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The author and Paramananda at Ranchi, Bihar, 1983. Photo: Devendranath.

IN SEARCH OF TRUTH

MY EXPERIENCES WITH SWAMI PARAMANANDA

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A YOGI IN THE WEST

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and

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DEDUCTION

Science and Spirituality

In our Western culture, for the main part, we have been occupied by the outer things rather than the inner things, so that we struggle with fundamental problems as regards spiritual concepts and understanding. In striking contrast to the culture of the East, in our culture man's inner nature has neither been discovered nor mapped. Our religious mystics have had to take a leap into the dark supported only by their faith, without training or guidance, just because philosophy was never accepted in religion while our philosophers contend with the most breakneck intellectual capers in their brain based speculations, as if it was extreme-sport for the IQ-gifted.

Yet, in our times, science prevails and only the physical-material reality has any real value. Today science has taken over the roles of both religion and philosophy and rules supreme in the arena of opinion in society, in spite of the fact that it relies on the paradox that everything has emerged from nothing. No one who wishes to be taken seriously today can present a single assertion or make a common statement unless, at the same time, they present a lot of scientific research results and reports in support of their arguments. But it is an irrefutable fact that what is a recognized truth today will be completely discarded for a much wider or higher truth tomorrow, precisely because we constantly discover new things which change or overturn the previously current and prevailing view. And that, of course, will never end – nor is there any end to knowledge – for the simple reason that science is only concerned with phenomenal or impermanent (changeable) truths.

That these truths fully depend on something as fragile and changeable and untrustworthy as our five physical senses, seems to be quite acceptable. And that a large part of these truths appear as a result of research involving terrible torture of animals in captivity, also seems to be considered acceptable. As is the fact that too much of all the research conducted will be no more objective (i.e. true) than money, politics and power permit. Another fact regarding science is that it far too often only proves the obvious and self-evident, so that it only confirms what we always knew or should have known through common sense.

I do not at all wish to criticize serious and good scientific

research, but I do find reason to warn against the exaggerated value Science, with a capital S, is poised to achieve in our individual lives as well as in society. To many science has become like a religion, especially within Darwinism and the theory of evolution, just like many self-declared atheists behave in exactly the same manner as those religious people they criticize. *But at the starting point any one scientist is a truth seeker and their research is their sadhana.* Many great scientists are just like yogis, and I do not exclude the possibility that the great, late, world famous physicist, Stephen Hawking, could have been the same identity as the great Vedic and Vedantic Rishi Astavakra. 'Astavakra' means 'twisted eight times' and indicates that Rishi Astavakra was physically impaired.

However, it is necessary to direct the attention to the massive inhumane consequences caused by modern material science, on account of the completely dead view which prevails regarding humanity and life in general, saying that consciousness and complex, intelligent, life has evolved from "dead" material atoms, and that our thoughts, conscience, intuition, etc., are only the result of chemical reactions in our physical brain. The dire consequence of this accepted and established, almost religious, dogmatic, "scientific" view, is that man is looked upon and treated like a *machine*. And that is why we think that we can make an even better machine than ourselves, with the manipulation of our genes and DNA, the making of artificial intelligence, and so on.



Blue-throated Barbet (*Megalaima asiatica*), Satavisha, Azim Ganj, Murshidabad, West-Bengal, India, 22.12.2014. Photo: BP.

One area of life in which this is visible and tangible to all and part of everybody's experience, is modern medical science. This science has legitimacy as long as it is dealing with emergency medical treatment. But when it comes to chronic diseases the allopathic doctors and their allopathic, highly artificial and unnatural, chemical medicine do far more harm than good. Actually, allopathic medicine is quite dangerous as it kills, little by little, since it is really pure poison to the body. This medicine is not directed towards finding and eradicating the cause, only to subduing the symptoms of illness, and it always has a lot of serious side effects, besides being addictive and often extremely expensive. Behind it, of course, is the insatiable, extremely greedy and cynical multi-million dollar business of the pharmaceutical industry. For instance, when a person feels deep depression or anxiety for some time and finally visits a regular doctor, a psychiatrist or even a psychologist for help, he or she will most certainly end up being prescribed pills and medication, which, of course, is the easy and highly professional way.

This is nothing but uncivilized and inhumane, as it is bound to lead to so many more complications, necessarily so because human beings are certainly not machines! That person would need attention and sympathy, with love and understanding, and then some practical, friendly advice for the possible change of lifestyle and diet, based on the person's history and present individual requirements. Only very simple and natural and humane things. But the intellectual and scientific mind tends to think that the more complex and complicated something is, the better it is.

There are many areas in life where we clearly see the diametrically opposed outlook of East and West, and one of these areas is regarding causality. One circumstance in our everyday life in which we all quite clearly see causal connections is regarding thought-processes that lead to practical actions. Everyone experiences perhaps daily, or even many times a day, that first we have an idea, then think, consider and possibly make plans about it until eventually, by our will, we drive it into action. Everyone knows that this is the way it happens, because we see and experience it ourselves all the time. First something very subtle emerges in the mind, which is the idea, and thereafter come thoughts, feelings and will, preferably in that order, which are gradually coarser and more concrete properties of the mind. And then, finally, this mental creation is ready to be actualized or realized, i.e. manifested, in the physical-material life.

That is how we can create and make anything, and everybody knows that that's how it works. Still science wants us to believe that Creation and life have come about in a completely opposite way – that all things in this unending



From the garden outside Paramananda's hut at Banagram ashram, 03.02.2013. Photo: BP.

universe have come into existence from dead matter! It is the same as if to say that it is the painting that has created the artist and not vice versa – that the artist has come from the tube of paint, so to speak, almost like the genie of the lamp! This is completely illogical and really an unscientific concept, which is sustained only because the mental world and the spiritual world cannot be measured and weighed in the same way as the material world. ¹⁾

But science goes much further than that in its fantastic inconsequence. The theory of the "Big Bang" – about how life first originated – asserts that the universe has originated from "nothing". This has resulted from the science of physics which is that science which is the most developed and thus has the most authority and influence. There the research on elementary particles of atomic physics has revealed that matter actually does not exist. What we traditionally have perceived as solid matter through our physical senses, is, in its minutest parts, only a kind of vibration or subtle energy. So here the research stands on the threshold of the mental sphere where things no longer can be measured or weighed, or in any way understood physically. And that is very interesting because it confirms what the Vedic Rishis of India have communicated many thousands of years ago in their Vedanta philosophy, namely that the physical universe is a mental projection which is created, sustained and dissolved (transformed) continuously.

And the understanding of the universe's fundamental element as vibration is also Indian and is found in the concept of pranava, which is the first and eternal tone or sound by which everything has originated and in which everything rests – better known as the monosyllable *OM* or *AUM* – Brahma's (God's) wish to manifest Itself and thus enjoy Itself – which is also found in the Bible (“Logos” or “The Word”: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”). So here physical science stands on the threshold of not only the mental world, but also directly of the spiritual world.

Science as such knows the physical world and has perhaps a vague suspicion about the mental world, but has no idea whatsoever about the spiritual world – what *consciousness* is, is a complete unknown, in spite of the fact that it is only because of consciousness that we are living and thinking and acting, and it is “the nearest” to us at all times.

”Soul” and Mind

There are huge challenges for the truth-seeker of a spiritual inclination in the West as regards languages. Because we do not have the proper words and expressions to communicate the deep spiritual realities of the East. The Sanskrit language of India has precise terms for the most central spiritual concepts, such as *brahman*, *atman*, *dhyana*, *samadhi*, *shanti*, *dharma*, *samsara*, *maya*, *karman*, *ahamkara*, whereas the languages further to the west of the Indo-European group like Greek and Latin, and the Germanic, Celtic and Slavonic language families, totally lack equivalents for these, showing that these thoughts were simply never thought in the West. Moreover, in all of Western literature and culture the three concepts of ‘soul’, ‘mind’ and ‘spirit’ are used haphazardly to denote the same thing, without any real distinction between them. As a result we completely lack a proper concept of God and Soul, and ‘soul’, ‘mind’ and ‘spirit’ produce more or less the same idea in the consciousness and understanding of people.

The Greek *psykhos*, for instance, which forms the basis for our science of psychology may either be rendered as ‘soul’ or as ‘mind’, depending on which dictionary you use, which exactly illustrates the confusion, and everything that is learned in psychology is about the mind and the mental sphere of man. No one can understand that the mind or the mental sphere, and the soul or the spiritual sphere, are two completely different spheres of life. In Norway, for instance, a spiritual person is one who can feel spirits and extrasensory phenomena and a clairvoyant or a person doing ‘channelling’ (spiritism) and healing is commonly regarded as extremely spiritual. But all of this has to do with external phenomena only and lies well within what I call the “men-



Western Spotted Dove (*Spilopelia suratensis*), Banagram ashram, Burdwan, West-Bengal, India, 05.02.2013. Photo: BP.

tal sphere” of life, while the “spiritual sphere”, in the Indian sense, always has to do with the innermost internal – with one's inner identification.

But, as said, one should not be surprised about the confusion in the West as long as there are no adequate words and expressions. That one understands ‘spirit’ when one is saying ‘spiritual’, is only natural. So the so-called “spiritual” people in the West are therefore mainly concerned with spirits or extra-sensory identities *outside* themselves. Whereas the “spiritual” people of the East are not at all “spiritual” in that sense – they are *adhyatmika* – ‘focused on *atman*’ or ‘occupied by *atman*’, i.e. their innermost identity or true Self. Therefore we can understand the difficulty of language. However, the Sanskrit *atman* (the Self) is now more and more commonly used internationally, and I would by far prefer to use that rather than ‘soul’ (German ‘Seele’, Norwegian ‘sjel’), which does not have any good etymology and which is mixed up with mind and spirit.

In any case, the main reason why confusion reigns and the mixture of soul and mind prevails in the Western cultural sphere is that there is no tradition in the West for *transcending the mind*, which in the East is called *nirvikalpa samadhi*. The Christian Mystics and other truth-seekers of the West have had the habit of stopping at the earlier stage called *savikalpa samadhi*, which is Universal Mind, but mind just the same. It is only in the East, and primarily in India, that there is a tradition of transcending the mind, which is also called *turiya*, and thereby realizing the Self or Atman. ²⁾

Let us take a closer look at the concept of *samadhi*, which has no equivalent in any of the Western languages, and which forms the basis for the division of mind and soul or the Self (Atman). *Samadhi* means ‘union’ or actually the act of ‘putting together, or ‘to bring into harmony’, and refers to the absorption of the mind. *Samadhi* is the eighth and last step in Classical Yoga, the very end result of a consecutive series of exercises consisting of seven parts or steps that in a most scientific way prepares the body and mind for the union of the individual (*jivatman*) with the universal and beyond (*paramatman*) in the human being, which is exactly what happens in *samadhi*. (Unfortunately, it is only the third step, *asana* or physical exercises, and the fourth step, *pranayama* or breathing exercises, that for the most part is understood as yoga in the West. To put Yoga into the perspective of the Indian spiritual tradition, it can also be mentioned that it is the fourth of the six major philosophical systems of India.)

In the first phase this absorption will come as a result of a prolonged, concentrated or one-pointed mind, which necessarily will make the mind into the unity it actually is. This is also called “Universal Mind” or *savikalpa samadhi*. In that condition all the senses (all the ten *indriyas*) have been indrawn and pacified, and one no longer has any feeling of one's physical body. Four classes or stages of *samadhi* have been listed of which three are included in the concept of *savikalpa*. These three are “imagined *samadhi*”, “active *samadhi*” and “complete *samadhi*”. All

three have some object or other in the mind and can therefore be explained. The fourth and last type of *samadhi* has the striking name of “opposite *samadhi*”. It has no object in mind and therefore it also cannot be explained. It is more commonly known as “*nirvikalpa samadhi*”. *Nirvikalpa* means that there is neither will for projection, nor non will for projection in the mind. In other words, there is absolutely nothing more in the mind.

Thus, in *samadhi* in the sense of ‘absorption’ either the mind is absorbed in one object or in the identity of its own unity, which in principle is one and the same thing, and which shows an *active mind*, or it can be the absorption which follows a *passive mind* or a transcended mind, which in Sanskrit is called *turiya*. Thus the mind is neither active (awake consciousness and sub-consciousness or dream sleep) nor inactive (deep, dreamless sleep or unconscious), but fully *passive*. Only a so-called “pure mind” can become passive, in which there are no longer any wishes or desires, but where life is reflected spontaneously. When the mind has become passive it will be transcended, and one cannot in any way feel the mind any longer. That which is the reality of *turiya* or *nirvikalpa samadhi* can thus in no way be described or named (see a further explanation of this in the chapter “Guru Kripa” in the section “Transcendence”), in contrast to the reality of *savikalpa samadhi* which is within the reality of the mental sphere and everything that it involves.

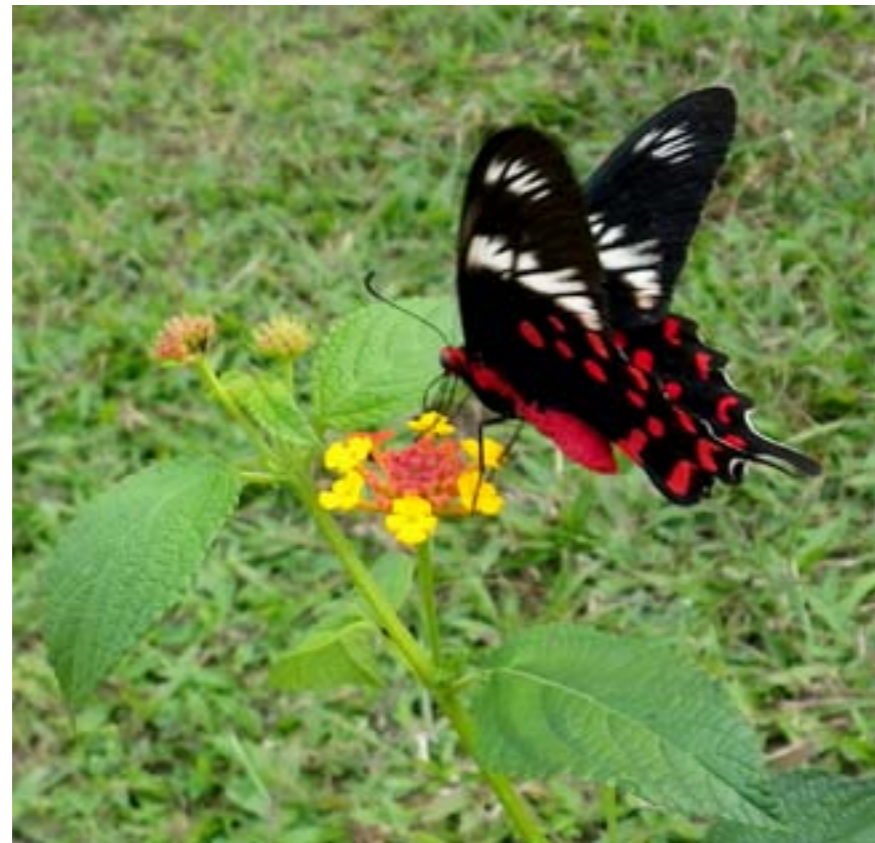


Blue Pansy (*Junonia orithiya*), Gettaptapi ashram, Baijnath, Himachal Pradesh, India, 12.06.2016. Photo: BP.

So exactly here is the borderline between the two realities, between Atman and the mind, which are totally different realities and in no way can be compared. Everything manifested or created, both within the mental sphere and the physical sphere, has its origin in, and entirely depends on, the Atman or Brahman (God), whereas Atman or Brahman (which are one and the same) is self-preserved and does not depend on anything – it is Self-Upheld and Self-Dependent. This is the essence of the youngest and last of the six major philosophical systems of India, namely Vedanta (= *veda-anta* or ‘the end of knowledge’).

In this we see a clear causal connection with Atman or Brahman first, which we may say is included in the spiritual sphere; thereafter the mind and the mental sphere; and lastly the physical and material sphere. This is also shown very nicely in the development of the foetus in the mother’s womb. The father’s sperm is the carrier of the individual’s identity or causal body, which symbolically represents the static aspect in the human being, where the dynamic is only latent. This is called the original union of Shiva (static) and Shakti (dynamic) in India.

As soon as the delivered sperm from the man fuses with the ovum of the woman at the time of fertilization, the identity receives the food it needs and cell division starts, i.e. Shakti gets activated and leaves the union with Shiva, and the growth of the continuous cell-division commences. This movement or directed energy inside



Crimson Rose (*Atrophaneura hector*), Konarak, Orissa, India, 01.02.2011. Photo: BP.

the individual is called *kundalini shakti* in Indian philosophy, and is the direct cause of the individual’s physical and mental development. Through the continuous movement of the *kundalini* in *sushumna* the *chakras* of the astral body are developed, and in the physical body, the head with the spinal cord and its limbs, which grows almost like the stem and the branches from the root of a tree, because the foetus is lying on its head and the growth happens vertically, upwards.

At first this energy is very fine and then gradually becomes more and more condensed, coarse and solid. This is reflected in the endocrine orchestra of the central nervous system and the inner organs of the body.

First, in the physical sphere, the pineal gland in the centre of the brain is formed, which is the physical counterpart to what they in India call *sahasrara chakra* in our “causal body”, which is the seat of our individual identity.

Second, the pituitary gland is formed which is the physical counterpart to the “third eye” or the *ajña chakra* in our “astral body” or the mental sphere, which is the seat of mind.

Thereafter follow all the different centres or *chakras* of the astral or subtle body with their physical counterparts in the endocrine system of glands, all of which influence vital organs and functions in our physical body or physical sphere:

- vishuddha chakra* and the thyroid gland in the region of the throat, which includes the organ of speech with the element of ether (or plasma);
- anahata chakra* and the thymus gland in the chest, which includes heart and lungs with the element air (or gas);
- manipura chakra* and the adrenal gland in the stomach, which includes all the organs of digestion and metabolism with the element fire;
- swadisthana chakra* and the sexual glands in the abdomen, which includes the kidneys with the element water; and
- muladhara chakra* at the perineum (pre-coccyx), including the colon and anus with the element earth.

When the *kundalini* has reached or formed the *muladhara chakra* with its physical counterparts, its mission in creation or the development of the individual is fulfilled, and it will “coil up” (hence the name *kundalini*) three and a half times and then remain “sleeping” or inactive there. However, the result is the complete manifestation of the individual human being, spiritually, mentally and physically. And in this process the foetus has gone through various stages of development, showing a variety of forms and appearances, by passing through the whole evolution from fish to human. Fish because that is the form of life in which the mind is first manifested, so actually, in the early stage of the foetus, the evolution of the mind is reflected.



Black-hooded Oriole (*Oriolus xanthornus*), Satavisha, Azim Ganj, Murshidabad, West-Bengal, India, 28.02.2014. Photo: BP.

All of this has happened while the individual has been completely unconscious and the mind has been inactive. But after the foetus is fully developed, after about four months, the foundation is there for the mind to become active. Thus the consciousness will change from unconscious to sub-conscious and the mind will go from being inactive to active and enter the state of dream. The mother always notices this because then, for the very first time, she feels that there is a “separate” life in her body or that her child has become alive. She may take part in the child’s dreams, and she will often feel a variety of physical symptoms which are not her own but belong to the child. For example, craving for certain types of food which she has hardly or never eaten before, or suddenly she cannot bear certain odours or other things to which previously she never reacted. In the same way as the mother is influenced by the child, she also influences the child, and much more so than she usually thinks. In this way the mother can consciously affect and form her child to a great extent. In the remaining five months of the pregnancy, the child’s mind alternates between active and inactive, and the stage of consciousness correspondingly between sub-conscious and unconscious, just like during regular sleep after birth.

When the nine months of pregnancy have passed and the period of gestation is over, and the child has become more developed and strong, it develops an unbending urge to experience waking consciousness. And that starts the process of birth, because the waking consciousness is only possible after the child has come out from the mother, breathes air and has independent life.

Again, we will also understand the evolution of life in Creation, or more accurately, the constant effort of Consciousness to express itself through manifestation, by looking at the development of the human from foetus through infant to child and beyond: As a foetus we are lying upside down and reflect downward manifestation in Creation, which is vegetation and other organic life; as an infant we are lying on our back or crawling on all fours and reflect horizontal and forward manifestation in Creation, like all of the animal kingdom and biological life; and as a child, youth and adult we walk in an upright, vertical position with our head on top and reflect upward manifestation in Creation, which then has the possibility of fulfilling the goal of evolution.

For most people the *kundalini* continues to slumber in the *muladhara chakra* throughout their life, and is the cause of those autonomous body functions not usually controlled by the mind or of the waking consciousness, like heartbeat and respiration, blood circulation and digestion. But if the *kundalini shakti* should be woken from its sleep by some utterly intense, emotional, mental mood or by a particularly strong spiritual influence or experience, such as contact with a realized person (especially during initiation), it will immediately start longing for its original union with Shiva. ³⁾ Thus its reverse motion starts, upwards through the *sushumna* with all the *chakras* and elements from solid to fine and beyond, back to Shiva in the *sahasrara*. It is this which is called “spiritual development”, but it may as well be called ‘un-folding’ and ‘involution’. And then we have returned to the starting point with the eight steps of Classical Yoga:

- 1.) *yama* or universal moral rules in relation to our fellow human beings;
- 2.) *niyama* or self discipline through food habits and life style;
- 3.) *asana* or physical postures or exercises for the strength and flexibility of the body;
- 4.) *pranayama* or the balancing of the breath;
- 5.) *pratyahara* or the withdrawal of all the physical and subtle senses;
- 6.) *dharana* or the concentration (or conception) of mind;
- 7.) *dhyana* or the observation of mind (meditation);
- 8.) *samadhi* or the union of the individual with the universal and beyond.

As mentioned at the beginning Yoga is a complete science which comprises the whole human being, and is designed in such a way that step by step it will naturally fulfil the human being – with no more than the tools of our own body and mind, and completely without need of believing anything outside ourselves or having to assume a set of rules or dogma. Self confidence and the will for self discipline are the only things needed to start with. Self-Realization or

God-Realization is only possible *in life, through life* – after having been born as human and through our body and mind. So everything is there with the gift of birth from the side of nature – nothing needs to be brought from outside or in addition to ourselves!

Every single day throughout life every one of us experiences three totally different states of mind in three totally different stages or levels of consciousness. During most of the hours of the day most of us are in what is called the waking state of mind with the familiar waking stage of consciousness. But when we sleep the mind alternates between the dream state of mind on a sub-conscious level (whose main function is mental hygiene, by the ventilation of mental impressions so as to maintain our mental balance), and deep, dreamless sleep on an unconscious level. Nobody seems to understand that exactly the same thing happens after death as regards our mental states and the stages of consciousness, except, of course, that then it is without the waking consciousness and the waking state of mind, which are inseparable from the living physical body. Actually we die a little every night, and that is the reason why sleep is so important to us and that we can start anew every single morning after a good night’s sleep.

The transition from one life to another after death is just like a prolonged sleep with an extra long interval of unconsciousness and inactivity of the mind. It is no more mystical than that! If we solve the mystery of sleep we also, at the same time, solve the mystery of death, because the two are closely intertwined. Just by observing one’s own body and own mind in one’s own life one can solve all the mysteries and get the answers to all the fundamental questions of existence. As simple as that! Life is not meant to be complicated. Nature is always in harmony with herself, but we humans know only too well how to complicate all things and to make disharmony wherever we go. Therefore it is always of vital importance to follow nature!



Water lily at Henry Island, Sundarbans, West-Bengal, India, 12.02.2015. Photo: BP.

FOOTNOTES

1) All manifested life has its origin in the un-manifested spiritual – in the static that becomes dynamic. In evolution manifestation demands a certain level of development for the spiritual to function, like the erect spine and the size and quality of the brain – certain prerequisites for a playground, like the six needs and necessities of man that have to be met with before he can properly direct all of his energy in the seventh and last principle of life (spirituality). Hence the illusion that everything develops from primitive matter. We may say that the material needs a certain degree of refinement and complexity before it can properly reflect its spiritual source – perhaps not exactly reflect, but operate according to *purpose*.

2) Many gurus and “masters”, in the West as well as in the East, quite naturally misunderstand their own spiritual reality because they do not have any guru to guide them, at least not a Realized guru, and therefore get “stuck” in the Universal Mind (*savikalpa samadhi*), which is quite “pleasant” and rewarding, but which is not at all final and permanent.

3) One should never try to awaken the *kundalini* by force of any kind, which will only be harmful. The spiritual aspirant should be patient and leave this entirely to God, who certainly will wake it up in due time in a most natural and harmonious way. For some experiences accompany this, for others not – it does not really matter.

GLOSSARY (simplified)

adhyatmika – one who is always focused on *atman*, or sees everything in the light of *atman*; who belongs to *atman*. See *atman*.

ahamkara – “ego”; ‘the I-making faculty of man’, originating from fear and insecurity as an apparently separate individual; ‘I am the doer’.

ajña chakra – the seat of mind; popularly known as the “Third Eye”; the sixth centre of the astral body, corresponding to the pituitary gland in the ‘endocrine orchestra’ of the physical body. See *chakra*.

anahata chakra – the heart centre; the fourth centre of the astral body, corresponding to the thymus gland of the endocrine orchestra of the physical body, governing heart, lungs and respiration; element air. See *chakra*.

asana – physical body posture in Classical Yoga. See *yoga*.

atman – the Self, in which rests the unity of being, including man, nature and God.

Brahman – ‘The Absolute’; ‘Absolute Consciousness’; ‘God’.

chakra – ‘wheel’ or ‘circle’; according to the Tantra philosophy man’s astral body has seven *chakras* or centres alongside the spinal cord from bottom at the coccyx to the top at the crown of the skull. See *sahasrara-chakra*, *ajña-chakra*, *vishuddha-chakra*, *anahata-chakra*, *manipura-chakra*, *swadisthana-chakra*, *muladhara-chakra*.

dharana – concentration of mind; the sixth step of Classical Yoga. See *yoga*.

dharma – ‘steadfast’; or ‘on which all things rest’.

dhyana – meditation, or observation of the mind; the seventh step of Classical Yoga. See *yoga*.

jivatman – “individual self”, i.e. *atman* reflected in the individual; (actually:) “*atman* as experiencer of life”. See *atman*, *paramatman*.

karma – ‘action’; ‘deed’; popularly known as the ‘law of cause and effect’ in relation to man.

kundalini – ‘coiled up’; the central, ‘serpent-like’, power in man which is the cause of the development of the human body (through the serpent-like spinal cord) by its descent from the crown of the head through the *sushumna* by the spinal cord, and which remains ‘sleeping’ (and coiled up) at the tip of the tail bone after the completion of the body, and performs (passively) all the autonomous physical body functions from there, but which ascends (actively) through the *sushumna* again following the spinal cord back to the starting point at the crown of the head if, or when, the individual has a spiritual awakening; basis for all physical and mental life in the human being, or the substratum of all bodily and mental energy. See *chakra*, *sushumna*.

manipura chakra – the navel centre; the third centre of the astral body, corresponding to the adrenal gland of the endocrine orchestra of the physical body, governing digestion and metabolism (stomach, small intestine, liver, spleen, etc.); element fire. See *chakra*.

maya – “illusion”; the world; the seeming duality and manifold; impermanence, transience.

muladhara chakra – the anus centre; the first (in ascending order) centre of the astral body, corresponding to the perineum of the physical body, governing the large intestine and bowel movement; element earth. See *chakra*.

nirvikalpa samadhi – that form of *samadhi* which is without any object in mind and which therefore cannot be explained, in contrast to *savikalpa* and other forms of *samadhi*; also known as “opposite *samadhi*”, completely different from all other forms of *samadhi*. After complete *nirvikalpa samadhi* there is no more cause for rebirth. See *samadhi*, *savikalpa samadhi*.

niyama – self-purification/discipline through food-habit and life-style; the second step of Classical Yoga. See *yoga*.

OM / AUM – the sacred monosyllable of the Hindus, which is the symbolic representation of Brahman (God); “the primordial sound” from which everything originates, is sustained, and becomes dissolved into; the Absolute’s wish to experience and enjoy Itself. See *pranava*.

paramatman – pure consciousness as unattached by, or ‘before’, manifestation. See *atman*, *jivatman*.

pranava – term used for OM. See OM.

pranayama – breathing exercises or manipulation of the respiratory system; the fourth step of Classical Yoga. See *yoga*.

pratyahara – withdrawal of, and making passive, all of the senses; the fifth step of Classical Yoga. See *yoga*.

rishi – ‘seer’; Self-Realized sage; the highest level attained by humans through evolution, who manifests love and wisdom; (in plural) ‘the seven (original) rishis’ did not come through evolution, but by divine incarnation, and are the mind-born sons of Brahma, who were created for the protection of all living beings, including gods and men, and who are always living among the people on earth (through continuous rebirth) to fulfil this task.

sadhana – ‘which leads straight to the goal’; a person’s spiritual search or quest for truth (which involves personal commitment and practice); the collected effort – physically, emotionally and spiritually – for the realization of life’s end.

sahasrara chakra – “the spiritual centre” or “the eternal centre”, situated at the crown of the head of man; the seventh and last chakra in the astral body (symbolized as a thousand petalled lotus), corresponding to the pineal gland in the centre of the brain of the physical body. See *chakra*.

samadhi – ‘union’ (‘putting together’ or ‘bringing into harmony’); full absorption in meditation; the eighth and last step of Classical Yoga. See *nirvikalpa samadhi*, *savikalpa samadhi*, *yoga*.

samsara – “the wheel of life”; the unending, bound cycle of rebirth and death in the world on account of *karma* and ignorance, from which liberation is the goal of all Hindus. See *karma*.

savikalpa samadhi – when the mind has become a unity; “universal mind” or “super mind” (but still mind, as different from *nirvikalpa samadhi*, which is without mind). See *nirvikalpa samadhi*, *samadhi*.

Shakti – ‘power’, ‘energy’; the dynamic aspect of the Absolute; the female principle, which is worshipped in many forms, like Kali, Lakshmi, Saraswati, etc.; the counterpart of Shiva. See *Shiva*.

shanti – “universal peace”; as much inner peace as outer peace.

Shiva – ‘in which everything rests’; the static aspect of the Absolute; Shakti’s counterpart; the “king of the yogis” and the origin of all yoga (i.e. the first yogi). See *Shakti*, *yoga*.

sushumna – “the governor channel”; the central and only vertical channel of the astral body, which connects all the seven *chakras*, and through which the *kundalini* both descends and ascends. See *chakra*, *kundalini*.

swadisthana chakra – the centre of sex; the second centre of the astral body, corresponding to the sexual glands of the endocrine orchestra of the physical body, governing the sex organs and the kidneys; element water. See *chakra*.

turiya – “the fourth state of consciousness”; the transcendental or super-conscious state, beyond the three ordinary states of consciousness – waking, sub-conscious and unconscious; the “Rishi state” or realized. See *rishi*, *nirvikalpa samadhi*.

veda – ‘knowledge’ or ‘Divine Wisdom’; denoting the oldest scriptures of the Hindus, consisting of four books – Rig-Veda, Sama-Veda, Yajur-Veda and Atharva-Veda – written in Sanskrit, and which have formed the basis for all later literature of India; traditionally transmitted orally by recitation of words, melody and rhythm, only very late in prehistoric time were they written down, i.e. reduced to text. See *vedanta*.

vedanta – ‘where the wisdom ends’; the philosophical part of the Vedas, which represents the very essence of the Vedas and of Indian thinking, which deals with the inquiry into the nature of the Absolute; the last of the six major philosophical systems of India. See *veda*.

vishuddha chakra – the throat centre; the fifth centre of the astral body, corresponding to the thyroid gland of the endocrine orchestra, which governs the organ of voice in the physical body; element ether. See *chakra*.

yama – universal moral rules in relation to our fellow humans. See *yoga*.

yoga – ‘conjunction’; spiritual science that unites the individual with the universal in the human being; the second of the six main philosophical systems of India, established by Rishi Patanjali and called “Classical Yoga” or Asthanga Yoga, consisting of eight parts or steps – *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana*, *Pranayama*, *Pratyahara*, *Dharana*, *Dhyana*, *Samadhi*.



*Indian Tortoiseshell (Aglais cashmiriensis), Kalimpong, Darjeeling, West-Bengal, India,
09.06.2007. Photo: BP.*

Continuation follows in the next number next week.