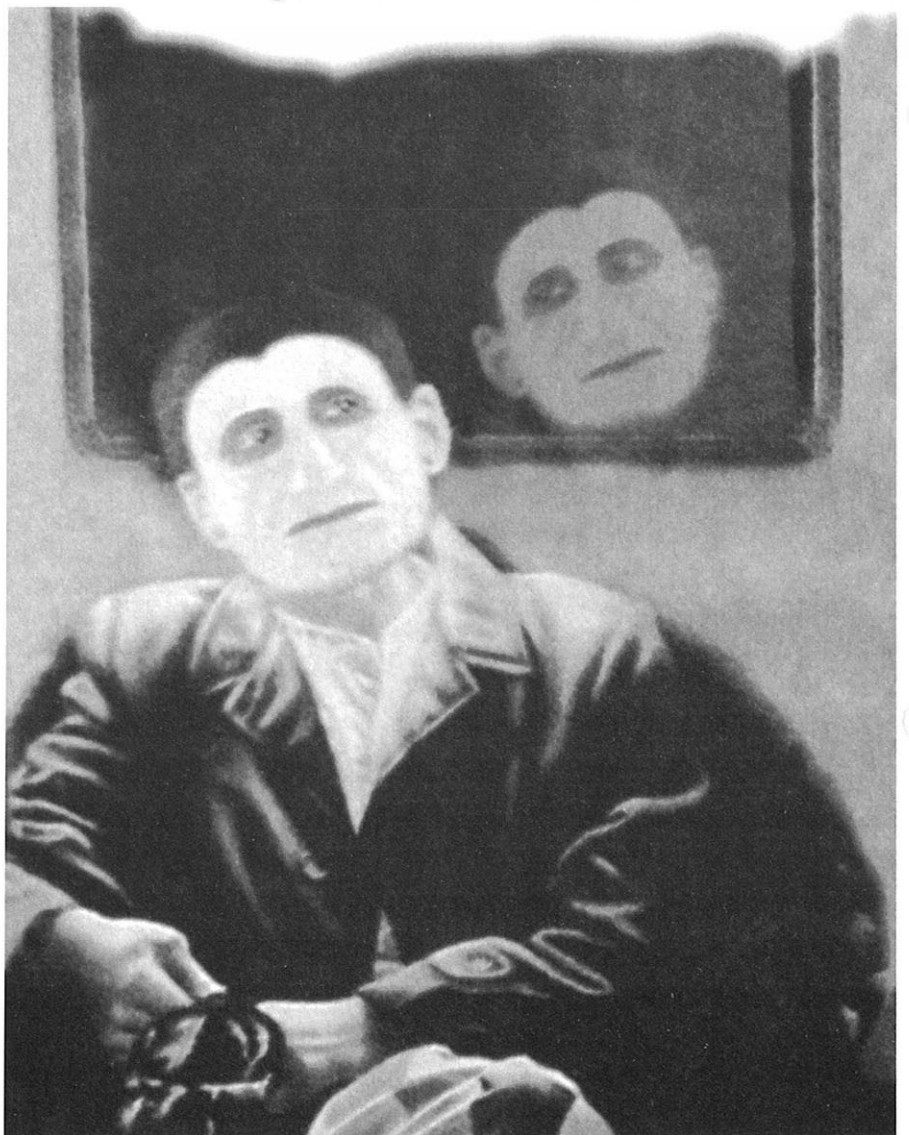
THE ACTOR, THE ENTERTAINER AND THE EGO

Denise Lawrence describes the emergence and the influence of the self indulgent actor who resides in all of us.



Satellite dishes perch on the shanty towns of Rio de Janeiro, Calcutta and the Indian reservations of Arizona, next to piles of corrugated iron and cardboard where people attest to the great power of entertainment and its hold over the world. The entertainer has enormous influence. However, little is known about how far performance reaches into individual lives all over the world.

A blues guitarist recently on radio



described how sometimes his performance can be so perfect that the audience is totally moved and the other musicians entranced. It is as if he moves beyond performing, and observes from somewhere else; where the ego-consciousness is not

involved. He can be moved to tears by his own music as if he were in the audience - an amazing, almost mystic, experience.

Michelangelo, too, said of his sculptures "The figures are already

in there, I just peel off the excess marble.” Statues, though perhaps more in his time, continue to have a strong impact on people’s lives.

Most of us have had similar mystical moments. The difference between someone good and someone great is the ability to completely detach from their creation or performance. Though we may not exactly be remembered in history as great, whenever we experience that detachment, we move into the dimension of greatness for a while. That sense of greatness is very real and an important spiritual component in a person’s life.

All of us are actors. If we look within, we are bound to discover a crowd of characters. Within a single day, one plays such a variety of parts. Some parts are played in the same costume, and sometimes costumes must be changed. At every change of scene, a new character within is projected into the drama of our lives.

We adopt certain postures that are peculiar to ourselves and certain situations. If we are in a business situation, our businessman will come out and we will talk in our business voice, we will dress, hold our body and be tough in a certain way and when the businessman’s part is over he merges within. The next situation calls forth another character inside us. We will find a few dozen characters inside. Eventually the moment comes when we ask which one is me, or “Will the real me please stand up?” It’s one of hardest questions to answer.

Humans are creatures of habit. Our inner characters have their habits too, and every so often one will come out to say, “I am going to be here all day! I don’t care what the situation is!” Some of us have a policeman inside and whether or not it is appropriate he

could preside over the entire day. When we use a character inappropriately, it is inevitable that something will go wrong. If our observer self stays asleep, our various characters, out of pure habit, may continue to act unsuitably. But if our observer awakens, he would ask “Hey, what’s going on? This is not what you should be doing.”

Being locked in a role makes us pretentious as we try to impress others, using our act to get everybody’s attention. When we are ‘on form’, and ‘on a roll’, indulging in our acting, we don’t care whether the situation merits it or not, we are having a good time and are not going to quit. We quickly tread on someone’s toes, become out of sync with our real self, our spirituality.

Our purpose in meditation is to awaken the observer self. Our alertness enables us to send the character whose time is up backstage, and to call the next player. When the observer is skilled, responsible and confident, this works well. The actor and observer are complementary opposites. A spiritual master is skilled in moving between the two and balances both to perfection.

Normally in Western culture, perfection is an extreme end of the scale and anything that is not at that extreme is not perfect. However, in truth, perfection is dead centre of the balance. We become out of balance when we move towards extreme success and perpetuate this display. This is called an ego problem.

Ego is slippery and difficult to see in the self, while it is easy to see in the next person. Spiritual study and practice invites us to work at very deep levels; deeper than those of the ego.

Our conscience can act as a

barometer to identify instantly when we are wrong or right. A wrong act is produced by false ego. Spiritual work increases our sensitivity and skilfulness in reading our barometer and seeing our activity each day. When we are putting on an act, this is the last thing we want to do. The observer needs to be there with sufficient potency to counterbalance our self-expression when it moves into self-indulgence. The observer will then send a message to the director.

How do we know when we are acting properly? It feels right. The sensibility to recognise the line between what feels intuitively right and when it is wrong can be developed. Whenever we use the expression “It seemed like a good idea at the time...” it indicates to our observer, who is connected with our conscience, the intellect and understanding, that we were being egotistical at the time.

We must also learn to observe our thoughts, and that includes comments on what we have done. Whether private, internal comments, or words that come out of our mouths, they are tell-tale. We need to know what words are signs of. Then we can master the ‘production’ of mind, body and soul.

The fundamental discernment we need to have is that the characters inside us are not the essence. Each one is merely a projection of a facet which may be suitable for particular expression. Our problem is that we go overboard, or out of line.

Ultimately, we are the directors, and it is through our mastery and self-regard that we can ensure that the entire play, performed by ourselves as the main actors, unfolds to our total satisfaction.

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Denise Lawrence is Director of the Brahma Kumaris Centre in Los Angeles.

C O U R A G E

Mike George reflects on the courage to let go



Sometimes life ahead can look and feel like a mountain. It stands before you as a barrier and a frightening if not awesome prospect, triggering feelings of foreboding and smallness as it drains the enthusiasm from your very veins.

And then along comes one of those mountaineer types. One of those people who thrives on the challenge of climbing a lofty peak, conquering flat rock vertical faces and slaying the ice and snow on the way. Watching people like that take on life with gusto, and even contempt, can sometimes give you hope, but at other times they only seem to confirm your sense of self-inadequacy.

But mountains don't have to be climbed just because they stand ahead. The courage of the mountaineer is often mistaken for the ego of, 'I'm going to conquer you, like it or not'.

And the energy of that ego is the driving force that takes the climber to the top. Another word for this is ambition, and climbers, of the social type, seldom worry who they have to clamber over on the way. Everyone knows a good climber,

and seldom are they the most popular people in the world.

For most people it takes the courage of honesty to say 'that it looks too big for me, I just don't know how I'm going to get there'. But it is that very honesty which releases the tension of having to confront the monster, which in turn allows you to see there is another way - all mountains don't have to be climbed the hard way, especially the one called life.

Extend the courage of your honesty into the courage of letting go. Let go of the fear that says, what if I don't make it? Let go of the baggage of all your possessions, which you cannot take with you. Let go of others' opinions which say you might as well not bother.

It takes courage to let go of your self-imposed limitations, and it takes courage to visualise yourself looking down on the mountains of life, seeing them only as a small range of hills. That vision alone releases energy for forward movement. And finally, it takes courage to let go of the belief that there is such a thing as fear!

Where is all this courage going to come from? How are you going to get access to it? Courage is not yet on the market. Neither packaged nor bottled, it is the stuff of the human spirit. To be inspired (inspired) is to have your spirit filled

with the energy of courage. There are never doubts in inspiration. There are no fears in spirited effort. The well-spring of courage is therefore within.

The tales of courage in our history books always remember the physical overcoming the physical, the defeating of the enemy and the foe. But is this real courage, or is it the offspring of folly, the defence against the threat of death, the obedience to authority for fear of punishment, or like the mountaineer, the ego's driving need for achievement and recognition?

No one talks about the courage required to admit they are wrong. The courage to go into the meeting with that person you dislike the most, and make yourself like him. Or the courage to see the good side of a person, when all you want to see is the bad. The courage to love, when all you want to do is hate. The courage to climb your own internal mountains of jealousy, anger, self doubt, and all those feelings that you are not good enough.

This is the courage that creates heroes. Invisible and unsung heroes, taking on their mountains, and quietly inspiring others to reach for their own personal peaks.

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Mike George is the Editor of Retreat Magazine.

TIME

Reality or Illusion?



If you watch a clock you'll see time slip away from you. If you watch the greying of your hair you'll see time catching up with you. If you accidentally put your hand in boiling water ten seconds will stretch into an age of pain. And if you have a day in which twenty tasks must be done, that day will pass in a moment.

The mystery of time has baffled the best brains for... time immemorial! What is it? How does it work? How do we measure it? And why can't we buy it like everything else...or can we? Is time real, or simply the product of our ego as we try to control the energies of the universe? And what of eternity? Was there a beginning? Who saw it? Who remembers? And who knows when time will end?

Are there any conclusions? Or is it just pure arrogance to put a speculative date on the

beginning of our world and call it truth?

At a physical level the sun tells us of the passing of time. At a mental level our memory tells us that time has passed. At the spiritual level some have spoken of an awareness of the totality of time and yet paradoxically, the total absence of time. They describe a state of being where nothing changes and eternity is experienced. There is freedom from the tyranny of change. And fear is no more.

To a busy mind this describes an end. To a mind attached to change, it describes its own death. But description is not reality. Which might explain why those who have tasted the silence of timelessness returned with a story of bliss.

What's your story?

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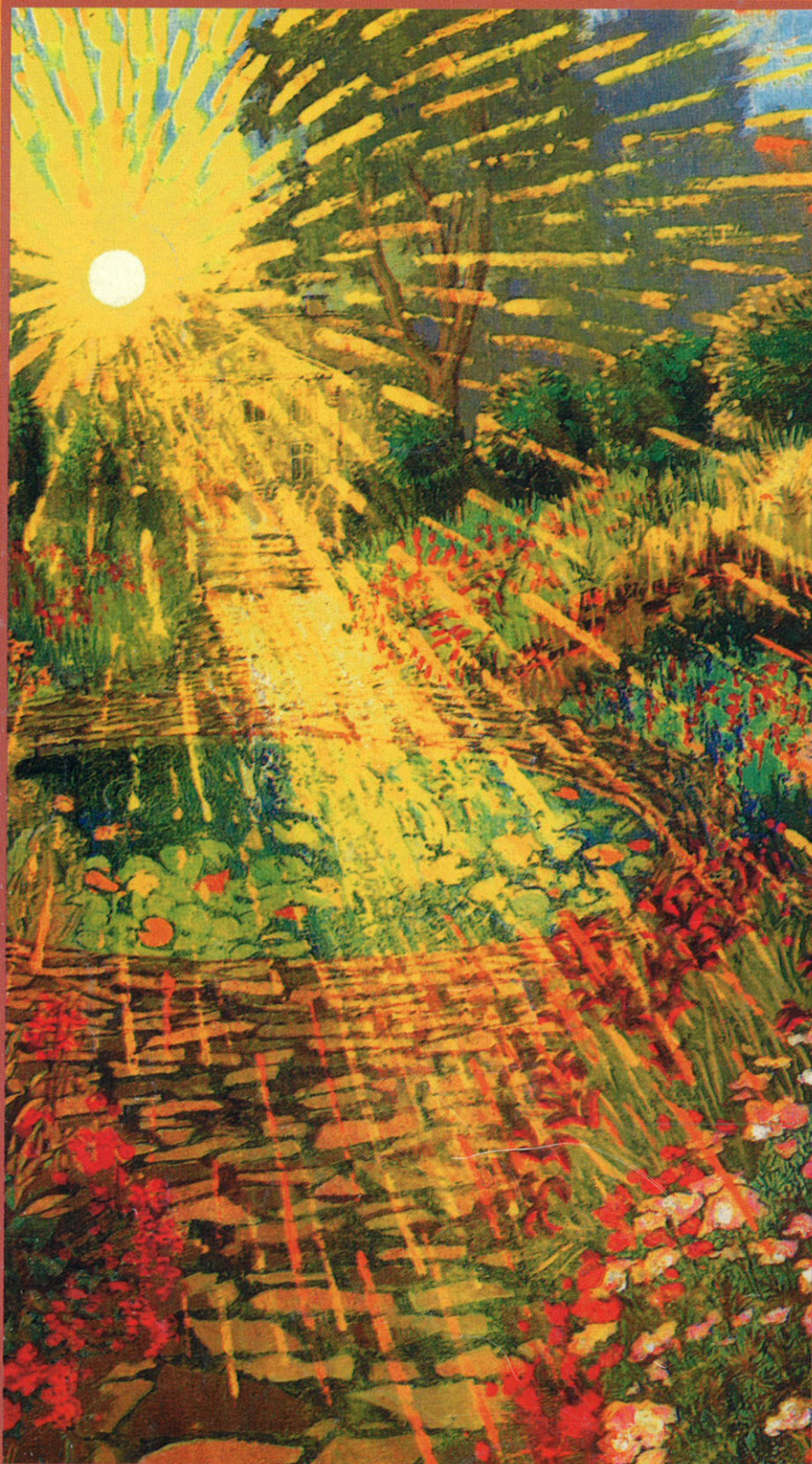
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SILENT NATURE

SILENT NATURE

Friend, be still! And listen
Till the echoes die away
Of all the voices talking
And you shall hear one say,

“Do not Fear! The Darkness
Is only lack of sight;
Still, I’m here beside you -
The Way, the Truth, the Light.”

The more and more you’re Silent
More clearly shall you see;
For He is Silent Nature,
Whose Balance you shall Be

If you stop altogether
And vanish from our sight,
You’ll find that Death *is* Life, my Friend,
And you are nought but light.

For Light Himself’s a traveller,
The fastest on our Earth,
And if you’re still, you’ll find you will
Flash by ‘twixt’ Death and Birth

So fast or slow you will not know
What difference there be;
Yet, free of strife, you’ll Be the Life
As fluid as the sea.

For though God works in Silence,
He works to His own plan;
And when at last we go too fast,
He’ll make His own Big Bang.

For He is Silent Nature;
He works at his own pace;
And those who still deny Him will
Soon meet Him face to face.

For Man thinks Time and Money
Are what we Truly need
And faster growth to go with both
And greater, greater speed.

But God is Silent Nature
And He will ever wait
For Man to See and with Him Be
In Love - not endless hate.

Man has stretched to breaking
His ego rubber-band
And his proud ‘I’ must snap and die -
Or on the other hand

He must return to Nature,
Relax, be Silent, Yield
And meditate upon the state
Of lillies in the field.

Friend, be still and listen.
And when you know you’re One,
You will be Silent Nature
And shine like God, the S.n!

Francis Boston
FLASHES OF SILENCE