THE POWER OF SOUND

What are Mantras? ● Thoughts on a Quote from Tolstoy’s, ‘War and Peace’ ● Mantras: Holy Prayers, Sounds, Chanting the Names of Divinity, and Stories of God(s) ● AUM (Om): The Word ● Sound and Vibration in Traditional Societies: Australia and Africa ● The Seven Jewels of Wisdom ● REN’ (‘The Name’): The Power of Speech ● The Virtue of Courage
CONTENTS

3  What are Mantras?
5  The Potency of Sound – G de Purucker.
8  Thoughts on a Quote from Tolstoy's 'War and Peace' – Amanda F. Rooke.
10 Mantras: Holy Prayers, Sounds, Chanting the Names of Divinity, and Stories of God(s).
18 AUM (Om): The Word - Graeme Edge.
19 Sound and Vibration in Traditional Societies: Australia and Africa.
22 Better Health:
• Qi Gong Classes.
• Sleep and Depression.
24 'REN' ('The Name'): The Power of Speech - Normandi Ellis.
28 The Virtue of Courage – James Feinstein.
29 News
31 Book Reviews:
• Every time I Find the Meaning of Life: They Change It. By Daniel Klein. Reviewed by Tony Downey.
35 Religions in a Nutshell: The Religions of Japan: Shinto and Zen.
39 Obituary: Marjorie Maud Downey.
39 Letters to the Editor:
• How Can I Meditate or Chant Mantras in this Hectic Modern World? - Krishna Das.
• Soul versus Spirit – Eugene Harris.
• Lockdown Amplifies the Simple Sounds - Jennifer Pignataro. • Waiting for a Sign.
In this issue several authors look at sacred sounds, including ‘Mantras,’ and how they can be applied to assist in building a better, more enlightened world. Theosophical teacher, G de Purucker, writes of ‘The Potency of Sound’ and vibration including the famous mantra, ‘AUM (Om);’ and the use of vibration by the Hierarchy of Light to protect mankind with the mysterious ‘Guardian Wall.’ Graeme Edge and James Feinstein put a poetic perspective on the powers of sound. Normandi Ellis turns our mind to the wisdom of the ancient Egyptians and their profound knowledge of the power of the ‘Name.’ Our feature article deals in depth with ‘Mantras, Holy Prayers, Sounds, Chanting the Names of Divinity and Stories of the God(s) and Goddess(s).’

But what are Mantras from a theosophical point of view?

Mantra (Sanskrit) Mantra. That portion of the Vedas which consist of hymns as distinct from the Brahmana and Upanishad portions. The mantras considered esoterically were originally as magical as they were religious in character, although the former today is virtually forgotten, although remembered as a fact which once was. In the composing of the mantras the rishis (sages) of old knew that every letter had its occult significance, and that the vowels especially contain occult and even formidable potencies when properly chanted. The words of the
mantra were made to convey a certain hidden meaning by certain secret rules involving first the secret potency of their sound, and incidentally the numerical value of the letters; the latter however was relatively unimportant. Hence their merely verbal significance is something quite different from their meaning as understood of old. The language of incantations or mantras is the element-language composed of sounds, numbers, and figures. He who knows how to blend the three will call forth the response from the regent-god of the specific element needed. For, in order to communicate with the gods, men must learn to address each one of them in the language of his element. Sound is “the most potent and effectual magic agent, and the first of the keys which opens the door of communication between Mortals and the Immortals” (SD 1:464)...”
– from the Encyclopedic Theosophic Glossary at: https://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/etgloss/man-mar.htm
Let’s go ahead and look at what ‘the divine potency of sound’ means in detail.

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The concept that the manifest universe is built of varying levels of vibration was well-known in the mystery schools of the ancient world. From atoms to suns, each entity sings its own keynote of life, and by sounds inaudible to our ears because of their magnitude, follow their paths of destiny.

– Mysteries of Music: Part 1: The Ancient World (2017); Theosophy Downunder Website
The Mantra: Om Mani Padme Hum: In the Tibetan Buddhist mantra, Om Mani Padme Hum, Om, the Jewel in the Lotus, the lotus flower is the human being, the soul, likewise the entire constitution of man; more accurately, his auric egg with its different layers of substance combined each with the others, like the closed petals of the lotus flower. The jewel within the lotus is the diamond heart, the 'Vajradhara,' as the initiate of ancient days was called — a mystical term signifying the expression in action of the inner god, the divine radiance or flame, sparkling, glorifying, and vivifying the one through whom it shines.

It is small wonder that Tibetans of all classes, whether quasi-initiates or merely the vast rank and file of the populace, have cherished this invocation and recite it with the spiritual longing arising in the aspiring soul. It is a way of saying, just as H.P.B. phrases it, "I am in Thee, and Thou art in me." When intoned with an understanding of what it represents, and with a yearning of the heart and mind always toward union with the divine within, it has a strong effect in purifying one's channels of thought and keeping one's aspirations constantly alive.

The Mystical Significance of ‘AUM’: As to the pronunciation and significance of this mystic syllable OM or AUM: either way of writing this word in European characters is correct, and the meaning is practically identic.

The pronunciation, however, is not the same. OM is pronounced O-M, but AUM is A-U-M, the two vowels being sounded distinctly, and the M in both cases sounded vibrating within the skull. The sectarian, modern Brahmanical
devotee will say that AUM is emblematic of the three persons of the Hindu triad, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva; but this is a lame attempt to explain in what we may call ecclesiastic fashion something more profound.

A-U-M — spelling and pronunciation and sound — is the higher form of the word, and is perhaps the more effective when one knows how properly to sound it; OM is the simpler of the two, and in the beginning equally effective.

The vowel O, or the fluid diphthong A-U, combined with the sounding of the M within the skull, have a particularly strong effect upon the human aura; and when the aspiration is high, and the heart lifted with reverence and love, and the mind itself is allied with the sun, the influence of the 'sounding of the word' can be very great. It stills, calms, and refines the entire sphere of the aural egg, so that the differing vibrational periods in separate portions of the aural egg are reduced to one harmony. Then the inflow from the god within is easy; and, at such times, a man may receive the very inspiration of divinity.

The Jews also had a word of somewhat similar character, used by their initiates in much the same way, and this was 'Amen — the common Amen.

More important than the correct pronunciation is the sounding of the word. That verily can work magic if rightly done: its correct pronunciation combined with the proper reverberating resonant sounding made by one who understands, works magically. It is the physical sound of this sacred word which is used in the art of practical magic solely for the purpose of tranquillizing the atoms, as far as it is possible for that sound to do this. As I have said, when uttered by one who knows how to do it and who understands the meaning of the act, its power is very great; it tranquillizes and soothes the entire aural envelope, and makes much easier the passage of the soaring soul up towards the spirit and back to the human consciousness.

Let us remember this, however, that it is not the senseless repetition of words that will do anybody any good. The patterning of prayers would be of equal value. The singing of hymns and the chanting of chants and the muttering of mantras are in themselves all useless. What is important is to know, and knowing to do.

**Sound - The Language of the Gods:** To one who knows, sound is perhaps the most important factor in cosmic workings. As H.P. B. has written in her Secret Doctrine (I, 464), the "magic of the ancient priests consisted, in those days, in addressing their gods in their own language … sound being the most potent and effectual magic agent, and the first of the keys which opens the door of communication between Mortals and the Immortals." Verily it is so. We must learn to talk the language of the gods before we can confabulate with them; learn to control the elemental beings before we have mastery over them. We must learn to reach the hearts of our fellow humans before we can ever help them. And this speaking the language that is understood is, above everything else, through the instrumentality of sound, the great magic agent in the universe. For everything that is, great and small, visible and invisible, sings a song of life, and this is its vital keynote; and if one can strike that keynote, he has mastery over it.

But let us beware of black magic, and touch not the individuality or destiny of any other than ourself. The magic potency of sound is widely known. Political orators, the orators in the churches, sway the hearts and minds of multitudes, and do it not necessarily by words, though greatly by words at times, but by sound and intonation.

Those who teach the Law, the Dharma, however, use the wisdom and knowledge that have been placed in their hands as a sacred trust. It is by sound more than by words that the messages of truth and wisdom are carried into our consciousness through the crevices and crannies of the armour of personal selfhood built around the soul.

**The Guardian Wall:** I might add that the members of the Brotherhood are continuously acting as a Guardian Wall shielding, protecting, mankind from dangers of cosmic and terrestrial character. The method used by these Great Ones is to 'sing' these dangers away from us, through the Akasa — by sound. Now please do not misinterpret these words and picture a row of the Great Teachers standing there, clad in white garments, and opening their
mouths and yelling and bellowing and squawking and squealing, as we human beings sometimes do and speak of it as singing! The singing may be utterly soundless to our ears, but it is a song, a song of which the mystics spoke, charming the evil away — charming means here to sing, to chant, to ‘sound’ it away.

Now what are these dangers? Let us not think for a moment that they are only material. No; they are of many kinds: spiritual, intellectual, psychical, astral, physical. They are cosmic dangers reaching our earth from outside, from other planets of the solar system, and from dead planets, our moon in particular, and the so-called Eighth Sphere or Planet of Death. Indeed, there are in constant movement along the circulations of the solar system, rivers of lives having as much right to be as we have; but inimical to us in our present evolutionary state, or dangerous at least, and which, if they could enter our earth’s atmosphere and impinge upon us, would wipe out the human race overnight. Not a single human being would be left alive upon the earth when morning came.

We humans are pilgrims; we are not forever and unto eternity chained to our globe, nor linked to our planetary chain. We are transients here, although our sojourn is of an exceedingly long time period when judged by human standards. Consequently, there are dangers arising even in this planetary chain, and therefore in globe D [ie, our Earth] of it, which could be highly inimical to man’s well-being were they allowed to impinge upon us without a shield or barrier of some sort. These are the terrestrial hazards, and they are of many kinds and on all planes. Incidentally, one of the greatest of these that we human beings are facing in our own era is the psychical crazes which are sweeping over the world, distracting our minds and diverting us from the thoughts of spirit, of spirituality. This is a psychical danger, which is fraught with tremendous perils because it can mislead human souls.

**The Power of Sound:** But let us remember always that we are protected by song, by sound, albeit the most powerful sounds are those which are inaudible to us. The sounds which the human ear can take in, on account of its present imperfections, are but a small part of the octaves of vibration. The greater by far is the inaudible sound. The Music of the Spheres, for instance, is so immense that our ears cannot take it in. Every smallest atom sings its keynote of life as it lives. It is thus by sound, inaudible to us, that it grows; it is thus by sound, inaudible to us because of its magnitude, that the planets and the suns follow their pathways of destiny, and weave their web of being and so grow to grander things.
A friend recently sent me this beautiful quote from the great Russian writer, Count Leo (Lev) Tolstoy:

"You say you can't see the kingdom of the good and the true on earth. I didn't see it either; and it can’t be seen if you look at our life as the end of everything. On earth, I mean this earth...there is no truth--everything is falsehood and evil; but in the universe, in the whole universe, there is a kingdom of the true, and we are now children of the earth, but eternally--children of the whole universe. Don’t I feel in my soul that I make up a part of that huge, harmonious whole? Don’t I feel that among the countless number of beings in which the divinity--the higher power--whatever you like--is manifest, I make up one link, one step from lower beings to higher? If I see, see clearly, this ladder that leads from plant to man, then why should I suppose that this ladder, the lower end of which I do not see, is lost in the plants? Why should I suppose that this ladder stops with me and does not lead further and further to higher beings? I feel not only that I cannot disappear, as nothing disappears in the world, but that I will always be and have always been. I feel that, besides me, above me, spirits live, and that in this world there is truth."

To this I responded:
Marvellous! Tolstoy sounds like a Theosophist, he so beautifully put into writing the doctrine of spiritual evolution, of the consciousness underlying the many kingdoms of nature. Our imperfect understanding in the World, the higher power's infilling of the Outer, by the Inner.
I dreamed a mental picture of the plants twining their stems around the sides and rungs of my friend’s garden-ladder, climbing their way along the upward path! Of course, they’d change into the next-highest life-form as they went.
Sometimes I think one has glimpses of universal consciousness at work in the plants and animals. My friend lives in an idyllic semi-rural area beside a creek - you sit on the back veranda and hear the creek's soothing burbling as it drifts towards its far-distant destination. One
afternoon I sat there listening to the noisy minor-birds dipping and dashing over the surface of the water above a hollow between the river-stones on its shallow bed. It was a very hot day, the sunlight glittered on water, leaves, and stones. Walkers and cyclists drifted by on the opposite bank.

But the concrete paving of the backyard had a big crack in it, like a huge chunk of earth was about to drop into the cavity of the flood-line of the creek bed. The scoria-rocks of the retaining wall on the other side of the yard bulged outward toward the creek. We feared the house would slip into the creek - a not unfounded fear.

However, the REAL/ Inner Vision came when we wondered, why the birds kept skimming that part of the river-bed. We saw an "inanimate" vine using the breath of the wind to move it towards a nearby branch of another tree as if unconsciously searching for another branch to move itself onto. It seemed that it used the Earth's very breath of life to move itself. If that was so, it was extraordinary to observe.

The OUTER/Worldly Vision then came in the realisation that the car needed filling with the minimum of fuel and there were jobs to go to the next day. The concerns of this world flooded back, which was the way it should be.

That's my take on what Tolstoy wrote so beautifully. How strange, it was more than words, the words became warm, glowing, calm, breezes and surroundings! Thanks to the great author, Leo Tolstoy, for this beautiful piece of writing that acted like a window to somewhere else, or the wax covering on a cell full of honey in a bees' honeycomb:

Thus, both the Inner and Outer visions combined both the beauty of the inner “kingdom” of the ideal, and the relative imperfection, of our outer reality. The reflection, as we've perceived it, in our outer, imperfect, reality, the perfect infilling the imperfect, according to our enlightened perception of its inner, silent, “Thereness”.

– Amanda F. Rooke, Melbourne, Australia.

“There’s a crack in everything, that’s how the Light gets in.”
– Leonard Cohen.
MANTRAS, HOLY PRAYERS, SOUNDS, CHANTING

THE NAMES OF DIVINITY, AND STORIES OF GOD(S)
All of us are aware of the effect music can have on us. A mother humming or singing lullabies to get a baby to sleep, background music at work, in lifts, or the supermarket; rock music energizing huge crowds at stadium concerts; dance, hip hop, and rap music at rave parties and night-clubs; all show us the hidden power of music and vibration to move us.

Holy prayers, sounds, chanting the name of divinity, or stories of God(s) are a feature of religious practice all over the world. From the rhythmic drumming of a Siberian shaman through to the harmonies of the Kings Choir in a London church, we all know that music has a power to spiritually move us and help us find a stillness within the Buddhists call ‘Mindfulness’ amidst the stresses of life in the modern world. In India such holy chanting is called ‘Mantras’ derived from the Sanskrit words ‘Manas’ meaning ‘to think’ and ‘Tra’ meaning ‘instrumentality’, therefore Mantra originally meant ‘the instrument of thought’. This gives the clue that mantras can affect the mind and mood in dramatic ways if performed accurately.

**MANTRAS: SACRED SOUNDS**

The earliest mantras were composed in Vedic Sanskrit in India, and are at least 3500 years old. Mantras now exist in various schools of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. In the Japanese Shingon tradition, the word Shingon means mantra. Similar hymns, chants, compositions, and concepts are found in Zoroastrianism, Taoism, Christianity, and elsewhere. The Scandinavian Runes in certain respects correspond to the Hindu mantras. Mantras considered esoterically were originally as magical as they were religious in character. In the composing of the mantras, the wise men/women of old knew that every letter had its occult significance, and that the vowels, especially, contain occult and even formidable potencies when properly chanted.

The words of the mantra were made to convey a certain hid meaning by certain secret rules involving:

- the secret potency of their sound,
- the numerical value of the letters,

The language of incantations or mantras is the element-language composed of sounds, numbers, and figures. The ancients who composed the mantras, knew how to blend these three to call forth the response from the Regent-God of the specific element needed.

**COMMUNICATION WITH OTHER DIMENSIONS**

For, in order to communicate with the Gods/Goddesses, it was said that men must learn to address each one of them in the language of His/Her element:.

Sound is “the most potent and effectual magic agent, and the first of the keys which opens the door of communication between Mortals and the Immortals” (from HP Blavatsky: The Secret Doctrine Vol.I: page 464).

The hidden voice or active manifestation of the latent occult potency of the mantras is called ‘Vach’ meaning in Sanskrit, ‘Voice’. In exercising the power of Vach, G de Purucker says:

“…The would-be magician attempting to evoke the “spirits of the vasty deep” by uninstructed chanting or singing of any ancient mantras will never succeed in using the mantras effectively in a magical way, until he himself has become so cleansed of all human impurities as to be able at will and with inner vision to enter into communion if not direct confabulation with the inner realms…”
PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS
Mantras are based on specific repetitive sounds. Mantra's use these repetitive sounds to reach the subconscious mind. The sounds are soothing, they calm the mind, even if we do not understand fully understand the phrases – which is most often the case for us Westerners when listening to Indian Mantras! Of course, translating a mantra into your own language, gives a much greater depth to the experience of repeating the mantra in its original language – you have an affirmation where the words have the additional benefit of imparting a sense of confidence with time when repeated.
While mantras are often thought of in reference to eastern religions, by no means is this the only place you have mantras. Often repeated Catholic and Christian prayers are also mantras. All repeated and spoken phrases in the English (or any) language can be thought of as mantras. Commonly known as “affirmations” these mantras are repeated for the purpose of building confidence, quieting anxiety or trying to take advantage of the brain’s capacity to adapt itself to new habits of thought (neuroplasticity). Daily mantras can help quiet anxiety and counter depression. They can help to boost happiness, help to inspire self-confidence, but constant practice and therefore repetition is required. According to the Annual Review of Nursing Research, mental health mantras can be used effectively to treat Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD), reduce stress, and even decrease blood pressure. Here are some of the traditional types of Sanskrit mantra’s:
Shanti – Peace; Dharma – Righteous Path; Ananda – Bliss; Prasada – Radiance or Happiness; Prajna – Wisdom; Bhakti – Devotion, Faith, and Love.

AUM (OM): THE SACRED SOUND
Mantras come in many forms, including verses from the ancient Vedic book, the Rigveda, and Sāman, musical chants from the Sāmaveda for example. They are typically melodic, mathematically structured meters, believed to be resonant with numinous (religiously awe-inspiring) qualities.
At its simplest, the word ओ́म (Aum, Om) serves as a mantra, it is believed to be the first sound which was originated on Earth. The Aum sound when produced creates a reverberation in the body which helps the body and mind to be calm. The Aum sound is most often repeated at the beginning and end of chanting to create and sustain peace in the audience.
There is a whole mystical science attached to the meaning and use of the sacred word Aum (Om).

JAPA: SILENT REPETITION
In more sophisticated forms, mantras are melodic phrases with spiritual interpretations such as a human longing for truth, reality, light, immortality, peace, love, knowledge, and action. Some mantras without literal meaning are musically uplifting and spiritually meaningful. Repeating Mantras quietly to yourself is called Japa. It is most auspicious to repeat them at least 108 times and for this purpose private repetition of mantras is assisted by 108 beads on a string, Malas, which are handled as you repeat the mantra.
Any verse of the sacred scriptures such as the Rig Veda, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, can be repeated. The most auspicious mantras for Japa are said to be the Gayatri Mantram and the Purusasukta.
mantras both verses from the *Rig Veda*. They are best repeated at sunrise and sunset.

**THE GAYATRI MANTRA**

The most universally chanted of all Hindu mantras. Dedicated to Savitur, the Vedic Sun God, Gayatri is also the name of the Goddess of the Vedantic Mantra in which the verse is composed. Hindus are supposed to chant it at least 108 times per day to help purify their inner constitutions from low vibrations which well up from within and are imposed by society from without. Invoking the universal Brahman as the principle of knowledge and the illumination of the primordial Sun, the mantra is extracted from the 10th verse of Hymn 62 in Book III of the *Rig Veda*:

*Aum*  
*Bhuh Bhuvah Svah*  
*Tat Savitur Varenyam*  
*Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi*  
*Dhiyo Yo nah Prachodayat*  
~ *The Rig Veda* (10:16:3)

Translation: “Unveil, O Thou who givest sustenance to the Universe, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, that face of the True Sun now hidden by a vase of divine light, that we may see the truth and do our whole duty on our journey to thy sacred seat.”  
– WQ Judge translation.

**BUDDHIST MANTRA: OM MANI PADME HUM**

Probably the most famous mantra of Buddhism is: 'Om Mani Padme Hum' meaning 'Om the Jewel in the Lotus, Hum'

The six-syllable mantra of the Bodhisattva of Compassion, *Avalokitesvara*, (Tibetan, Chenrezig, Chinese: Guanyin). The Dalai Lama is said to be an incarnation of Avalokiteshvara, and so the mantra is especially revered by his devotees. In esoteric philosophy Avaloki, the “on-looker”, is the Higher Self, while Padmapani is the Higher Ego or Manas. The mystic formula “Om mani padme hum” is especially used to invoke their joint help.

One of the most sacred Buddhist mantras or verbal formulas; used very frequently in Tibet and in surrounding countries of the Far East. Not only is every syllable said to have a secret power of producing a definite result, but the whole invocation has a number of meanings. When properly pronounced or changed, it produces different results, differing from the others according to the intonation and will give to the formula and its syllables.

This mystic sentence above all refers to the indissoluble union between man and the universe, and thus conveys “I am in thee and thou art in me.” Each of us has within himself the ‘Jewel in the Lotus’ or the ‘Divine Self’ within. When understood in a Kosmic sense, it signifies the Divine Kosmic Self within, inspiring all beings within the range of that Kosmic Divinity.

**TANTRA AND JAINISM**

Similar mantras, hymns, chants, compositions, and concepts are found in Zoroastraianism,
Taoism, Judaism, Christianity and elsewhere. The use, structure, function, importance, and types of mantras vary according to the school and philosophy of Hinduism and Buddhism. Mantras serve a central role in Tantra. In this school, mantras are considered to be a sacred formula and a deeply personal ritual, effective only after initiation. In other schools of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism or Sikhism, initiation is not a requirement and an earnest student will be given a mantra suitable for them individually from their Guru.

In Jainism for example, the concept of mantras is not focused on material aspects, rather mainly deals with seeking forgiveness, praising their Saints (Tirtankharas), or Deities like Nakoda, Padmavati, Manibhadra, Goddesses like Saraswati and Lakhsmi, and others. Some mantras are claimed to enhance intellect, prosperity, wealth or fame. There are many mantras in Jainism; most of them are in Sanskrit or Prakriti, but in the last few centuries, some have been composed in Hindi or Gujarati languages. Mantras, couplets, are either chanted or sung, either aloud or by merely moving lips or in silence by thought. The most popular mantra in Jainism is the Navkar Mantra (literally, "Nine Line Mantra"). The initial five lines consist of salutations to various sanctified souls, and the latter four lines are explanatory in nature, highlighting the benefits and greatness of this mantra.

**SIKHISM**

In the Sikh religion, the term mantar or mantra refers to Shabad, this may be a word, a sentence or a hymn from the, Guru Granth Sahib – the holy book of Sikhs (also known as *Adi Granth*). All shabads describe God's attributes, grace and virtues. Through repetition and reflecting upon the qualities of the Divine, the mind rises above materialism and conquers the vices (*Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachments and Ego*). By continually repeating and contemplating upon Guru's teachings, the mind is stimulated to create positive thoughts practicing *Truth, Contentment, Empathy, Divine Wisdom and Forgiveness*. It encourages one to live a practical life with high morale.

Mantras in Sikhism are fundamentally different from the secret mantras used in other religions. Unlike in other religions, Sikh mantras are open for anyone to study, use and embed. They are not used in secret sessions. Instead, they are preached and discussed in front of assemblies or a congregation of Sikhs and non-Sikhs. The *Mool Mantar (Fundamental Belief)*, the first composition of *Guru Granth Sahib*, was written by the founder of the Sikh religion, Guru Nanak. It is the most widely known Sikh mantra.

In Sikh faith, the word *Wahe Guru* (*the Wonderful Lord*) is used repeatedly to thank the Lord for giving us the virtues and guiding us on the righteous path. According to Sikh poet, Bhai Gurdas, the word "Wahe Guru" is the *Gurmantra* mantra given by the Guru, which eliminates negativity and ego from the mind.
The Islamic mystical sect, the Sufis, use the ‘Names of God’ or particular phrases found in the Holy Book of Islam, The Quran, or, sayings/actions of the Prophet Mohammed, The Hadith, in a mantric way, which they call ‘Dhikr’. Of particular importance is the phrase لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا-اللَّهُ (Lā ʾilāha ʾ illa-Llāh) and numerous variations. These words or phrases are often counted on a string of beads called a Tasbih or Misbaha or in Iraq Sibha, similar to a Mala but generally consisting of thirty-three or ninety-nine beads. The recitation of these formulas can be done individually, or in unison in large assemblies with musicians and directed by an elder (Shaikh). Each Sufi Order has its particular formulas and group ceremonials.

We tend to think that Mantras are just an Eastern concept and practice but they have a long tradition in the West for all the same reasons we see in the East. Repeating a prayer which is familiar to us from our own predominantly Christian culture can also have the same uplifting influence on us. This has been long recognized in the tradition of church music, monastic chanting such as Gregorian chants, and in Jewish synagogues where the ‘cantor’ leads worshippers in song.

According to American Bhakti (Devotional) Yoga practitioner and teacher, Krishna Das, the repetition of the Name of Divinity strikes a deep resonance with the godlike source of strength within oneself so we should practice this constantly no matter how we feel. The power of the name is not exclusively in us, but is the vibrationary form of the Divine which connects us all. We are effectively calling out to the Higher Self by calling the Name of Divinity, which may vary according to the society to which we belong. Chanting the Name can extricate ourselves from the trivialities of life, emotions, false beliefs, and so the ‘mirror of our hearts’ is polished.

In this way, even though we may be depressed and anxious, we see what is reflected in that mirror differently and we start to see changes in ourselves. We start to act differently. The constant nagging self-critical inner voice starts to fade in the harmony of repeating the Name.

Bhakti Yoga

Bhakti (ie Devotional) Yoga, also called Bhakti Marga (literally the Path of Bhakti/Devotion), is a spiritual path or spiritual practice within Hinduism focused on loving devotion towards a personal god/guru. It is one of the paths in the spiritual practices of Hindus, others being Jnana Yoga (the Path of Spiritual Knowledge) and Karma Yoga (the Path of Good Works).

Bhakti Yoga, based on chanting or repeating the Name of Divinity is said to be the most suitable form of spiritual practice for the majority of people during the present Kali Yuga age with its many stresses and diversions from the pursuit of spiritual knowledge which requires much study, time, and inner effort not freely available to most people.

Chanting the divine names is a simple path...
suitable for the present-day context. It has no ‘binding’ rules and regulations. *Nama Kirtan* (chanting the Divine names) can be done by anybody, anytime, and anywhere.

**American Kirtan singer, Krishna Das.**

**KIRTAN CHANTING**

Kirtan, is a Sanskrit word meaning ‘narrating or telling a story. But Kirtan is most commonly applied to the practice of singing/chanting sacred mantras with the audience joining in the chanting and emotion of the occasion. Such chanting is primarily an emotional experience providing the audience with the opportunity to express themselves through movement, dance, praising Divinity, but primarily singing along with the song leader or ‘Kirtankara’. Kirtan is an essential feature of ‘Bhakti’ or ‘Devotional’ Yoga and it is becoming very popular in the West due to the efforts of a range of Western performers putting a new twist on an ancient Indian religious practice.

Kirtan, or musical mantra-chanting, was first popularized in America by Krishna Das (Jeffrey Kagel) in the 1990s following his travels in India in the 1970s and his devotion to his Hindu Guru, Neem Karoli Baba (Maharaj-ji). He was referred to as the “Rockstar of Yoga” by the Grammys when he was nominated for a 2013 Grammy Award. His powerful baritone voice and skilful playing of the traditional Indian harmonium, accompanied by a band playing a combination of Indian and Western instruments have become enormously popular in America, Europe and Australia.

Krishna Das has attracted the participation of such rock luminaries as ‘Sting’ (of the famous English rock band, ‘Police’), and Walter Becker (of American iconic rock band, ‘Steely Dan’). Before the Covid pandemic, Krishna Das gave concerts all over the world and he is a foundation performer at New Age and especially Bhakti Yoga festivals now held online in the USA. He has released 17 albums since 1996, but his live performances capture the true spirit of Kirtan. I would recommend his live performances on You Tube, particularly his performance at the Church of St Paul and St Andrew in 2013 in New York.

This concert is a truly heartening experience of universal brotherhood in action with Krishna Das, an American Jew from Long Island, singing sacred Hindu mantras in Sanskrit language, accompanied by a mixture of traditional Indian and Western instruments, in a Christian church, with an audience of Western Hindu converts, New Agers, and curious onlookers!

Krishna Das says of his own music that he does not put on shows or set out to entertain: “A kirtan is a spiritual, meditative practice. And that is completely different from a concert. [Chanting] is something I share with people. When I sing, I am sharing my practice, and they are doing the practice themselves while we chant together.”

This is where Krishna Das found the purpose of his music, and the same could be said for all practice of chanting mantras. He believes it was meant to take him somewhere—not to fame or fortune, but to enlightenment. Music and Bhakti Yoga are the vehicles of his transcendence.

“It's a repetition of mantras, the names of your own inner being. The practice is to repeat those names and to pay attention and have an experience of quieting down and opening up.” Krishna Das thinks the problem with our culture is that we're always looking for happiness from external sources. He believes that kind of happiness is fleeting:
“Everything is changing all the time and one has to find peace of mind within.”

MODERN FORMS OF MANTRA
Other modern performers of Kirtan and the chanting of mantras in Sanskrit language with modern melodies include: German singer, Deva Premal, her English partner on guitar, Miten, with the traditional flute of Indian performer, Manose. Julia Elena, with her own style utilizing synthesizers and guitars. Why not also check out on You Tube the beautiful singing of American Sikh Kirtan and New Age singer, Snatam Kaur, especially when she is working with German-born American pianist/composer Peter Kater. Australian devotees of Kirtan will know and love the music of Gold Coast band, Sacred Earth, which combines flutes, recorders, electric and acoustic guitars, and synthesizers with their own beautiful versions of Hindu mantras. For the really adventurous, try the band, Shanti People, which features a combination of Rap/Hip Hop and traditional Hindu mantras.

– Compiled by the Editor. Special thanks to Dr Preet Singh for his advice on the Sikh section of this article.

From subatomic particles to galactic clusters, nature gives evidence of a magnificent balance like a great orchestra blending countless keynotes into the Music of the Spheres. Listening to this music even for a moment, we realize that disharmonies will eventually blend within the greater harmony as a natural progression in the development of the Whole...


Mantra singers, Deva Premal and Miten.
AUM (OM): THE WORD

– Graeme Edge.
This garden universe vibrates complete.
Some make of it a sound so sweet.
Vibrations reach on up to become light,
And then through gamma, out of sight.

Between the eyes and ears there lie,
The sounds of colour and the light of a sigh.
And to hear the sun, what a thing to believe.
But it’s all around if we could but perceive.

To know ultra-violet, infra-red and X-rays,
Beauty to find in so many ways.
Two notes of the chord, that’s our full scope.
But to reach the chord is our life’s hope.
And to name the chord is important to some.

So, they give it a word,
And the word is AUM.

- Graeme Edge, England.

The seven-note musical scale is meant to model the hidden side of the macrocosmic design, the universe ruled by mathematical harmonies of music. The [musical] scale structure implies that the universe emerges from absolute divinity, descends through a seven-stage celestial hierarchy, and returns to absolute divinity.

Australian Aboriginal Music: Like Aboriginal art, Aboriginal music unites consciousness with the invisible laws and energy patterns in nature. The didgeridoo is perhaps the oldest musical instrument on earth. Traditionally, a player would go into nature and listen intensely to animal sounds, and natural sounds of all types like the wind, thunder, trees creaking, water running. The essences of these sounds are played as accurately as possible within the droning sound of the didgeridoo. The observation of nature requires an empathy enhanced by the sound of music inducing a trance-like state in the players and listeners. Dance is the same in observing the natural world and reproducing it as accurately as possible inducing an identity with the natural world and the powers inherent in a particular place or animal. Initiated aboriginal people employ hunting and fishing methods that are grounded in spiritual awareness. They know that the sound of clapping sticks near the water will draw fish. These tapered sticks are tuned by varying their thickness and density to make sounds that attract various species of fish. Aborigines in some areas are known to communicate with dolphins which help

SOUND AND VIBRATION IN TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES: AUSTRALIA AND AFRICA
We are constantly surrounded by a sea of cosmic music which is the consequence of the harmoniously vibrating aggregated life atoms which form the vehicles of spiritual forces underlying manifestation. Perhaps also the beautiful colours and configurations of nature are other manifestations of the symphonic harmonies constantly singing about us. From the natural harmonies of a brook to the complex rhythms of a classical symphony the various forms of music we hear are translations through and on our plane of being of the music which fills the universe."


them to attract particular species of fish on particular days. They scoop the water into their hands and clap them together rhythmically, sending a signal to nearby dolphins, which drive a school of fish toward Aborigines’ waiting nets. Another method used by older initiates, is the capacity to catch the gaze of an animal and temporarily hypnotize it, preventing it from fleeing. Always Aboriginal people are very careful only to take from nature what they need to survive and there are strict rules from the Dreamtime Laws about how and with whom food is to be shared. Often the hunter only ends up with the least of the hunt or catch of the day. Specific animals and fish can only be hunted in particular areas in accordance with the Dreamtime stories of their creation and the special powers latent in particular localities.

Music and Chanting in Traditional Africa: Music and chanting is a form of prayer in the African spiritual tradition. Songs are made specifically for certain natural forces, or even certain ancestors. Songs can be used to invite certain natural essences to form a unity with someone or something so that you can manifest these essences or ancestors and pass along messages from them. Dancing, drumming and sonic vibration or frequencies can similarly invite natural essences and ancestors.

— Compiled by the Editor.
Many times over the ages spiritual knowledge has been summarized for us lesser mortals. Such epitomes are the result of the experiences and teachings of those brave souls who have ventured into the inner realms of consciousness and returned with their observations. We know that these soul-adventures date back to ancient Egypt and beyond: Neoplatonic philosopher Iamblicus (250-330 AD) refers to the Egyptians as having such a system "concerning principles and the Supreme cause of things."

One modern summary is the Seven Jewels of Wisdom: The Seven Jewels are listed below in order from the least to the most difficult to understand. They are not to be taken as read – rather you should examine them carefully, sceptically even, before you even begin to accept them as your true keys to understanding.

The Seven Jewels are:

- **Reincarnation-Re-Embodiment** (‘Punarjunman’) – changing forms/the indestructibility of the human spirit.
- **The Law of Cause and Effect**
- **Involution** (‘Nivritti’) – of Humanity and the Earth.
- **Two Paths of Spiritual Development: The Path of Compassion** (‘Amrita-Yana’) and **The Path of Oneself** (‘Pratyeka-Yana’): choices along the spiritual Path. Good and Evil, Selflessness and Selfishness.
- **Knowledge of the Self** (‘Atma Vidya’): what do we actually mean by the ‘Self’. How did the One become the Many?

Let’s examine each beautiful Jewel in order and perhaps you will be encouraged to continue your own researches. This study will fill many lifetimes so don’t despair of the difficulties involved! We have many books in our Theosophical libraries and bookshops in Melbourne and around the world to assist you with this endeavour. All that we can do here is to encourage you to begin your own treasure hunt for these invaluable “Jewels” yourselves!

These jewels are a kind of perceptual atlas to help us find our way through a highly complex and yet unutterably simple universe. They are practical, influencing our ethical perceptions and behavior for the
good over the long-term of soul growth — and what could be more deeply practical in solving individual and world problems? Using these jewels, we can unlock some of the mysteries of the universe, better understand ourselves and others, and harmonize our thoughts with the functioning of the universe. Let's examine each beautiful jewel over the course of our next few issues starting with:

1. **Reincarnation**: The first jewel, Reincarnation or Reimbodiment, concerns the indestructibility of centers of consciousness, though their outward forms may change. It has been compared to an actor who, in one role, is "killed" on stage, but then changes his costume to take on another role. In Egypt reincarnation was accepted as transformation, symbolized by the Benu bird or Phoenix arising from the ashes to new life.

The American mythologist, Joseph Campbell, suggests that there is a deeper level of our being: "those who have identified themselves with the mortal body and its affections will necessarily find that all is painful, since everything — for them — must end," even if subsequently reembodied. "But for those who have found the still point of eternity, around which all — including themselves — revolves, everything is acceptable as it is; indeed, can even be experienced as glorious and wonderful." — Quoted in Sylvia Cranston and Joseph Head, Reincarnation: *The Phoenix Fire Mystery*, p. 22.

The list of well-known people in the West who accepted the concept of reincarnation is enormous, including: Plato, Marcus Aurelius, Paracelsus, Henry More, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Edgar Allen Poe, Herman Melville, Gustav Mahler, H. G. Wells, and George Santayana.

As Benjamin Franklin said: "When I see nothing annihilated and not a drop of water wasted, I cannot suspect the annihilation of souls, or believe that [God] will suffer the daily waste of millions of minds ready-made that now exist, and put Himself to the continual trouble of making new ones. . . . I look upon death to be as necessary to the constitution as sleep. We shall rise refreshed in the morning." — *Ibid.*, p. 271

A general belief in reincarnation might encourage people towards ethical behavior if they realized that they would be the people they deserved to be in their next life. It is also food for thought that we may meet our friends - and enemies - in another lifetime!

— Compiled by the Editor with thanks to Stefan Carey.
**BETTER HEALTH**

**QI GONG**: exercise for the spirit, mind, and body: Are you interested in Qi Gong, a Chinese form of exercise for the body, mind and spirit, a bit like Tai Chi? Then come along to weekly sessions conducted by our friend Carmella Flescher, a Qi Gong Teacher trained in China, free of charge near the Pagola in the park in Rosanna Street, Carnegie, Melbourne, every Monday from 10-11am. No Need to book, just turn up. Wear comfortable clothing. It can be done standing or sitting. If you want to sit BYO chair. Ring 0400942613 for further information.

**SLEEP AND DEPRESSION**: Waking up just one hour earlier could reduce a person’s risk of major depression by 23%, suggests a sweeping new genetic study. The study of 840,000 people, by researchers at University of Colorado Boulder and the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, represents some of the strongest evidence yet that chronotype—a person’s propensity to sleep at a certain time—influences depression risk. It’s also among the first studies to quantify just how much, or little, change is required to influence mental health. As people emerge, post-pandemic, from working and attending school remotely—a trend that has led many to shift to a later sleep schedule—the findings could have important implications. Previous observational studies have shown that night owls are as much as twice as likely to suffer from depression as early risers, regardless of how long they sleep. But because mood disorders themselves can disrupt sleep patterns, researchers have had a hard time deciphering what causes what.

For those wanting to shift themselves to an earlier sleep schedule, the study offers this advice: “Keep your days bright and your nights dark,” … “Have your morning coffee on the porch. Walk or ride your bike to work if you can, and dim those electronics in the evening.” More information available at:

https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/article-abstract/2780428

When I say words that knock at your mind, when a speaker knocks at your heart, it is done with a thought, it is done with a feeling, it is done with knowledge; and the portals of understanding fly open wide, and ideas and thoughts enter into your minds, into your souls. The right knock has been given ... When you have built these words of power into yourself, you pass unchallenged. If you have not evolved to the point, or are unworthy, if you have not built them into your soul, you are challenged, and stopped, and back you go.

- G de Purucker,
The Wind of the Spirit
REN (‘THE NAME’):
THE POWER OF SPEECH

– Normandi Ellis.

Ren means “the Name” and represents the power of speech. One of the most powerful spiritual bodies on the mental plane, it uses the creative force of voice vibration. The hieroglyphic image of a mouth above rippling water says it all. Religious philosophy tells us that the genesis of the world began with the voice of God moving across the abyss. In the daily human realm as well, we have discovered that the words we speak create powerful vibrations and have an impact upon our environment.

In his book *The Hidden Messages in Water* the renowned Dr. Masaru Emoto demonstrated this transformation by using magnetic resonance analysis to record either beautiful or disfigured molecular formations that were produced depending upon words spoken pleasantly or discordantly into the water. Words offer powerful magic. Words speak to us in visible and invisible ways. With each repetition of a word, the sound vibrations attach to a name or object, and the words gain power through repetition. That is why Hindu chanting, which uses 108 mala beads, is so effective. Ancient priests chanted their prayers and incantations -- literally “singing in” the energy of the Divine. This idea of enchantment involves using the breath and a tone and vocal pattern that dials in the vibratory energy.

In a literary sense, the sounds of the words bind the listener to a story. In a magical sense, the recitation of a “spell” binds the energy of the Divine and the Heart of the speaker within a particular place or within an individual. Some of my earliest childhood memories were of my mother reading to me each night. I lay my head on her chest to hear not only her heart but her words. She literally spellbound me when I was less than two. The only way I would eat those green beans was if she was reading me poetry. My mouth dropped open into the...
breathy oh! While I listened, she scooped the food into my mouth. She fed me on poetry! Poetry was a magical incantation – the proper words, the proper sequence, the proper intent. When a religious person speaks of "heeding the call," he or she means that the voice of the Divine has called them and drawn them toward it. Dr Helen Schucman penned A Course in Miracles by heeding that call when she heard a voice that identified itself as Jesus. It commanded that she take dictation, saying, "This is a course in miracles. It is a required course. Only the time you take it is voluntary."

In just such a way, the angel Gabriel appeared to the illiterate Muhammad and commanded him, "Recite." Thus, began the Quran in an oral tradition.

Many traditions kept secret the true name of God as a protection against anyone usurping that name's divine power. Genesis 32 tells us that Jacob wrestles with a messenger of God, demanding that he bless him. Each fights the other, insisting on hearing his name. In the end, Jacob tells the angel his name (which means "Follower"), and the angel changes Jacob’s name to Israel (meaning "Wrestler with God"). Conversely, when Jacob demands the messenger’s name in turn, the messenger withdraws and disappears. For those who know numerology, the difference between the vibrations of Jacob as a 13/4 and Israel as a 28/10/1 is dramatic. The number four indicates struggles against limitations; the number one indicates a leader. Obviously changing one’s name strongly changes the vibration of the individual.

Both Jews and Egyptians believed that naming and name vibration kept the universe in order. The chaotic forces ruled lower vibrations and the angelic forces were found in higher vibrations. Says religious studies professor Nicolaus Benjamin Pumphrey in his dissertation Names and Power: "The names of the angels, gods, and the stranger (in the Genesis story) were, however, kept a secret in order to maintain the structure of all existence because a lesser power could gain the name and disrupt the order of the universe."

Egyptian gods, goddesses, and all children had multiple names. Some of them were secret names given to them by their mothers. Those names were hidden in their bodies, safe from anyone who might wish to attain power over the individual -- even their own siblings. A myth of Isis and Ra found in the Turin Papyrus recounts the way in which Isis learned the God’s secret name and so gained his solar power. Even in the throes of death and the near death of all life-forms should he die, Ra was reluctant to divulge his true name to his healer. Why? Because once Isis learned it, her magical power over life and death became as strong as his.

In the end, the two of them withdrew behind a cloud where he divulged his secret name and was healed. This story may refer to another Egyptian description of the first creative power of the universe. It claims: "My name is Heka." In other words, "Magic is my name." A magician might declare himself so by claiming that as his secret name, thus aligning with the co-creative energy of the universe.

Isis, of course, already knew the secret name of Ra. She had magically conjured the creature that bit him. "The Mistress of Words of Power" was bequeathed her magical ability by the god Thoth, who created the entire cosmos in his cauldron wherein all beings -- divine and
human -- were magically and mathematically created. By having Ra divulge his name to her, Isis received divine affirmation of their similar abilities to invoke on multiple levels in Heaven and on Earth. Just as Jesus said "The Father and I are One" (consider the numerical power and unity of One) so did the ancient Egyptians assert in the Book of the Dead, "God is my name. I do not forget this name of mine."

The vibrations of the words in the ancient texts was so important that the lector-priests, who may have sung the incantations to the Divine thousands of times in a temple, were required to carry the sacred scroll of hymns and to read from it exactly. They were not allowed to rely on memorization, as that might actually create a misstep and "dispell" the Divine Energy. The lector-priest was considered one of the most powerful magicians in the temple. Written spells of protection and healing were kept in divine storerooms to be copied onto Papyrus. Some copies were dissolved in water to concoct a magical healing drink, or they were tucked into amulets worn on the body. The texts of the temple libraries were zealously guarded, and many an ancient Egyptian teacher refused to let his words be copied down.

The Nag Hammadi gnostic text The Apocalypse of Peter summed it up succinctly when Jesus advised Peter by saying, "Words are a mystery, Guard the words you hear! Keep them secret; do not tell anyone, for they are not for this time, but for the future." These Sacred words, the text warned, must remain secret. In profane hands, on profane lips, their true meanings vanish. The prohibition against taking the Lord’s name in vain derives from those priests who used their spiritual knowledge for baser means. Perhaps the gift of tongues, or glossolalia, which is speaking unknown language while in trance, may preserve the vibrational intensity of the powerful words themselves. When spoken aloud the sound vibrations set the magic of the matter in motion, yet still hid the true meaning from profane ears.

One of the most profound uses of name power allows the dead to pass through the neterworld. It affirms the cycle of transformation and the understanding of our shared consciousness with the Creator. Speaking the names of the dead as we pass them in the cemetery offers a powerful prayer on behalf of the departed. After the tragedy of 9/11, the priestesses of the Temple of Isis in Los Angeles, an affiliate of the International Fellowship of Isis, gathered together through a call sent out by the late Arch-High Priestess, Laura Janesdaughter. Using text from my book Awakening Osiris, we dedicated ourselves to pray for and invoke by name the soul of every individual who died in the incidents of that day. The Fellowship of Isis retains in its archives a copy of that ritual for those wishing to perform similar memorial rites.

Perhaps a connection exists between the Egyptian hieroglyph ‘Ren’ and the oracular rune stones of the Vikings. The rune was a sacred image, like the hieroglyph, which telegraphed a whole constellation of meanings. There may indeed be something to the twelfth-century legend that an Egyptian princess named Scota was sent into hiding, thus becoming the namesake of her adoptive country. It is for this Egyptian princess that Scotland was named. According to cultural Anthropologist Ralph Blum, the word rune meant “a secret thing, a mystery.” Like the sacred hieroglyphs, runes were used in Celtic rituals of healing, protection, enlivening, fertilizing, and carrying the dead into the next realm.

In certain traditions, including the Hebrew language, the vowels of a name are considered the sacred soul of a name, the breath of the
name. That is why Egyptians did not write with vowels. Those breathy sighs were kept sacred, to be heard only between mother and child, or creator and creature.

Numerologists also identify the vowel number in combination as the soul urge, or authentic self. Each name you were called in your lifetime -- your childhood names, pet names, married names, nicknames, endearments, roll calls, and so on -- resonates to a different named energy. The numerology of your name becomes a kind of destiny. For example, I was not given a middle name by my parents. None appears on my birth certificate, yet I was carried home from the hospital, my older brother, upon seeing me, exclaimed that he had a sister named Normandi -------. Like a fairy godbrother, in this case he gave me a middle name to reveal my hidden potential that very few people know. The energy of that little-known name is hard to live up to, but it carries with it the vibration of great success after many trials. Most people would prefer the success without the trials, frankly. Taking on a new name changes your resonance, which changes your identity. Your street names, the names of your pets, your business name, even the pet name you call your cat offers a different energy for your life.

'Ren' always reminds us to find our resonance, to speak our truth. The "Opening the Mouth" ceremony was an important rite of transformation that allowed the soul to affirm, pray, invoke, and thank-- especially thank. In the Sanskrit, chanted Mantras meant breathing with the om sacred vowels. In the Hebrew alphabet, those unwritten vowels became flames of light illuminating each word. In a meditative state, as you pray slowly, begin to see every word as a flame igniting a fire, or as incense curling from your lips. "Say my name that I may live," says the Coffin Text.

THE VIRTUE OF COURAGE

How courageous it is for Souls to face themselves! To see uncertainty with powerful certitude; To know strength comes from the inner nature: Fine qualities within the soul – never without. Build courage from your own secret depths.

If the roots are deep, when fierce winds blow, The leaves and soil may scatter, but the tree Still holds its steadfast grip.

When the soul can feel its own strength, Trepidation scatters like dark clouds, While a courageous sun finally breaks through, Shedding its golden rays of spiritual light.

- James Feinstein, California, USA.
Australia:

Zoom Online Meetings: Tuesday nights from 7.30pm, Melbourne time. Please check our Theosophy Downunder Website at: www.theosophydownunder.org for the latest information and list of meetings available on Zoom. Please email: andrewrooke@hotmail.com if you want to be put on our mailing list for the weekly Zoom meetings.

Melbourne Library News – from Amanda Rooke: Theosophical Pasadena Library Centre is at 664 Glenhuntly Rd, Caulfield South, Melbourne. The library has a collection of ‘hard-to-get’ books and magazines on spirituality, religion, theosophy and occultism. Books are available for loan to regular attendees at our meetings and U3A students attending the Ancient Wisdom course (Tuesday Zoom meetings) or by mail to members. Depending on the situation with the Covid health emergency, the library is open on Tuesday mornings from 9.30am to 12.30pm and Wednesday mornings from 10am to 1pm. The library catalogue is available on our website at: www.theosophydownunder.org

New on our Website: Several new articles have been added to our website under the ‘Theosophy Downunder Library of Articles and Lectures’ menu. Including the following articles by Tony Downey: Gaining and Avoiding; Why?; Winners and Losers; Articles by Jenny Pignataro: Pilgrimage: the Mystic Journey; One God or Many? Where Did the Idea of One God Come From?; Aims of the Theosophical Society Pasadena; Luke M. Ironside: The Three Fundamental Propositions of the Secret Doctrine; Don Shepherd: How Long Are the Cycles Mentioned in Theosophy?; Ruth Houthuijzen: Organ Donation, Euthanasia, Suicide and Abortion: Some Theosophical Perspectives; Nhilde Davidson: Thoughts on Christmas; Nivard Vas: Rebirth: Soul Becomes Form; and many others. Check them out at: theosophydownunder.org/ifensterl.php./library/


Theosophical Book of the Month: The Ocean of Theosophy provides a concise yet comprehensive survey of the basic tenets of theosophy. Written with the beginner in mind, it clarifies such topics as the sevenfold nature of man, reincarnation and karma, dangers of psychic practices and pitfalls of pseudo-occultism, earth’s sevenfold being, cosmic and terrestrial cycles, after-death states, the existence of highly advanced human beings (Mahatmas), and many more. Here is knowledge based upon evidence and experience, written with brevity and depth. 209 pages with an index.

International Headquarters:
The Theosophical Society, Pasadena, has a comprehensive website, www.theosociety.org where a wide selection of online publications, information regarding the basic concepts, objectives and history of the society can be viewed.

American Section:
The online magazine, The Spiral Path, is available on the website www.theosocietyamsec.org: Northwest Branch: A wide range of articles and all editions of the
Theosophy Northwest View newsletter are listed at: www.theosophy-nw.org

British Section:
For all back copies of the newsletter, Compass, and general information go to www.theosophical.org.
Contact Pat and Sandy Powell at: ts-uk@talktalk.net

German Section:
For general information: www.theosophie.de

The Netherlands Section:
For general information: http://theosofie.net

Swedish Section:
www.theosociety.org/pasadena/sverige/index.htm
For online literature in Swedish visit:
http://theosociety.org/pasadena/sverige/teosofiskabokforlaget/index.htm

Exploring Theosophy:
the Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy: This website, maintained by David Pratt, features a wide range of topics relating to theosophy: http://davidpratt.info

Theosophy World News:
the best way to keep up with developments in the world-wide theosophical movement inclusive of all Theosophical Societies is to read this quarterly website at:

South African Section:
Copies of the South African section newsletter, Contact, are available by emailing the editor and National Secretary, Alice Yetman: alice.yetman@gmail.com
Contact person in the greater Durban area: Grant Holiday, halliday@absamail.co.za
Contact person in the Western Cape: Dewald Bester: besterdewald@gmail.com

Think the World is Getting Worse, Think Again:
Think the world is getting worse? You’re wrong: the world is, for the most part, getting better. But 58% of people in 17 countries that were surveyed in 2016 thought the world is either getting worse or staying the same rather than getting better. Americans were even more glum: 65% thought the world is getting worse and only 6% thought it was getting better. The uncontroversial data on major global trends in this book will persuade you that this dark view of the prospects for humanity and the natural world is, in large part, badly mistaken. World population will peak at 8 to 9 billion before the end of this century as the global fertility rate continues its fall from 6 children per woman in 1960 to the current rate of 2.4. The global absolute poverty rate has fallen from 42% in 1981 to 8.6% today. Satellite data show that forest area has been expanding since 1982. Natural resources are becoming ever cheaper and more abundant. Since 1900, the average life expectancy has more than doubled, reaching more than 72 years. Of course, major concerns such as climate change, marine plastic pollution, and declining wildlife populations are still with us, but many of these problems are already in the process of being ameliorated as a result of the favourable economic, social, and technological trends that are documented in a new book by Ronald A. Bailey and Marian L. Tupy: Ten Global Trends Every Smart Person Should Know: The CATO Institute, 2020.

Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything.

– Plato
Compiled by Shirley Nicholson.

Shirley Nicholson’s compilation The Goddess Re-awakening: The Feminine Principle Today brings together a rich diversity of views on the topic of reclaiming the sacred female, or feminine principle in the world. Published in 1989, it still constitutes a fertile source of ideas and insights designed to promote further discussion. Most contributors are women, some are men. Some explore historical sacred imagery, while others focus on reverence for the Goddess, on the female psyche and the feminine principle as a whole, or on socio-political concerns.

The anthology asks the question “what does the return of the sacred female mean to us today?” There is no attempt to provide definitive answers. Indeed, some writers contradict each other. Merlin Stone points out in the introduction that disagreements and differences can enrich our understanding, “the theory itself is not sacred. It is our ongoing process of building the theory that becomes a sacred act.”

The ancient concept of a female creator of all life is fast regaining popularity. As Phyllis Chesler in her ground-breaking feminist work, Women and Madness, observes “Goddesses never die. They slip in and out of the world’s cities, in and out of our dreams, century after century, answering to different names, dressed differently, perhaps even disguised, perhaps idle and unemployed, their official altars abandoned, their temples feared or simply forgotten.”

For three thousand years, most mainstream world religions have worshipped a patriarchal God. But before that, Goddess worship
dates back tens of thousands of years. The subordinate position of women is seen to be neither natural nor divinely ordained. (Riane Eisler points out that the problem is the ‘dominator’ model of society that is patriarchy, and not men as a sex).

Interestingly, the return or reawakening of the Goddess echoes the ancient mythology of the Mother Goddess Demeter, associated with nature, and her daughter Persephone (actually the Kore maiden aspect of herself). Persephone is abducted by Pluto and carried off to the Underworld. Enraged and grief-stricken, Demeter demands, and being a powerful Goddess is granted, the return of her daughter. Their joyful seasonal reunion was cause for widespread celebration in the ancient world. It is worth noting that the Nature Goddess is not always gentle and benevolent, but capable of erupting, without warning, with all of the rage of a neglected and woefully abused Deity. Joan Chamberlain Engelsman explores the patriarchal schism between Demeter’s grieving and raging aspects, which have been split into the ‘mater dolorosa’ and the figure of the archetypal ‘witch.’ She reminds us of just how intertwined these emotions can be in the experience of grief. Demeter represents both the positive and negative sides of the maternal.

Mary Ann Mattoon and Jennette Jones focus on aspects of the female psyche, revisiting Jungian archetypes and posing the intriguing question "is the animus obsolete?" They argue that the concept of the animus, the ‘inner masculine’ in a woman’s psyche, was shaped in part by Jung’s wife, the analyst Emma Jung, and that wider availability of her own exposition might have assuaged feminist hostility toward, and mistrust of the theory. Emma Jung’s view was that, for many women, “the problem is not too much animus, but too little”. It is the contributors’ belief that the animus can be positive, helping a woman to achieve individuation, to assert herself, and to realise her creative potential.

For Geoffrey Hodson, the Goddess is infinite compassion, embodied in the ‘World Mother’ whose incalculable value lies in comforting and absolving humanity. In a similar vein, James M Somerville introduces the figure of Maria Avatara, the Christian Madonna. It is clear that the devotion of many Catholics to Mary does have a frankly worshipful aspect. The deification of Maria Avatara is a natural progression from that devotion. Patricia Hunt Perry explores the idea of the Wise Woman in the Western tradition. Ferociously maligned, the Wise Woman,

*Picture: Cycladic statue of Mother Goddess from Amorgos. circa 2200 BCE. 152 cm tall. National Archaeological Museum, Athens, Greece.*
especially the old Wise Woman, possesses tremendous occult knowledge, with an understanding of the hidden powers of the universe, and of plants and animals. The Wise Woman is a healer.

Another healer, the Egyptian Goddess Isis is the subject of Kathleen Alexander-Berghorn’s work. Known as the Divine Physician, Isis is the personification of the life force. She is infinitely merciful and wise. She has created the cosmos, and, in death, all return to her. This section of the book includes a prayerful meditation invoking the healing powers of this great Goddess.

'Oya, Black Goddess of Africa' is introduced by Judith Gleason. Worshipped by the Yoruba people of Africa then taken by slaves to Brazil, the Caribbean and the United States, Oya is still honoured to this day. Associated with tornadoes and lightning, her name, translated as "she tore", gives some idea of the energy this Goddess brings to life. Nonetheless, she is a benefactor of women.

Nancy C Zak brings to light the matriarchal traditions of the First Nations people of North America. We learn of Thought Woman, the creator Goddess of the Keres of New Mexico. She has conceived the original plan of creation by her thought. She contains all of life including both male and female. For the Hopi, a Pueblo people of Arizona, Spider Woman is the mother of everything. She possesses all knowledge and infinite wisdom. While she has both positive and negative aspects, she is for the most part benevolent and protective.

The Navajo Goddess Changing Woman brings order to the world which had been in chaos. She has the miraculous ability to reach old age then continuously rejuvenate. For the Sioux, White Buffalo Calf Woman represents cosmic knowledge and energy, while, She Who Pushes Them Over the Bank, presides as celestial judge of souls, pushing them towards their destiny.

This anthology is so far-ranging in its scope it is impossible to do it justice here. In the pages of this book there are spirited debates about the validity or otherwise of rigidly demarcated, dualistic sex role stereotyping, and about the male/female partnership. There is a discussion of the Jewish deity the Schechina (Light of Creation) and the Gnostic Sophia (feminine Soul Wisdom). The great pantheon of Buddhist and Hindu female deities is revealed, including the Great Mother and Saviour Tara, Prajnaparamita, The Perfection of Wisdom, Sarasvati with her lute, the ever-merciful Kuan Yin, and the wrathful protector Kali. There is an account of the lives of the thirteenth century female mystics, the Beguines. In their writing of ecstatic union with the divine, expressed in sensual terms, there are hints of a female aspect to their God. You may not agree with much of this compilation but it gives a comprehensive overview of its subject. Anyone interested in the sacred female is sure to find something that resonates.

In the end, perhaps as Merlin Stone suggests, the Goddess is multiplicity. Multifaceted, complex in all her aspects yet unified and whole, she is not removed from us. She is immanence. Perhaps the final word should go to the compiler, Shirley Nicholson. Her own contribution 'The Way of the Uncarved Block' is a plea for a quieter, more reflective and compassionate way of being in the world - an eschewing of the decisive, assertive, aggressive, competitive and hyper-individualistic ways which are so valued and encouraged in the West in particular, and which are gradually and surely destroying the Earth. She advocates a balancing, a quiescence, a stillness, where "boundaries blur into a oneness". She draws upon the illuminating wisdom of Lao Tzu ("Knowing of the Male but staying with the Female"). The goal, and the Way, is unity, a sympathetic merging with all. Lao Tzu says of The Way:

"There was something complete and nebulous; Which existed before Heaven and Earth; Silent, Invisible; Unchanging, standing as One; Unceasing, ever-revolving; Able to be the Mother of the World. I do not know its name and I call it Tao."

Tao te Ching - Chapter XXV

-Niamh O’Byrne, Melbourne, Australia.
Every Time I Find the Meaning of Life...They Change It!
By Daniel Klein.
Published by Text Publishing, 2015.
Review by Tony Downey.
Available in our library.

At some stage along life’s journey, we are all bound to ask ourselves, “Why am I here?”; “Why do I have to go through all these difficult experiences?”, and anyway, “What is the meaning of life?” Maybe the best answer I ever heard to that question was when the Dalai Lama came to Melbourne a few years back and he said that the meaning of life was to be: “Constructively Happy”. Two little words with a power of meaning!

Everyone wants to be ‘Happy’, but very few people are prepared to be ‘Constructive’ in finding their way towards their definition of happiness! Usually, we define happiness in terms of personal well-being, material possessions, and our own health. We are very reluctant to accept the inevitability of set-backs in life. We certainly don’t see suffering as part of our idea of happiness! Yet in Buddhist understanding, suffering is inevitable as it is nature’s way of teaching us important lessons in life. The Dalai Lama stresses that it is the way we react to such suffering that is the measure of our spiritual learning and progress.

So how do other cultures answer this ultimate question? I recently had the great good fortune to read a new book exactly on this subject: Every time I find the meaning of life, they change it: Wisdom of the great philosophers on how to live – by Daniel Klein (Published by One World, October 2015, ISBN: 9781780747859) – this book is now available from our Melbourne library.

Daniel Klein looks back from the vantage-point of his 80 years to revisit the wisdom he relished in his youth with a collection of philosophical gems from the Western World. He briefly sums up the writings of Epicurus (200BC) to Jean Paul Sartre, Samuel Beckett, and Viktor Frankl of the 20th century.

Over 20 of these writings are recognized by introducing such concepts as Hedonism, Logic, Humanism, Nihilism, etc... Short and humorous, each concept is summed up in a just few lines – an invaluable reference!

Here are a few answers to this timeless question from great thinkers of the Western World showing a huge variety of approaches to life, from the outright hedonistic, to the deeply, and spiritually responsible:

• “The art of life lies in taking pleasures as they pass and the keenest pleasures are not intellectual nor are they always moral!” – Aristippus, 400BC.
• “I don’t think that there is much point in bemoaning the state of the world unless there’s some way you can think of to improve it. Otherwise, don’t bother writing a book – go and find a tropical island and live in the sun!” Peter Singer, 1980.
• “Do every act in your life as though it were the very last act of your life.” – Marcus Aurelius, 150BC.
• “I saw a Divine Being today! I’m afraid I’m going to have to revise all my various opinions and books.” – A.J. Ayer, 1970.
• “Live as you were living a second time and as though you had acted wrongly the first time.” – Viktor Frankl, 1955.

Ideas on the meaning of life are, of course, not restricted to philosophers. There are as many such ideas as there are people walking this earth. This book gives a general view of ideas that will hopefully lead the reader by using courage, patience, humour, and above all, common sense, to find out and act on discovering positive benefits for All.

– Review by Tony Downey, Melbourne, Australia.
RELIGION IN JAPAN

Shinto and Zen Buddhism

Picture: The torii gateway to the Itsukushima Shrine in Hiroshima Prefecture, Japan. Torii mark the entrance to Shinto shrines and are iconic symbols of the religion and of Japan to most people around the world.
Religion in Japan is dominated by Shinto (the ethnic traditions of the Japanese people) and by Japanese versions of Buddhism. According to surveys carried out in 2006 and 2008, less than 40% of the population of Japan identifies with an organized religion, around 35% are Buddhists, 3% to 4% are members of Shinto sects and related organizations and from fewer than 1% to 2.3% are Christians.

Shinto is, in fact, the largest religion in Japan, practiced by nearly 80% of the population, yet only a small percentage of these identify themselves as "Shintoists" in surveys. This is due to the fact that "Shinto" has different meanings in Japan: most of the Japanese attend Shinto shrines and beseech Kami (gods or 'spirits') without belonging to Shinto organisations, and since there are no formal rituals to become a member of folk "Shinto", "Shinto membership" is often estimated counting those who join organised Shinto sects.

Shinto has 100,000 shrines and 78,890 priests in the country. Two Chinese traditions Confucianism and Taoism, have been very influential in the Japanese world-view. Confucianism provided an exaggerated filial piety and loyalty to the state so typical of Japanese society. Taoism manifest in forms of magic, divination and cosmology rather than the philosophy of Taoism.

Christianity did not arrive in Japan until Francis Xavier's mission in 1549. It flourished for a brief 'Christian century' before being banned for two centuries following a major Christian uprising (Shimabara Rebellion) against the Shogunate (central government) in 1637. Christianity in Japan today dates from its re-introduction in the second half of the 19th century. Although it is largely considered to be a foreign religion with a following of less than 1% of the population, Christianity has made major contributions to education, and social reforms in Japan.

**SHINTO:** Means 'the way of the Kami, or Gods'. It is a religious tradition that emerged from prehistoric religious practices and such influences as Buddhism, and Chinese religions, but developed its own distinctive beliefs and practices. The world view found in Shinto is central to Japanese culture and has often been closely related to the national identity.

**Kami** or Gods dwelling in heaven but inhabiting earth as sacred forces within nature. The notion of Kami is broad and flexible; the Emperor is considered to be 'manifest Kami' because of his direct descent from the Sun Goddess (Amaterasu), and people with extraordinary spiritual powers as well as family ancestors are considered to be Kami.

**Shrines** were established at sacred places like natural objects – trees, waterfalls, boulders all over Japan. A basic division in many shrine buildings is between the larger Haiden (oratory or hall of worship) and the smaller Honden (inner sanctuary or main shrine) behind it. Shinto Shrines do not have statues rather ancient relics such as mirrors and swords sometimes considered the dwelling places of the Kami. Offerings such as fish and vegetables are presented to the Kami and eaten.
later. Small shrines to the Kami (Kamidana) are in most Japanese homes. Shinto priests attend the public shrines and present offerings to the Kami and formally mediate between the Kami and the local people. Traditionally each shrine observed the new year, spring, autumn and special festivals honouring the local shrines – all of which formed the religious year for the local people.

Shinto does not have any formal theological systems, favouring instead a sincere reverencing of the kami and respect for ritual purity. Shinto was favoured by the government after the Meiji restoration of the Japanese emperor in 1867 where it was considered to be a state religion, and the Emperor a manifestation of the Kami on the earth. After WWII Shinto was relegated to equality with all other religions. The intimate association between Shinto and the war effort dampened enthusiasm for participation in Shinto, many shrines lost their special privileges and land holdings, and priests had to seek employment. However, Shinto is still fundamental to Japanese life even if most people don’t have a direct affiliation with their local shrine. Shinto has long defined a distinctively Japanese spiritual tradition, and will continue to do so, both in Japanese culture generally as well as in its influence upon other religions, notably Buddhism and the new religions.

**ZEN BUDDHISM:** Buddhism was first brought to Japan by Korean missionaries in the 6th century AD. This was originally opposed by local clansmen until 593 AD when Prince Notoku assumed the regency of the Empire and officially sanctioned the establishment of Buddhist monasteries. In succeeding centuries especially under the Tokugowa Shogunate (1600-1867) Buddhism became the dominant faith in Japan with a variety of schools which shaped the national character of Japan.

*Zen (Meditation)* became the most famous form of Buddhism in Japan. Its aim is enlightenment; the art of transmitting the Buddha mind drawing on Mahayana Buddhism from northern India emphasizing meditation and the doctrine of Sunyata (emptiness) and Bodhi (enlightenment) with Chinese practicality and Taoist tradition. A successor of one of the Buddha’s disciples brought Buddhism to China and became the first patriarch and founder of Ch'an Buddhism which later became the Zen tradition. The 6th Patriarch of Ch'an Buddhism, Hui-Neng, became the founder of Zen tradition of rejecting scholasticism and preaching the possibility of sudden enlightenment, Satori, the direct experience of enlightenment.

Enlightenment is the unfolding of the inner mind without attachment. Teachers avoid academic argument and emphasize meditation and intuitive wisdom expressed in the present moment and everyday life. Sudden Enlightenment meant the idea of progressing by stages was rejected. And teachers now utilized shouts, slaps, questions, and strange seemingly meaningless poems (Koans) and antics to trigger enlightenment. Zen has had a major influence in the West due to the works of Zen Masters, DT Suzuki, Allan Watts, and the influence of Zen centres in Hawaii and California. Zen has found especially
friendly reception in the West amongst psychotherapists (mindfulness), poets, and artists.

The Enso, symbol of Zen Buddhism: a circle that is hand-drawn in one or two uninhibited brushstrokes to express a moment when the mind is free to let the body create.

OTHER FORMS OF JAPANESE BUDDHISM: Nowadays, the most popular type is Pure Land Buddhism, emphasizing the role of Amitabha Buddha and promises that reciting the phrase, "Namu Amida Butsu" ('I take refuge in Amida Buddha') upon death will result in being removed by Amitabha to the "Western Paradise" or "Pure Land", and then to Nirvana. Pure Land attracted the merchant and farmer classes. Another prevalent form of Buddhism is Nichiren Buddhism, which was established by the 13th century monk Nichiren who underlined the importance of the Lotus Sutra. This includes, Soka Gokkai, a controversial denomination whose political wing forms the Komeito, Japan's third largest political party. As of 2018, there were 355,000+ Buddhist monks, priests and leaders in Japan, an increase of over 40,000 compared to 2000.

NEW RELIGIONS: Japan is unusual in that New Religions number in the hundreds, and total membership reportedly numbers in the tens of millions. The largest new religion, Soka Gakkai, a Buddhist sect founded in 1930, has about 10 million members in Japan. Other bizarre examples are: Happy Science, founded in 1986 and the related, God-Light Association, whose leader thinks he is the great super-God, 'El-Cantare', and established a political party in 2009, The Happiness Realisation Party; which attracted 1 million votes in a national election!

Scholars in Japan have estimated that between 10% and 20% of the population belongs to the new religions. As of 2007 there are 223,831 priests and leaders of the new religions in Japan, three times the number of traditional Shinto priests. This probably due to the impact of World War II on Japanese society and the previous association of Shinto with the Imperial Japanese government before WW II. All the different traditions and religions of Japan interact in Japanese life; so, a person may be married according to Western style, or in a Shinto shrine, live his life according to Confucian social teachings, hold some Taoistic beliefs, participate in folk festivals, celebrate Christmas and Valentine's Day, and have his funeral conducted in a Buddhist temple!

"...a human being is somewhat like a sounding board, strung with seven chords like Apollo’s lyre, across which sweep the winds of eternity, and the combined notes of these chords produce within him a cosmic symphony – each one of us being a living mystic lyre vibrating in sympathy with the Music of the Spheres."

- G de Purucker
OBITUARY
MARJORIE MAUD DOWNEY: 24/6/1929 – 17/6/2021

Long-time friend of our work and wife of Tony Downey, our Bookshop Manager of many years, passed to greater light in June, 2021. Marjorie had an adventurous early life in Shanghai, China, during the 1930s escaping the Japanese invasion of 1937 and travelling on the last ship to leave Shanghai for Australia. Returning to England, Marjorie trained as a nurse/midwife, eventually migrating to Australia in 1972 and marrying Tony in 1980. Together they raised a family and travelled the world after busy professional careers. Marjorie is survived by her son, Charles, step-sons, Brendan and Shaun and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We wish her well on her marvellous journey amongst the stars and look forward to all working together again in future lives. As the ancient Romans would say: “Gaudeat in Astris”, “She rejoices now amongst the stars.”

– Andrew Rooke, National Secretary Australasian Section.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

How Can I Meditate or Chant a Mantra in this Hectic Modern World?

A reader emailed us recently: I find it so hard to meditate or silently chant a mantra (called ‘Japa’ in India) given the hectic pace of the modern world. I live in an apartment and I can’t even find a quiet place for more than 10 minutes. How can I possibly chant to myself daily? [Editor: I can do no better than pass along some recent comments by American chanting [Kirtan] master Krishna Das]:

“… Don’t try so hard. One of the problems is you have great expectations! You say to yourself: “I am going to sit down. I’ll have peace and silence, bliss and ecstasy”, and, of course that just doesn’t happen. So, you get discouraged and then discouragement causes other problems. You get unhappy, you get depressed, you try other things, you don’t sit still. It’s not easy to calm the mind. It not easy to chant silently (known in India as ‘Japa’) and pay attention to what you are chanting. We have spent our whole lives facing the outside world looking out for, and trying to get, the things we need from the outside and being
attached to the things of the outside world. Wanting this. Wanting that.

Just sit down and relax and if you are doing your chanting just simply do it and when you notice that you are not paying attention – just come back and don’t do it for too long because you just get tense and you get: ‘Oh, I can’t do this and that’s not going to help’. You have to build up little by little, five good minutes, three good minutes is better than three hours pretending that you are meditating. Turn your phone off. If you catch yourself thinking idle thoughts, just come back to the name of Divinity or Mantra you are chanting. If there’s no one around you could speak it in a low voice. But as you are in an apartment you could whisper the mantra. Move your lips, your tongue, and you’ll move part of your being and it helps you to concentrate and stay aware.

Little by little. No one is judging you except you. No sense pushing yourself, twisting yourself into something you’re not. None of us can pay attention when we try. That’s when we find out how hard it is. But that’s a stage you go through. It might take 20 years, it might take a minute, but just calmly try and be with the Mantra. Regular practice is what’s necessary. Even if it’s three minutes a day make it a good three minutes. Relaxed awareness not hard angry effort is what’s required. Little by little…”
– Krishna Das from Hanging in the Heart Space Online Satsang, June 3rd 2021.

Soul versus Spirit:

Eugene Harris of Melbourne has written recently on a question that has vexed philosophers throughout the ages:

“The matter of the soul versus the spirit crops up eternally in religion, occultism and general theological debate. Consider the following scheme to put the needless duality to rest: The soul is life’s essential fruit whose germ is the divine spark, whose husk is the mortal flesh in which it is present and whose stem is the spirit from which it is divinely sprung and nourished.

A fruit expands and reaches perfection and so, also, the soul through lives, experiences and its growing ripens towards the peak of its development in divine perfection.
And as fruit is nurtured on hidden, clear-waters, so the soul on wisdom from the unseen.
Thus are the soul’s juices the nectar of esoteric wisdom and divine visions.

The stem, the spirit which is the soul’s link and channel is life’s vital animation, life’s wants, needs, and survival. Spirit is the channel of the divine, feeder of stars and worlds, conduit to Godhead, a principal vital in realms both physical and ethereal. Thus, do stars and worlds come to rise from the Source…”
– Eugene Harris, Melbourne, Australia.
Lockdown Amplifies the Simple Sounds

_We have recently received a poetic comment on the latest of many lockdowns in Melbourne which I’m sure reflects the experience of many people in lockdown around the world:_

**HEAR, HERE!**

The long, pandemic stillness of lockdown amplifies the simple sounds of home and surrounds …

Tap, tap, tap, teaspoon contacts the porcelain-morning teacup’s rim,

Spitter-splatter, pelting rain on our tin roof, such a glorious din.

Radio news anthem harks, starkly out on every hour anew,

Suburban walks on the racetrack and past the mews.

Horses are trotting, pounding and moulding sand on the long dirt tracks,

Wet evenings dozing next to the pleasing purring of Miss Pussycat,

Patting her fur coat, many colours, mostly blacks.

At dusk, alone, sighting the slow crawl of snails,

Slowly slithering, not quite silently, crisply crunching their way through bountiful garden greens…

Jennifer Pignataro, Melbourne, Australia.

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Waiting for a Sign

_A reader writes that during the latest round of lockdowns in Melbourne, he was walking around rather aimlessly, like most other people grabbing their prescribed two hours of exercise, when he saw a large sign outside a church:_

“The sign said: ‘If you’re waiting for a sign. Well, this is it!’ I laughed to myself and thought how true these words are for all of us.

Don’t wait for a sign. Live your life fully and if you can’t, then do your best to find out why. What is it that’s keeping you from finding out who you truly are? What’s keeping you from finding that Love that lives within us, that is our True Being?”
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