

AGNI YOGA

QUARTERLY

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Growth of the Spirit

Infinity II, 1930

Infinity II, 139. Only in spheres where a shadow veils the vision can the spirit seek the Light. Only where the shadow stands behind its back can the spirit display its strength. Only where the shadow conceals the far-off worlds can the spirit reveal its power of discrimination. Therefore, the growth of the spirit is quickened through obstacles. Hence, Agni Yoga is given as the loftiest and most direct path. The knowledge of transmutation will reveal all possibilities. Therefore, when the fiery experiment is confirmed for humanity its offering will be unlimited.

Hierarchy, 1931

Hierarchy, 445. The approach is endless; so, too, are defeats. Few will discern where is victory and where defeat. One must know the relation of spiritual growth to the victory over darkness. Darkness can display the Maya of well-being, whereas Light can attest to violent commotions. Each one strives along the shortest path, but who is capable of imagining the best achievements? Only the link with Hierarchy can reveal the uniqueness of the best path. Our decision is to consider achievement as the shortest path. The dark ones consider fearlessness as a bad sign. We have determined not to avoid the steep path. For them, each ascent is an unnecessary dissipation of strength. With Us, the Ray of Light is a bridge of granulations, but they dream of a void. We understand each daring leap; for them, it is but recklessness. Thus, between the daring of wisdom and the recklessness of treason stands only the heart. It will safeguard and open the Gates of Hierarchy. He will err less who follows the silver thread stretched from his heart to the heart of the Teacher.

Hierarchy, 454. When you understand the foundations of Hierarchy, We shall proceed to an

explanation of the centering of the spirit in the heart. In order to link the chain of the worlds it will be necessary to give special attention to the heart. Only thus shall we keep within the boundaries of a natural growth of the spirit. The abode of the spirit is in the heart. Thoughts about Hierarchy are spiritualized by the heart. Thus we shall remain as before in the essence of a true accumulation.

Letters of Helena Roerich, Volume II (1935–1939)

Letters of Helena Roerich, Volume II, 24 September 1935. Verily, material prosperity and ease are our most dangerous enemies.

Nothing extinguishes the inner fire so quickly as security for the morrow. We do not know such security, and we work on the border of exigency and possibilities. However, at a difficult moment, when all our forces are tensed,

when we have applied all our resourcefulness, help comes, but at the last moment—such is the law. All earthly burdens are necessary for the growth of the spirit. Thus, the best flowers of joy grow beside thorny roads. In time, new conditions will come into existence and the tasks will become broader. Possibly there will no longer be worries about earning a living, but there will be new problems, far more complicated and difficult. But if the Image of the Teacher lives in our hearts, can we worry about tomorrow! That which is considered the worst, from a human point of view, sometimes becomes our salvation and a step toward new possibilities. Verily, if our service is unselfish, not one hair will fall from our heads without the knowledge of the Great Teacher. Unselfish service, sincere devotion, and gratitude weave a strong thread by which all that is needful comes to us.

“The growth of the spirit is quickened through obstacles.”

Inside This Issue

Growth of the Spirit
Page One

Networkers Letter
Page Two

The Seed-Atom
Page Three

Health Corner
Page Five

Thoughts on
Agni Yoga
Page Seven

Conversations with
Daniel Entin
Page Eight



Welcome

For discussions and posts on the Agni Yoga Teachings, please visit our “Agni Yoga – Living Ethics Community” site on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Agni.Yoga.Living.Ethics.Community/>

and WMEA on the Web:

<https://www.wmea-world.org>

NETWORKERS LETTER

Dear Friends,

Welcome to this issue of *Agni Yoga Quarterly*! It is my sense that presenting each issue of AYQ puts us in energetic contact with the spirit and labor of the founders of Agni Yoga, Nicholas and Helena Roerich; their children, George and Svetoslav; as well as the members of the original circle who eventually established the Agni Yoga Society. And as such, in some way, we will find the examples and inspiration of their lives awakening our own inspiration and desire to continue in their footsteps—to bring the Teaching of Life, the Teaching of Agni Yoga, the Teaching of Living Ethics, to those who are searching for the purpose of life. As Helena Roerich was told by a Great Sage, “Live the Teaching as your life.”¹

I would like to thank the staff of *Agni Yoga Quarterly* for their tireless dedication that lets us enjoy these publications. For the editing of the articles, a most tedious work for the translators whose talents in language translate each issue from English into Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese; and for the sensitivities required in providing us with the extraordinary content found in each issue. And finally, my gratitude to the graphic designer who designs the template of AYQ, an action that takes a good deal of resourcefulness, creativity, and knowledge.

As you read through this issue, I would like to bring your attention to the article “Toward Straight-Knowledge” by Vladimir Anatolievich Shibaev (1898–1975). Shibaev, who was born in Riga (Latvia), moved in the latter half of 1919 to London, England, where he began working

Community

“Begin to build the community as a home of knowledge and beauty.”
– *New Era Community*, verse 229

Rev. Joleen D. DuBois

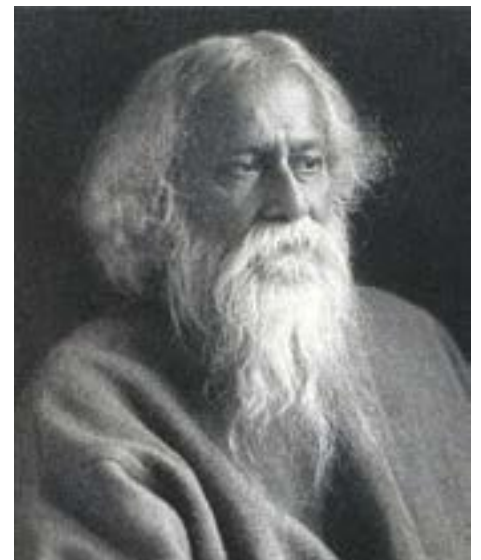


for a publishing company. It is said that his initial meeting with Nicholas Roerich was very casual. N.K. was looking for a Russian-language typist to type his new collection of poems, *The Flowers of Morya*, and that was why he dropped by his office.

While in London, Shibaev joined the Theosophical Society, which provided him with the opportunity to personally know and develop a friendship with Annie Besant, the head of the Society.

One day Shibaev met with George Roerich, the son of Nicholas and Helena Roerich, where N.K., also there, invited him to participate one evening with the Roerichs in their circle meetings, where communications were being received from the Masters, the Himalayan Abode of Mahatmas. This led Shibaev to participate in many more meetings together with the family.

In London, Rabindranath Tagore met with N.K., George Roerich, and Vladimir. During the next few days, Tagore took N.K. and his sons to his residence in Kensington. Tagore’s son Rathindranath, in his travel diary, described the meeting in this way: “Roerich showed us an album containing reproductions of his paintings



Rabindranath Tagore, 1925

which had been printed on the occasion of the celebration of his jubilee by his friends. The pictures are indeed remarkable. There is nothing in Western art to compare with them. Father was greatly impressed. One of Roerich’s sons is studying Sanskrit in London and the other, architecture. The whole family is going to India next September. Their genuine simplicity and unaffected manners were charming; so refreshing, so different from the stiff-

continued on page 6



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The Seed-Atom^{1,2}

by Aura May Hollen

(November 11, 1888–April 22, 1959)

Ms. Aura May Hollen was a prolific writer who authored many esoteric books, including Universal Dimension (1931), from which this article originates, and Flowers of Thought (1929). It should be mentioned that the Russian translation of this article was found in the 1990s among Helena Roerich's papers, and wrongly attributed to her authorship.

The process of generation consists of a gradual unfolding of mass consciousness, which evolves from the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms into what serves for the soul as a vehicle of its expression. It may be called a storehouse of spirit-knowledge, or knowledge of the soul.

Having been born inside the primordial sphere due to an enhanced influx of cosmic energy, it develops into what in the course of time manifests the power of individual thought.

But what happens in the interim, when the motive system is still undeveloped and the sense of equilibrium is as yet unsettled?

Inside the primordial sphere, which is a giant laboratory, a seed-atom of the soul separates from the Divine Whole; by this is meant an infinitesimal spark of the Spirit, which forms a nucleus of the incipient soul. On the initial stage of its development, the soul functions as an inert mass extracting its sustenance from the surrounding element, which nourishes it and imparts to it a stimulus for development.

Mass consciousness may be likened to a honeycomb structure, in the cells of which are found individual souls in embryonic state, each being supported or sustained by what it receives from the surrounding cosmic element. Such consciousness is



Photo source: NASA, ESA, the Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA), A. Nota (ESA/STScI), and the Westerlund 2 Science Team

in a perpetual state of passive receptivity, and as a result it gathers around itself some kind of clothing. Therefore, for a more or less prolonged period of time, the soul remains in a dormant state, while slowly and laboriously developing in itself life forces necessary to support equilibrium.

The spark of the soul may be compared with an extremely thin wire inside an incandescent ball, and the ball itself, with the soul. But similarity at this stage of progress is merely in form. What we designate a soul is, in fact, highly ethereal and subtle. Fabric, which clothes it and which is due to become individual consciousness in the course of the evolutionary process, is at this stage a unified or amalgamated formation.

Countless souls spring forth from the original sphere, and in the course of time, they form a whole species through the process of multiplication.

The law of growth works in a uniform fashion. The impulse toward uninter-

rupted effort is constantly being maintained and sustained, which, in conjunction with the continued state of dormancy, provides for or supports the soul's growth.

What happens next when the soul contained within the honeycomb structure receives an impetus toward movement, constant effort? Due to the process of assimilation, connecting walls cease to unify, and an individual soul, along with the fabric of consciousness clothing it, becomes an accomplished fact.

The bulk embryonic conglomerate of seed-atoms in the state of incessant activity may be likened to an ant nest.

Formation of a cellular structure

As a flame is an inalienable part of a candle, so the seed-atom is what constitutes the substance of the soul. This structure is made of innumerable cells, each of them penetrating others and being in itself an infinitesimal unit having a perfect structure. To try to differentiate what

incorporates these embryonic souls is the same as to try to separate a drop of water from its basic source—the ocean. This is because every created unit, coming from the creating sphere, is tightly unified by the connecting element, which is supplied by mass consciousness during dormancy, or hibernation.

People ponder on the relation between mass consciousness and the soul in order to understand what constitutes the foundation of the mind.

When, due to an increased force of the cosmic element, an embryonic soul detaches from the Divine Whole, mass consciousness, which unfolds due to cosmic energy animating all existing matter and endowing it with the power of motion, serves as a powerful receptacle for those innumerable units coming from Infinity. Each unit is routed to an exact cell, which provides for all its needs, and mass consciousness unfolding it sustains it with what helps it to progress.

It is in this way that the soul forms from the substance of mass consciousness, clothing the infinitesimal divine spark. Clothed inside an ethereal cellular creation of the Divine Wisdom, it grows the fabric of the soul—slowly, in imperceptible steps, through the process of absorption. This fabric, by necessity, also forms its outer shell (which is separated when the Spirit is fully clothed), for an independent and specific consciousness is a necessary addition to the mind after the twofold process is finished.

Thus we see that an infinite spark initially rests in the cellular fabric of mass consciousness. Being in the state of hibernation, this spark, through a slow and imperceptible process, clothes itself. In such a way, through the process of absorption, a soul structure is formed, which consists of an embryonic spark clothed with an indestructible outer garment.

“What factor is then responsible for



Photo source: NASA, IC 63 Ghost Nebula

the process of active establishment of the foundation of the mind?” ask skeptics.

When, through the vibratory activity of the cosmic element, a soul complete with its shell forms, a fragment of the bulk cellular fabric separates in imperceptible steps from the soul structure. In the course of a prolonged follow-up process, cellular walls close down, forming a spheroidal shell, which constitutes the ethereal aura surrounding the soul.

Being separated, and thus being able to expand, the consciousness keeps growing. In addition to it, each individual soul receives its complement, which becomes an active factor of further development.

This process shows a great degree of sophistication. It is so complex that a mere mortal can only get a vague idea of the process through which the soul is born.

As that which carries the imprint of thought grows, the soul gradually receives the ability to vibrate, begins to rouse from its slumber, and in the course of time acquires the ability to move—along with the equilibrium necessary to maintain motion. After the motion is established, this new creation, being an active principle as it is, escapes from the original sphere. Each of its units is still guided by what

constitutes mass consciousness, which functions as a whole (although a separated whole) through the process supported by cosmic energy.

To trace this newly born creature through the early phase of its existence would mean to violate the law, which the Great Mind uses to veil this stage of evolution. It can only be said that, in the course of its constant and eternally recurring motion, the soul acquires a perfected vehicle through which it can express itself, until it emerges from the spiritual sphere fully equipped with a physical organism. Awfully primitive is this early vehicle of the soul, and it serves as a means of procreation of the species. With each new act of procreation, it boosts its intensity and expands its range, thus increasing freedom of movement. Eventually it becomes able to display an ability for individual thought, which opens new ways for further development of the soul.

¹ Russian original published as E. I. Rerikh, “Zerno-atom,” *Mir ognennyi/Novaya epokha*, No. 1(20) (1999), pp. 64–65.

² The term “seed-atom” does not occur in the published Agni Yoga books. (However, see *Infinity I*, where “seed” and “atom” occur simultaneously in paras. 140, 325, 328.)

³ Apparently “complement” refers to the doctrine of twin souls, or soul mates. This is covered in more detail in Helena Roerich’s letter of December 10, 1954.

The Senses

- I. Vision
- II. Hearing
- III. Touch
- IV. Smell
- V. Taste
- VI. Mental perception or Straight-Knowledge
- VII. Spirit-Understanding

“The growth of sensitivity in a yogi cannot be described; it sharpens the five known senses, and also the seven senses related to the astral body, which can only rarely reverberate within the earthly shell, like a resonator.”¹

“The division of the physical senses into five comes to us from a great antiquity. But while adopting the number, no modern Philosopher has asked himself how these senses could exist, i.e., be perceived and used in a self-conscious way, unless there were the *sixth* sense, mental perception to register and record them; and—this for the Metaphysicians and Occultists—the *seventh* to preserve the spiritual fruitage and recommence thereof, as in a Book of Life which belongs to Karma.”²

“It is just because the personal senses gravitate and strive to be connected with the *impersonal* Self, that the latter, which is fire, burns the lower five and purifies thereby the higher two, ‘Mind and understanding,’ or the higher aspects of Manas and Buddhi.”³


“Cognizance of fiery reactions is divided in accordance with the senses. The first impression is that of vision, with all its fiery diversity.

Health Corner

“I speak about the preservation of magnanimity as the basis of good health.”

Fiery World I, verse 17

Note: All medical advice is given to the reader as a guideline. Please consult a medical professional before proceeding, and then proceed caerefully, with discretion and at your own risk.



Then hearing is added, with the music of the spheres, bells, and the chords of nature. Then comes the refinement of touch, with the sensations of rhythm, of heat and cold. The most difficult of all are the sen-

“All earthly senses, when transmuted, ascend to the Fiery World. Not only do sight and hearing exist spiritually but even taste has its new application. Without taste it is impossible to understand many chemical combinations.”

sations of smell and taste. Yet Urusvati knows the meaning of scenting a man at a remote distance. Now Urusvati also knows something else that is very difficult: to sense the taste of a metal in the Subtle World, which is already an extraordinary subtlety. But one should not only possess the power to discern such sensations, one should know how to observe

them. Such discernment is very rare, but by passing beyond the three-dimensional boundary it becomes attainable.”⁴

“All earthly senses, when transmuted, ascend to the Fiery World. Not only do sight and hearing exist spiritually but even taste has its new application. Without taste it is impossible to understand many chemical combinations. And in the process of creation all the senses are needed as means of correlation. Therefore, it is necessary to refine the senses while on Earth.”⁵

The Senses – Visions

“Broad is My Work; to everyone a place ordained. By the broadness of your vision will you allot your own part. The manifestation of unprecedented possibilities is behind the door. Give Us reason to rejoice!”⁶

“Visions are as real as the phototelephone. One may consider them more real than the physical world. One may question only from which source they come; but the spirit controls this. To a good inquiry there will come a good answer.

“I will say something of great importance: People study visions too little. It is precisely by following the character of the visions that the best history of the intellect may be written.

“Even studying but the crude

visions of the past, we discern definitely certain periods. Of course, visions of sensitive spirits have characteristic forms.

“When men began to visualize Christ as an inaccessible idol, there began a period of visions of Christ in most realistic forms. He appeared as very close to men, entering into their daily life. Briefly speaking, every popular error is corrected. In the day of woman’s humiliation one may trace the appearance of the Divine Mother.

“Now, when the continuity of the chain between the earth and the heavens must be made

evident, there is unity of manifestation upon various planes.

“After St. Augustine the church began its plunge into the darkness of the Middle Ages, and Christ was locked behind a barrier of gold. In order to break it, Christ Himself descended even in lesser Images in order to manifest again the grandeur of communion in unity. The wisdom of antiquity understood well the waves of the needs of the world. Of course, one is the path from the One Source. As do the loftiest spirits, thus also the sensitive earthly apparati know this unity. The vortical gulf of rotation of the planets attracts particles of the spirit, and the World of Higher Reality flashes into the windows.

“In the future equilibrium of spirit and matter a clear vision may be obtained. But not only fragments are to be seen. That is why the ancients guarded this natural telescope so cautiously. The most powerful telescopes were women, and the first

requisite for their protection was quietude.”⁷

“About the circles of keen sight and hearing. The first circle concerns the near ones and future events. The second is confined to current matters and to the near future. The third embraces the past which concerns the near ones. The fourth encompasses past events. The fifth is within the limits of the contemporary world.

The sixth reveals the future of the world currents. The seventh contains all signs.

“One can be strong in the first circle without being able to grasp the next

one. Therefore, it is better to develop the seventh circle, because all manifestations are accessible to it but without personal gravitative influence—without limitation by the personal, narrower, sphere. It is better when, following a personal sign, one can receive signs about coming events of nations, or glimpses of a cosmic order.”⁸

“The most powerful telescopes were women, and the first requisite for their protection was quietude.”

¹ *Agni Yoga* 1929, 6th ed. (New York, NY: Agni Yoga Society, Inc., 1997, repr. 2016), verse 219.

² H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, 1st and 2nd eds., 535; 3rd ed., vol. 1, 583; vol. 2, 4th ed. (Adyar, Madras, India: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1979) 259.

³ H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 2, 1st and 2nd eds., 639; vol. 3, 3rd ed., 675; vol. 4, 4th ed. (Adyar, Madras, India: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1979), 210.

⁴ *Fiery World*, vol. 1, 1929–1944, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Agni Yoga Society, Inc. [1943] 2016), verse 110.

⁵ *Fiery World*, vol. 1, verse 333.

⁶ *Leaves of Morya’s Garden*, Book 2, 1925, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Agni Yoga Society, Inc. [1952] 2016), II:I:3; 31–32.

⁷ *Leaves of Morya’s Garden*, Book 2, II:III:18, 54–56.

⁸ *Ibid.*, II:VII:14, 117.

Networkers Letter

(continued from page 2)

ness of the English. We should like to know them better.”² Roerich and Tagore became kindred spirits.

A few days later, Tagore paid a return visit to the Roerichs. N.K. showed his guest some of the paintings from his new Indian series, *Oriental Dreams*, which he was then working on. In fact it was H.R. who presented her husband’s works, with some of her own commentaries. Tagore praised N.K. again and was truly charmed by H.R. Tagore believed that N.K. and H.R. were an ideal couple to the Indians, a perfect union of *Prakriti* and *Purusha*, a man manifested through a woman, his energy source.³

Shibaev was to become Nikolai Roerich’s secretary.

I hope you enjoy the entirety of this issue.

With love,



Joleen Dianne DuBois
President and founder

¹ Helena Roerich, “High Path,” vol. 2, 1929–1944, (unpublished manuscript), January 1 [1936]. ©2019 White Mountain Education Association, first English translation

² Quoted from the diary of Rathindranath Tagore 1958, 131.

³ H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1 (Adyar, Madras, India: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1979), 51. “Prakriti is Nature and Purusha is Spirit; together they are the two primeval aspects of the One Unknown Deity.” In addition: *Prakriti* and *Purusha* are the two different aspects of the manifest Brahman, known as Isvara. The *Merriam-Webster* dictionary defines Brahman as, “A Hindu of the highest caste traditionally assigned to the priesthood.” My research of these terms also found the following: both *Purusha* and *Prakriti* are eternal.

Toward Straight-Knowledge

*A Talk Before the
Agni Yoga Society,
January 25, 1968*

by V. Shibayev

A thorough study of the process of thinking must inevitably lead the student of the Teaching of Life to the realization: (a) that evolution—for every one of us—lies in the refinement and expansion of consciousness; (b) that this can only be achieved by the cultivation of thought. “Brotherhood is primarily a School of Thought”¹; and (c) that “the ability to control thinking depends upon continual exercise.”²

Following *ardently* (that is, with the heart), *serenely* (that is, in a state of calm solemnity), and *diligently* (by trying again and again) the Indications given by the Master in the Books of Life, there must eventually come the following step of understanding or initiation—a realization of our attitude toward the Higher, Fiery World. This realization, if and when we can reach it, is truly wonderful.

“There are two kinds of knowledge: one expressed in words, the other an exact one realized by the spirit but not to be put into words. One cannot even explain in words how this understanding arises, but it is truly wondrous.”³ “[T]his straight-knowledge comes into bloom without visible signs, but it is based upon the opening of the nerve centers.”⁴

Straight-knowledge cannot be acquired at once; it is the accumulation in the center of the Chalice of knowledge attained during the whole chain of our previous lives.

“The *cumulated* experience in the center of the Chalice gives invincible *knowledge*.”⁵ “Remember that the affirmation of fire is achieved by many incarna-

Thoughts on Agni Yoga

We invite our readers to send us their thoughts on a quote from the Agni Yoga Teachings



tions.”⁶ “[S]traight-knowledge arrives unexpectedly, beyond human imagination.”⁷ “[A]mong the Great Teachers, the manifestation of the Eye of Dangma is especially valued. This is not clairvoyance, as generally understood, but the *straight-knowledge* accumulated in the Chalice during thousands of lives and self-sacrificing experiences. The goal of this accumulation is to achieve a great destiny and become a full Arhat, or Man-God.”⁸

“*Straight-knowledge* was formerly called intuition. Straight-knowledge is built out of accumulations from past lives and is preserved in the Chalice. Indeed, it is not just knowledge, but straight-knowledge, because all knowledge gained by us is based primarily on feeling. It is especially strongly expressed in all transcendental experiences. Straight-knowledge is awakened together with the intensification of the action of psychic energy. As you see, everything is interwoven in a mutual collaboration, and everything is interdependent.”⁹

“The Guiding Star of man is the emanation of the seed of his spirit, or accumulated straight-knowledge, which propels him toward Light. And this Guiding Star burns especially brightly after the hardships of life. Only in highest tension can our energies be refined and transmuted into higher striving. Indeed, strivings mold the character, or karma, of man. It is necessary to

firmly remember that karma is built primarily out of the motives, strivings, and thoughts of man, whereas actions are only secondary factors. Thus, the good accumulations of many lives mold karma, which is directed by the *Guiding Star of straight-knowledge*.”¹⁰

“[H]arken to the voice of the heart. So-called intuition, or the voice of the heart, is very accurately defined in the books of Living Ethics as ‘straight-knowledge.’ I can attest from my personal experience that all *enlightenment*¹¹ is based precisely upon ‘straight-knowledge,’ which brings true knowledge.”¹²

“Soon people will be divided according to their *straight-knowledge*. . . . Not experience, not education, not talent, but just the fire of straight-knowledge opens the direct path to Shambhala.”¹³

“He who renounces self, he who strives for the Common Good, who is devoted in battle, joyous in labor, acquires momentarily the Arhat’s enlightenment, which makes him lord of his karma. The realization of enlightenment may be defined as *straight-knowledge*. True, this straight-knowledge may leave one, or may never appear.”¹⁴ “Intellect is not wisdom. Straight-knowledge is wisdom. Intellect is reason.”¹⁵

“Maitreya is the Age of the Heart! Only with the heart can one evaluate the treasures of Maitreya! Only with

Continued on page 11

July 23, 1999

“Service is the path to growth.”

Question:

I would like to propose a question for the week: “How can we influence others to be more conscious about beauty and kinder to each other?”

Answer:

There is something a bit self-serving about the way the question has been put. As stated, it assumes that “we” are already more conscious about beauty and are kind to others. I am certain that “we” are not so wonderful and so developed, and that our striving must be put, at every moment, to trying to understand what beauty is, to trying to learn how to serve it, and to trying to learn how to be more open, more generous, more kind to all those around us and to all that exists. Maybe we will one day have earned the right to teach others about beauty and goodness. I, for one, do not feel that such an exalted position has been gained by me. Service is the path to growth.

Sorry to send a negative message, but I just wanted to jump in at the beginning of this to point out something that took me a long life to learn.

Loving best wishes,

Daniel

July 26, 1999

“Ego, Illumination, and Beauty”

Dear — ,

I, like everyone, appreciate compliments, and thank you for them. But some

Conversations with Daniel Entin

Daniel Entin (1927–2017), Former Executive Director of the Nicholas Roerich Museum



are undeserved. In any case, I may have overstated my case to make the point, and if I offended anyone, I apologize. It’s just that, as Director of the Nicholas Roerich Museum, I see so many people come through the door who are either aging New Agers or spiritual students, serious or casual. Almost all of them project a quality of certainty, of having already achieved, that I have begun to think of it as a kind of

“If Sina Fosdick, the Director here and one of the Roerichs’ first disciples, ever saw even a glimmer of that kind of ego ballooning, she’d shoot it down, fast.”

disease. Certainty is the lock that seals the door to growth.

Many years ago when I was studying with a great Sufi teacher, I was so overwhelmed by the feeling that I had been illumined, as if I had jumped from the bottom rung to the top in one leap. I asked the teacher for an interview and told him

that I felt a strong need to teach, to share what I had learned with everyone. He laughed, kindly, but told me that I had not yet learned much, and that I should go to the Sufi ashram for a few years, to meditate and serve. (Later he explained that this feeling and urge happens to so many people on the bottom rungs, that what they are learning and experiencing is so overwhelming to them that they really think they have found The Great Knowledge, and they want to go out to save the multitudes.)

Well, I didn’t follow his advice. Instead, I came to the Agni Yoga Society and offered myself as a volunteer. I had learned the lesson and didn’t let that ego-flower blossom again. Anyway, if Sina Fosdick, the Director here and one of the Roerichs’ first disciples, ever saw even a glimmer of that kind of ego ballooning, she’d shoot it down, fast. Here, it was all work and service, and developing the humility to know how little we know. Now, Beauty is such an immense thing that I have worked all of my life to try to understand it. We chew our way around the edges of the concept and try to enrich our lives by learning to

Continued on page 9

Summer classes are ongoing through July 2019

REGISTER NOW for our 37th Anniversary:
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Agni Yoga Society International Headquarters:

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www.agniyoga.org

love beautiful things, to collect them, and to see the beauty in nature (but we try our damndest to ignore its opposite). That is wonderful. But we are dealing with beauty, which is only the superficial aspect of Beauty, the sustaining power of the universe. And that, I think, is what I was trying to imply, that we have hardly an inkling of what that great power, beyond all imagining, can be. We really have to devote our lives to learning to gain small glimpses of it, and even those glimpses put us in awe to a degree we have never experienced before.

Beauty (with a small “b”) is recognized by most people already. That is why they like to look good, to fix up nice homes, to collect nice things, according to their own notions of what is beautiful, and to give beautiful gifts. What they do not know about is the greater Beauty that lies behind all the phenomena of life. The same Sufi teacher taught us that every time we go onto a bus or the subway, we should look at each passenger, and no matter how superficially ugly or offensive a person may seem, to peer beneath the surface and find the eternal beauty that exists in everyone. The Teaching tells us that the Master himself may come to one’s door in the guise of a filthy beggar, and that we must learn to recognize Him by seeing beyond the disguise, and by ignoring the surface appearance.

As a photographer, I took that idea to another realm. I began collecting the ugly things that one finds in the gutter, in the garbage, put them in front of my camera in the studio, and tried to find the beauty in each thing. Amazing discoveries. After all, everything that exists is a product of the laws of the universe, and those laws are an expression of Beauty.

Once when we were talking about meditation here with a teacher, someone said that she found it so hard to meditate in the city because of all the ugly noises coming from the street. The answer was: When you learn to hear all those things as beautiful, you will no longer have trouble meditating, anywhere.

When the Teaching uses the triad—Love, Beauty, and Action (or Motion)—that is the kind of Beauty that is meant. There can be no positive

“I agree with you, absolutely! We all must examine ourselves very carefully, not to find what we can be proud of but rather to find what we need to work on.”

motion in the universe without the impelling power and sustaining power of Love and Beauty.

Just a few ideas to flesh out my too-cryptic message.

Love to all,

Daniel

July 27, 1999

“Roerich, Color and the Subtle Worlds”

Joleen, perhaps he had, and we are too limited in our faculties to appreciate it?

Unfortunately, Roerich had to use normal (but the best) pigments and paints for his canvases. Sina used to send him paints from Paris. It must have been frustrating for him, who could see the vastness of the color range in the subtle worlds, to limit

himself to what the paints could convey.

But fortunately, almost all those who view the paintings have not yet seen those incredible colors, and for them Roerich accomplished wonders.

When people who have seen the colors in the subtle world have described them, it has always been in words that themselves have been inadequate. Once, a teacher sat us down to watch the sunset, and tried to convey to us what he was seeing. We could only shake our heads in awe, even though what we ourselves were seeing was magnificent.

Daniel

August 1, 1999

“What we need to work on.”

I agree with you, absolutely! We all must examine ourselves very carefully, not to find what we can be proud of but rather to find what we need to work on, to develop. We must not fall into the trap of thinking that we have abilities that are beyond our abilities. So many people now are sure that Master is speaking to them, regularly, as special disciples, and that they, therefore, have a mission to teach. Yet, He says clearly, in the Teaching, that those who are chosen to be messengers can be counted on the fingers of one hand. So the question for any one of us must be: Am I qualified to be one of those few? For me, the answer is certainly no.

Daniel

August 1, 1999

“Truth is Beauty, and Beauty Truth”

Dear — ,

Yes, of course, none of these things is arguable. I am reminded of the state-

Continued on page 10

ment by the great English poet Keats: “Truth is Beauty, and Beauty Truth—That is all you need to know.” The struggle to recognize Beauty, to recognize Truth is a lot harder than most of us think. Our egos tell us that we know how to recognize these things and to distinguish them from their opposites, but we are far from that evolutionary level.

That is why our life struggle must be to learn these things (to gain Knowledge). We cannot make use of Beauty until we have really learned what it really is. Back to the wise old Sufis, who said that one’s heart is a mirror whose only aim is to reflect God, and that one’s only job in life is to clean the mirror.

Daniel

August 1, 1999

“Incarnation of Master M.”

It occurred to me that I must say something about why I turn to the Sufis so much to illustrate one thing or another. It is partly because I studied with a great Sufi teacher, who left an ineradicable mark on my heart. And because the Sufi way is one of teaching with stories, poems, and aphorisms, all of which are very quotable.

We should remember that Akbar, one of the incarnations of Master M., was in his earthly life a disciple of a great Sufi teacher. His sons were all born in the home of that teacher. And that leads one to wonder why an Incarnation has to study at all. It says in the Teaching that we should study the lives, incarnations of the Masters, and that in many of their lives, they did not know who they really were. That is an astonishing thing to ponder.

Daniel

August 6, 1999

“Criticism”

Dear —,

I was working today on some paragraphs of *Supermundane*, for the third volume to be published later this year. There was such a clear and definite paragraph about acceptance of others vs. criticism. I’d like to quote it here, not as a reprimand, or even a suggestion, to others here, but because it is so relevant in the Agni Yoga world “out there.” Some here may not know the degree to which AY groups in some

*“Each bird has its own
song, and ... it is wrong
to force it to sing an
alien tune.”*

countries indulge in criticism, condemnation, and attack against other groups and individuals. It is a great problem that should be thought about. I’d love to hear ideas from members of this group about how we can affect those groups so that they can pay attention to a paragraph such as this:

“Urusvati knows how often even the simplest of Our Indications are distorted. For example, We spoke about the need to carefully attend to the protection of our friends, and to provide help when necessary.¹ It would seem that such advice is quite clear, but people often will see in this an opportunity to criticize their friends. But wherever the worm of criticism breeds, one cannot expect a harvest.

“Now let us understand the difference between condemnation and fair judgment. Everyone knows that there

are crimes for which severe judgment is deserved, but ordinary, everyday criticism is superficial and harmful. Often, when criticizing others, people attempt to compel them to act as they wish them to. They do not want to understand that each bird has its own song, and that it is wrong to force it to sing an alien tune. One could more easily kill the singer than to force it to sing a song that is not its own.

“It is sad to see how people impose their will on others, and it is even worse when these violations are committed in the name of Good. When We spoke about concern for the protection of our friends, We had in mind the most solicitous care, not tactless criticism. It is time to understand that it is wrong to poison the atmosphere with thoughtless criticism, which is akin to slander. All imposition of the will is an obstacle to communion with Us.”²

I showed this paragraph to a Russian friend who often indulges in criticism of others, and he immediately grasped the statement that “there are crimes for which severe judgment is deserved” as proof that he had every right to condemn others. How, I wondered, could he possibly assume that he could recognize a real crime? The only things he thinks are crimes are the things that he himself dislikes, or hates, or is repulsed by.

Once again, I am reminded that we are all seekers. We are qualified only to try to help others. We do not know enough to judge others and never have earned the right to. And the idea that our coarse feelings reach into the Abode and pollute the Sacred Place is in some ways shocking, for we forget how far out thoughts can go.

Daniel

¹ The first person plural in “our friends” refers to all of us, not to M’s friends. – D.

² *Supermundane*, Book 3, 1938 (New York, NY: Agni Yoga Society, Inc., 1994), verse 466.

Thoughts on Agni Yoga (continued from page 7)

the heart can one understand how greatly *all acquisitions, all straight-knowledge* are needed for the future.¹⁶ “We send *fiery thoughts*; they are fiercely understood. This understanding may be called *straight-knowledge*. . . . In a moment of doubt as to whether *communion* with the Fiery World is possible, one should remember its presence everywhere. But contact must be established through the *heart* and not the brain. One can find contact with the Subtle World continuously, but the Fiery World demands an especially *solemn* mood.¹⁷ “Prejudice is an offspring of the mind, while the abode of straight-knowledge is the heart. . . . The self-development of straight-knowledge induces *solemnity* of feeling.”¹⁸

Many will feel, and quite rightly, that to achieve such straight-knowledge is far beyond their present capacity. But even if this be so, the only way to come nearer to this state is by contemplating the ways in which this can be achieved, meditating on the wondrous Bliss and Light that can be ours for the effort and by thus directing our thoughts and our self in the right direction—toward it. How else could we approach this goal? For if we direct our daily thinking anywhere else, it is this “anywhere else” that we will reach and not straight-knowledge, our Great Goal and Aim. If during this constant effort and thinking we have but for a short moment perceived a spark of this realization and momentary contact through straight-knowledge with the Highest, it will be the greatest experience and joy of our life! But it can only come—and this must never be forgotten—if we are ceaseless in our aspiration and thinking of it, not deflecting from a constant yearning with all our heart to reach it. Such constant Love of thinking about Hierarchy is the

quickest route to straight-knowledge and communion with the Highest.

Although in her *Letters*, Mme. Roerich has pointed out the difficulties and seriousness of the path:

[T]here is no doubt that only an accumulation of straight-knowledge gives the possibility of direct and constant *communion* with the Teachers, and thus being able to receive, not fragmentary information, but the entire Ocean of the Teaching. . . . It is difficult to develop or awaken *straight-knowledge* in oneself, yet there is no other criterion. Full *discrimination* comes only in this way. And the main difficulty is that straight-knowledge is not awakened in us while the feelings of selfhood, conceit, hypocrisy, or insincerity predominate in our heart. Only when these vipers are ejected does the voice of the heart take their place, and straight-knowledge becomes clear and infallible. Believe me, if someone is striving sincerely, he shall meet his earthly teacher and recognize him. But very, very rarely do these occurrences take place on our Earth. Let us recall the insignificant number of disciples that even the Great Teachers had during their earthly lives. Since those times humanity has not improved, and crucifixion and betrayal of the earthly Bearers of Light still continues.¹⁹

We must not be discouraged, for there is no shortcut—this is the only way, and through these Gates we must all sooner or later travel, unless we want to turn back and perish in chaos. Sooner or later! However, the whole meaning of this talk is that it could come sooner, if we tried harder now, for it has been said, “Not only exceptions but the majority of people can attain a sensation of the subtlest energies. They have but to THINK ABOUT THEM.”²⁰

¹ *Brotherhood, 1937* (New York, NY: Agni Yoga Society, Inc. [1962] 2016), verse 512.

² *Aum, 1936*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Agni Yoga Society, Inc., [1940] 1959, repr. 2016), verse 404.

³ *Leaves of Morya's Garden, Book 2, 1925*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Agni Yoga Society, Inc. [1952] 2016), 136–37.

⁴ *Leaves of Morya's Garden, Book 2*, 190.

⁵ *Agni Yoga, 1929*, 6th ed. (New York, NY: Agni Yoga Society, Inc., 1997, repr. 2016), verse 156.

⁶ *Fiery World*, vol. 1, 1933, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Agni Yoga Society, Inc. [1943] 2016), verse 535.

⁷ *Aum*, verse 160.

⁸ *Letters of Helena Roerich*, vol. 1, 1929–1938, 12 April 1935 (New York, NY: Agni Yoga Society, Inc. [1954] 2016), 427.

⁹ *Letters of Helena Roerich*, vol. 2, 1935–1939, 2 July 1937 (New York, NY: Agni Yoga Society, Inc. [1967] 2016), 341.

¹⁰ *Letters of Helena Roerich*, vol. 2, 23 November 1937, 404; this explanation refers to *Fiery World*, vol. 3, verse 82.

¹¹ All words emphasized in italics, except for this one, have been added by V. Shibayev.

¹² *Letters of Helena Roerich*, vol. 2, 17 May 1937, 303.

¹³ *Agni Yoga, 1929*, 6th ed. (New York, NY: Agni Yoga Society, Inc., 1997, repr. 2016), verse 282.

¹⁴ *Agni Yoga*, verse 127.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, verse 508.

¹⁶ *Heart, 1932*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Agni Yoga Society, Inc. [1934] 2013, repr. 2016), verse 74.

¹⁷ *Fiery World*, vol. 1, verse 354.

¹⁸ *Heart*, verse 472.

¹⁹ *Letters of Helena Roerich*, vol. 2, 12 July 1938, 488–89.

²⁰ *Brotherhood, 1937* (New York, NY: Agni Yoga Society, Inc. [1962] 2016), verse 415.

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