

# The Path to Higher States of Consciousness as Perceived in the Upanishads, the Yoga Sutras, and the Books of Alice A. Bailey

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Consciousness might be defined as the faculty of apprehension, and concerns primarily the relation of the Self to the not-self, of the Knower to the Known, and of the Thinker to that which is thought about.<sup>1</sup>

Alice A. Bailey: *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*

Being, per se, can only be grasped by those who have ‘come alive’ monadically, who function in the three worlds of the Spiritual Triad with even greater positivity than the highly advanced personality functions in the three worlds of human evolution . . .<sup>2</sup>

Alice A. Bailey: *The Rays and the Initiations*

## Abstract

The purpose of this article is to acquaint the reader with those types of consciousness which are considered to be higher than self-consciousness, and in a general sense, spiritual in nature. In the teachings of Alice A. Bailey and the Tibetan Master, Djwhal Khul, these higher types of consciousness are clearly distinguished from each other as regards their level of influence as well as their nature and quality. In this article knowledge about their existence is sought, firstly, in the Upanishads, then in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, with special references to occult meditation, one of the surest means of arriving at higher levels of consciousness. Lastly, an attempt is made to clarify the nature of the higher consciousness of the Spiritual Triad, by means of discussing and referencing select passages from the works of Alice A. Bailey.

## Introduction

The average person might, at times, give thought to that weighty issue concerning the meaning of life, and probably try to answer it in terms of his or her individual religious belief system, or if he or she is an agnostic or atheist, assign no importance to the question at

all. The esoteric student, however, will inevitably consider life in terms of the evolutionary process and the development of consciousness. Seen in this context, life as it manifests through the evolutionary process, has as its goal the achievement of full awareness,<sup>3</sup> and includes all stages of consciousness, and ultimately also that high level of awareness known as pure Being, “in which the monad or spirit eternally rests.”<sup>4</sup>

Broadly speaking, the uniquely human characteristic which distinguishes us from the sub-human kingdoms is self-consciousness, or that faculty which allows us to see ourselves as individual units of awareness. However, an exception needs to be made regarding the higher primates, specifically chimpanzees and orangutans, who are capable of forming a self-

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## About the Author

Iván Kovács is qualified as a fine artist. As a writer he has published art criticism, short stories and poems, and more recently, articles of an esoteric nature. He is a reader of the classics and modern classics, a lover of world cinema, as well as classical and contemporary music. His lifelong interest in Esotericism was rounded off with several years of intensive study with the Arcane School.

image by means of mirror recognition.<sup>5</sup> Mirror recognition is based upon the mirror test, an experiment developed by psychologist Gordon Gallup Jr. to determine whether an animal possesses the ability to recognize itself in a mirror. The mirror test is the primary indicator of self-awareness in non-human animals.<sup>6</sup> Human beings are not only capable of experiencing their selfhood in a distinctly personal and individual way; they are also capable of self-reflection and deeper introspection. In exceptional cases this can be pursued with such acuteness, that it gives rise to branches of learning that are identified as philosophical or metaphysical.

It is possible to approach the subject of consciousness and the human psyche from various angles and schools of thought. The approaches that come readily to mind in our contemporary times are those that are to be found in the various schools of western psychology. Yet, if one bears in mind that modern psychology goes back no further than William James and Sigmund Freud, with James's *The Principles of Psychology*<sup>7</sup> first appearing in print in 1890, and Freud's *The Origin and Development of Psycho-Analysis*<sup>8</sup> first seeing the light of day in 1910, it needs to be acknowledged that one is dealing with a branch of science that is still largely experimental and has barely come out of its infancy.

Those who are familiar with the works of Freud will agree that there is no acknowledgement of either the Will or the Soul in his writings. Furthermore, Freud attributed all motivational strivings in a human being to basic drives and urges of a physical nature, with particular emphasis on the sexual. C. G. Jung, Freud's most important co-worker, corrected this notion, and developed such concepts as the archetype, the collective unconscious, the complex, and synchronicity. His interests included Eastern and Western philosophy, alchemy, astrology, sociology, as well as literature and the arts.<sup>9</sup> With such an open-minded attitude, he at least allowed for the possibility of spheres of influence reaching beyond the concrete and material. Yet, it is only with the advent of Transpersonal Psychology that the subjective aspects of life and being, and the true nature and essence of the human psyche

came under investigation, and were consequently acknowledged.

In contrast with the aforementioned disciplines, the esoteric tradition and its formulations of the Self or the psyche reach back into antiquity. The terms *atma*, *buddhi*, and *manas*, as used in theosophical literature and the books of Alice A. Bailey, are of Sanskrit origin, and part of the terminology by which the ancients tried to make sense of the higher states of human consciousness. Taken, each in turn, *atma* can be correlated with spirit, *buddhi* with intuition, and *manas* with the intellectual faculty, or the mind.

There are various branches of esoteric study which each use their own method and terminology when dealing with different levels of consciousness and the constitution of a human being. To avoid any misunderstandings or confusion, it needs to be pointed out that in this article, consciousness will be discussed within the context in which it was presented by the Tibetan Master, Djwhal Khul, and his amanuensis, Alice A. Bailey.

In order to understand the various degrees of consciousness, it is first necessary to look at the constitution of human beings, and clearly distinguish between their various vehicles whereby they are able to engage with the realities of life. The constitutional model that will be discussed is in use by theosophists, and esotericists who follow the teachings of Alice A. Bailey and the Tibetan.

## The Human Constitution

The following discussion of the human constitution is intended to provide readers with a framework whereby a distinction is made between the various vehicles by which reality can be perceived. Once these distinctions are understood it will be easier to grasp the meaning of the different types of consciousness with which the spiritual seeker needs to get acquainted once he or she is determined to tread the Spiritual Path.

The first thing that needs to be remembered regarding the human constitution is that each of its vehicles or bodies corresponds to a parallel level or plane which goes into the making

of the world in which we function. Thus, we have, from the lowest to the highest or from the most concrete to the most subtle, the following gradations:

Physical vehicle – Physical plane

Etheric vehicle – Etheric plane

Astral (Emotional) vehicle – Astral plane

Lower mental vehicle (Concrete mind) – Lower mental plane

Causal (or Soul) vehicle (Son of Mind) – Causal plane

Higher mental vehicle (Abstract mind) – Higher mental plane

Buddhic (Intuitional) vehicle – Buddhic plane

Atmic (Spiritual) vehicle – Atmic plane

Monadic vehicle – Monadic plane

To a layman, these gradations might appear to be foreign and bewildering, but once these vehicles are sorted into their respective groups, such as the threefold personality, the three aspects of the mind, and the Spiritual Triad; their interaction and relationship to each other can be better understood and appreciated.

The first grouping to be considered is the threefold personality, which consists of the physical-etheric, astral and lower mental vehicles, and is that vital part of the human constitution whereby we interact with our environment and fellow human beings. For the majority of humanity, the next great step on the evolutionary ladder is an integrated personality, by means of which the physical, astral and lower mental vehicles are fully integrated, and can thus work as a unit. Presently, the greater part of humanity is still astrally centered, and needs to be uplifted by means of a proper education so that the lower mental plane can become accessible to them. This will do much to dissipate the glamour in which the masses are caught up, and open up the path to the higher realities.

The soul, or causal body, is receiving much attention in all esoteric schools that offer discipleship training, since it is on the level of the soul that all true disciples are united. The soul occupies the midway point between the con-

crete mind and the spiritual or higher mind, and is thus a mediator between the lower world of concrete manifestation, and the world of the spirit. In Christian terms the soul can be likened to the Inner Christ, or what St. Paul calls “the Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians, 1:27). Soul or causal consciousness is the “first major” objective of all true spiritual seekers. This type of awareness is only possible when the personality recognizes the soul as the true inner self, and thus allows itself to be inspired and guided.

The Spiritual Triad is the last grouping under consideration, and stands in the same relationship to the monad as the personality to the soul. It is the triad that is formed by *atma*, *buddhi* and *manas*, which respectively stand for the spiritual will, the intuition, and the abstract, or higher mind. On a microcosmic or human level, it is a replica of the Holy Trinity, with the spiritual will standing for the Father aspect; *buddhi*, or intuition standing for the Son aspect; and the higher mind standing for the Holy Spirit aspect. (In Hinduism these aspects would translate into the trinity of Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma.) It is by using the light of the soul that the disciple is able to create a pathway of light between the personality and the Spiritual Triad, and thereby access the spiritual will, intuitive understanding and the higher mind.<sup>10</sup>

The last and highest aspect of the human constitution is the monad. Its state of awareness is very different to soul consciousness, which is fundamentally magnetic, and thus group conscious. The monad’s unique characteristic is that it is dynamic, and in its fully active state, aware of its own being and power, without the need to define itself in terms of relationship. Its nature is pure Spirit,<sup>11</sup> and all that one can assume is that it radiates the unadulterated Will of God with dynamic intensity.

## The Upanishads or the Search for the True Nature of Reality

When writing about the *Upanishads*, which form the theoretical basis for the Hindu religion, Radhakrishnan in his *Indian Philosophy* says the following: “The inner immortal self and the great cosmic power are

one and the same. Brahman is the Atman, and the Atman is the Brahman. The one supreme power through which all things have been brought into being is one with the inmost self in each man's heart."<sup>12</sup> This quotation clearly affirms that the composers of the Upanishads recognized man's inmost essence as being divine.

Unlike the *Vedas*, which are the earliest documents of the human mind that we possess,<sup>13</sup> and, which are written in poetic and symbolic form, the *Upanishads* are philosophical, and expound Hindu thought in more direct language, although they do retain some of the poetic tone.<sup>14</sup>

In his discussion of the *Upanishads*, Radhakrishnan points out another important distinction between these ancient texts. He writes that the transcendent conception of God held in the *Rig-Veda* is being transformed into an immanent one in the *Upanishads*, and that the Brahman and the Atman, the cosmic and the psychical principles, are looked upon as identical.<sup>15</sup>

Juan Mascaró, translator of the Penguin Classics version of the *Upanishads* confirms Radhakrishnan's view, and putting it in a Christian context, says the following: "The spirit of the *Upanishads* can be compared with that of the New Testament summed up in the words "I and my Father are one" and "The kingdom of God is within you," the seed of which is found in the words of the Psalms "I have said: Ye are gods; and all of you are the children of the most High."<sup>16</sup>

It is when man realizes his inner divinity that he becomes an integral part of the creation, and discovers the potential powers that make him an important link in the hierarchical chain of being. As this truth dawns on him, his aspiration is fired, and his yearning for truth finds ways and means to quench the thirst in his soul.

Lead me from the unreal to the real!  
Lead me from darkness to light!  
Lead me from death to immortality!<sup>17</sup>

Thus reads that uplifting and evocative prayer in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (1.3.27) that

is characterized not only by its poetic beauty, but also its high idealism and deep spirituality. It is expressive of the sincerest yearning of the spiritual seeker who will stop at nothing in his desire to experience the highest truth. In Alice A. Bailey's *Glamour: A World Problem* it becomes the subject of closer analysis. Bailey explains that it refers to the three aspects of glamour, i.e., *maya*, *glamour*, and *illusion*. These three aspects are considered the major obstacles that prevent humanity from realizing that the phenomenal world of the three lower planes, namely the physical, astral and concrete mental are only transitory, and that true joy and fulfillment is only to be found in the realm of the soul. In her book, *Glamour: A World Problem*, Bailey says the following:

'Lead us from darkness to light' refers to the mind as it becomes eventually illumined by the light of the intuition; this illumination is brought about by the means of the Technique of the Presence from Whom the light shines. This is the mediating factor producing the Transfiguration of the personality, and a centre of radiant light upon the mental plane. This statement is true whether one is speaking of an individual or of that focal point of light, which is formed by the mental unity and the clear thinking of advanced humanity. These, through the power of their unified mind, will succeed in ridding the world of some aspects of the Great Illusion.

'Lead us from the unreal to the Real' has specific relation to the astral plane and its all-encompassing glammers. These glammers embody the unreal and present them to the prisoners of the astral plane, leading them to mistake them for the Reality. The imprisonment by glamour can be ended by the activity of the Technique of Light, utilized by those who work – in group formation – for the dissipation of glamour and for the emergence in the consciousness of men of a clear conception and recognition of the nature of Reality.<sup>18</sup>

In the *Katha Upanishad*, the conflicting values of the lower and higher worlds are clearly demonstrated in a lengthy dialogue between the spiritual aspirant, Nachiketas, and Yama,

the god of death. Nachiketas, who has been offered as a sacrifice to Yama by his father, had waited for three nights in Yama's abode without food.<sup>19</sup> Finally, Yama had pity on him and granted him three boons.<sup>20</sup> The first boon Nachiketas asked for is that he may be reunited with his father, a boon that was easily granted by Yama.<sup>21</sup> The second boon Nachiketas asked for concerned the sacred fire which leads to heaven, and Death explained to him how this fire-sacrifice was to be carried out.<sup>22</sup> Regarding the third boon, Nachiketas addressed Yama as follows:

'When a man dies, this doubt arises: some say "he is" and some say "he is not." Teach me the truth.'<sup>23</sup>

Death replied:

'Even the gods had this doubt in times of old; for mysterious is the law of life and death. Ask for another boon. Release me from this.'<sup>24</sup>

However, Nachiketas remains firm, and replies:

'This doubt indeed arose even to the gods, and you say, O Death, that it is difficult to understand; but no greater teacher than you can explain it, and there is no other boon so great as this.'<sup>25</sup>

With the above answer, Nachiketas clearly indicates that his resolve to clear up the mystery is in earnest. However, Yama, the king of death, is not so easily persuaded, and replies as follows:

'Take horses and gold and cattle and elephants; choose sons and grandsons that shall live a hundred years. Have vast expanses of land, and live as many years as you desire.

Or choose another gift that you think equal to this, and enjoy it with wealth and long life. Be a ruler of this vast earth. I will grant you all your desires.

Ask for any wishes in the world of mortals, however hard to obtain. To attend on you I will give you fair maidens with chariots and musical instruments. But ask me not, Nachiketas, the secrets of death.'<sup>26</sup>

Considering this reply by Yama, one is reminded of the parallel that can be drawn between it and the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness by the devil. (*The Gospel According to Matthew*, 4:1-11). It is the successful withstanding of temptation, which allows for the reward of a higher realization, or the initiation onto a higher level of consciousness, and in the Katha Upanishad, Nachiketas successfully passes the test by replying to Yama:

'All these pleasures pass away, O End of all! They weaken the power of life. And indeed how short is all life! Keep thy horses and dancing and singing.

Man cannot be satisfied with wealth. Shall we enjoy wealth with you in sight? Shall we live whilst you are in power? I can only ask for the boon I have asked.

When a mortal here on earth has felt his own immortality, could he wish for a long life of pleasures, for the lust of deceitful beauty?

Solve then the doubt as to the great beyond. Grant me the gift that unveils the mystery. This is the only gift Nachiketas can ask.'<sup>27</sup>

Yama is now convinced that Nachiketas is in earnest and cannot be swayed from his purpose, thus he decides to instruct Nachiketas, and reveals the mysteries to him:

'You have pondered, Nachiketas, on pleasures and you have rejected them. You have not accepted that chain of possessions wherewith men bind themselves and beneath which they sink.

There is the path of wisdom and the path of ignorance. They are far apart and lead to different ends, You are, Nachiketas, a follower of the path of wisdom: Many pleasures tempt you not.

When the wise rests his mind in contemplation on our God beyond time, who invisibly dwells in the mystery of things, and in the heart of man, then he rises above pleasures and sorrow.

When a man has heard and understood and, finding the essence, reaches the Inmost, then he finds joy in the Source of joy. Na-

chiketas is a house open for thy Atman, thy God.<sup>28</sup>

It is important to note that in the passage above contemplation is identified as the means to spiritual consciousness, which then will reveal that God *dwells in the mystery of things and in the heart of man*, and once the spiritual consciousness has been attained, the devotee manages to rise above pleasures and sorrow and as the next verse points out, partakes in the true blessing of the soul, which is joy. Yama also assures Nachiketas that his earnest spiritual attitude has made him a fit abode for Atman, or the spirit.

Nachiketas, who has now gained the status of an accepted disciple, is now entitled to receive the ever deepening words of wisdom which Yama systematically reveals to him:

Atman, the Spirit of vision, is never born and never dies. Before him there was nothing, and he is ONE for evermore. Never-born and eternal, beyond times gone or to come, he does not die when the body dies.

If the slayer thinks that he kills, and if the slain thinks that he dies, neither knows the way of truth, The Eternal in man cannot kill; the Eternal in man cannot die.

Concealed in the heart of all beings is the Atman, the Spirit, the Self; smaller than the smallest atom, greater than the vast spaces. The man who surrenders his human will leave sorrow behind, and beholds the glory of the Atman by the grace of the Creator.<sup>29</sup>

From the above, one can conclude that the author of this Upanishad clearly identifies the essence of life with Atman, or the Spirit, which he considers immortal, and which he considers to be concealed in the heart of all beings. In Alice Bailey's *Esoteric Psychology II*, the two

energies of the soul, namely mind and love, or the principle of consciousness and the life principle, are each assigned their specific localities: consciousness in the human brain, and the life principle in the human heart.<sup>30</sup> It is

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noteworthy that various cultures besides the Indian, such as the Chinese, Egyptian and many classical Greek philosophers, such as Aristotle, consider the heart as the seat of the soul.<sup>31</sup> Is it any wonder that most of the profound experiences that we register are primarily felt in our hearts before they are made conscious, and later analyzed, in our brains?

Yama's exposition about higher consciousness becomes even more specific when he says:

'Beyond the senses are their objects, and beyond the objects is the mind. Beyond the mind is pure reason, and beyond reason is the Spirit in man.

Beyond the Spirit in man is the Spirit of the universe, and beyond is Purusha, the Spirit Supreme. Nothing is beyond Purusha: He is the End of the path.'<sup>32</sup>

An attentive reading of the above reveals a clear distinction between the mind, pure reason and the Spirit in man. The practiced occultist will readily recognize them as the unity of the Spiritual Triad, mind being understood in its higher or abstract sense, pure reason being equated with the intuitional or buddhic faculty, and Spirit being equated with the atma, also known as the power or will aspect of a human being. As regards Purusha, the above passage defines it as the Spirit Supreme. In Radhakrishnan's *Indian Philosophy, Volume I*, Purusha is identified with the Absolute<sup>33</sup> and the ultimate principle,<sup>34</sup> thus identical with what the above Upanishad calls the Spirit Supreme.

Yama's concluding words to Nachiketas are as follows:

‘Awake, arise! Strive for the Highest, and be in the Light! Sages say the path is narrow and difficult to tread, narrow as the edge of a razor.

The Atman is beyond sound and form, without touch and taste and perfume. It is eternal, unchangeable, and without beginning or end: indeed above reasoning. When consciousness of the Atman manifests itself, man becomes free from the jaws of death.’<sup>35</sup>

Yama’s final words do not hide the fact that the path is difficult to tread, indeed narrow as the edge of a razor, a simile which is very similar to the Noble Middle Path of Buddhism, whereupon the disciple walks by a wise balancing of the pairs of opposites, and thus avoiding extreme behavior and fanaticism. Yama also points out that Spirit is beyond the senses and even beyond reasoning, and consciousness of it is so precious that it surpasses even death.

In conclusion, an example from the *Chandogya Upanishad* sums up what the spiritual seeker can expect once his or her inner eye has been opened. Time and space are no more experienced as hindrances to unity with the Divine and the disciple can say with conviction and clarity what this Upanishad expresses as follows:

There is a bridge between time and Eternity, and this bridge is Atman, the Spirit of man. Neither day nor night cross that bridge, nor old age, nor death nor sorrow.

Evil or sin cannot cross that bridge, because the world of the Spirit is pure. This is why when this bridge has been crossed, the eyes of the blind can see, the wounds of the wounded are healed, and the sick man becomes whole from his sickness.

To one who goes over that bridge, the night becomes like unto day, because in the worlds of the Spirit there is a Light which is everlasting.<sup>36</sup>

### **The “Yoga Sutras”: From Self-Consciousness to Soul-Consciousness**

In the introduction to her book, *The Light of the Soul*, Alice A. Bailey comments on Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras* as follows:

The Yoga Sutras are the basic teaching of the Trans-Himalayan school to which many of the Masters of the Wisdom belong, and many students hold that the Essenes and other schools of mystical training and thought, closely connected with the founder of Christianity and the early Christians, are based upon the same system and that their teachers were trained in the great Trans-Himalayan School.<sup>37</sup>

Bailey also points out that this “Kingly Science of the Soul” will find its greatest demonstration in the West, because the fifth root race in its fifth subrace, i.e. the Anglo-Saxon, must inevitably touch its highest point.<sup>38</sup> The opportunity to reach the highest point will reach its zenith between the years 1965 and 2025 (written in 1927),<sup>39</sup> which to the present-day disciple leaves but a little more than a decade to avail him or herself of the opportunity to be part of that group which will attain the projected goal. This should be seen as an urgent appeal to spiritual seekers in the Occident to redouble their efforts, and avail themselves of the opportunity to study, meditate and serve, because this opportunity is available *right now*.

In answer to the question “What are the Yoga Sutras?” Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati of the Abhyasa Ashram answers as follows:

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali succinctly outlines the art and science of traditional Yoga meditation for Self-Realisation. It is a process of systematically encountering, examining, and transcending each of the various gross and subtle levels of false identity in the mind field, until the jewel of the true Self comes shining through.<sup>40</sup>

Radhakrishnan in his *Indian Philosophy* basically says the same thing: “Patanjali’s yoga is a system of psychic discipline by which we can clear the intellect, free the mind of its illusions and get a direct perception of reality,” and further on, a bit more specifically, he writes:

The Yoga Sutra of Patanjali is the oldest textbook of the Yoga school. It has four parts, of which the first treats of the nature and aim of samadhi, or meditative absorption (samadhipada), the second explains the means of attaining this end (sadhanapada), the third gives an account of the supernormal powers that can be attained through the yoga practices (vibhutipada), and the fourth sets forth the nature of liberation (kaivalyapada).<sup>41</sup>

According to Bailey the *Yoga Sutras* are so comprehensive, and of such a high order, that not only disciples and initiates, but even the Masters make use of them and derive benefit from their teachings.<sup>42</sup> Their importance as a spiritual treatise cannot be underestimated, and this is reinforced by the fact that there are at least 48 different translations of it into English, and that it has been translated into as many as 33 different languages.<sup>43</sup> For those students who approach the esoteric teachings in context of the writings of Bailey and the Tibetan, the preferred version of the *Yoga Sutras* is Bailey's *The Light of the Soul*, which is a paraphrase of the *Yoga Sutras* by the Tibetan Master, Djwhal Khul, with a commentary by Bailey.

In an article such as this all that one can do is to touch upon some key elements of the subject under discussion and point out their significance and relevance, and then trust that readers' interests are sufficiently piqued so that they will follow it up with their own investigations.

In this sense, it needs, firstly, to be pointed out that the most important distinction between Raja Yoga as expounded in the *Yoga Sutras* and the yoga traditions that preceded it, is that Raja Yoga is primarily the yoga of the mind. When the mind is properly disciplined and subjugated, it can be turned into an instrument whereby higher states of consciousness become possible, and thus bring the practitioner closer to the ideal of realizing his or her spiritual destiny.

In Bailey's rendering, the first book of the *Yoga Sutras*, subtitled *The Problem of Union*, has as its topic the versatile psychic nature and

begins by defining the higher and lower natures, and considers the obstacles that arise from there and the need for their removal. Book I concludes with a summation of the Raja Yoga system.<sup>44</sup> A closer look at Book I reveals in a nutshell, what the *Yoga Sutras* intend to do as a whole, i.e. the achievement of union between the lower and higher self, while the remaining three books concentrate on how this can be achieved in practice.

The second book of the *Yoga Sutras* is subtitled *The Steps to Union*, and is more practical and detailed than the first book. Its topic is the means of attainment, which is to be achieved by the recognition of the five hindrances to union and their removal.<sup>45</sup> These hindrances are identified as *avidya* (ignorance), *the sense of personality*, *desire*, *hate*, and *the sense of attachment*.<sup>46</sup>

At this point, it is appropriate to digress somewhat from the summation of the *Yoga Sutras* and examine in more detail how the five hindrances to union are perceived and what the suggested methods are so that they can be successfully overcome.

The first of the five hindrances, *avidya* or ignorance, is considered as the cause of all the other obstructions, because it is "*the condition of confusing the permanent, pure, blissful and the Self with that which is impermanent, impure, painful and the not-self*."<sup>47</sup> Bailey comments on this specific sutra by pointing out that this condition of ignorance is characteristic of all those who as yet do not discriminate between the real and the unreal, between death and immortality, and between light and darkness. In this respect, ignorance governs life in the three worlds, because the correspondence between *avidya* on the physical plane as experienced by man in incarnation is to be found on all planes. Bailey argues that *avidya* in the initial stage is unavoidable, because "*the spiritual unit is born blind and senseless*."<sup>48</sup> At this stage, Bailey points out three factors that must be borne in mind in connection with the spiritual unit. Firstly, the senses have to be evolved; secondly, their recognition and use must follow; and thirdly, a period undergone wherein the spiritual man utilizes the senses in the fulfillment

of his desire and in so doing, identifies himself with his apparatus of manifestation.<sup>49</sup>

It becomes clear from the above why the second hindrance is considered the sense of personality, because the personality is the vehicle by means of which we access the physical world; and why the third hindrance is desire, because the physical world is made up of those objects of pleasure that give rise to desire. The fourth hindrance, hate, goes hand in hand with the third, because it is the complementary opposite of the third hindrance, namely aversion for certain objects of the senses.<sup>50</sup> The fifth hindrance, attachment, sums up all the others and is defined in Sutra 9 as follows: “*Intense desire for sentient existence is attachment. This is inherent in every form, is self-perpetuating, and known even to the very wise.*”<sup>51</sup>

The five hindrances and the need for their removal are a very apt description of the all too familiar world in which we live and struggle, and an unbiased, but realistic view of the general human condition which results from it. The reasoning behind it is intrinsically sound, and it is very different to the Christian doctrine of atonement. The atonement, as it is customarily understood, is a doctrine in light of which human beings are by nature considered sinful, and need to be saved from their evil ways. Contrasting such a view, Radhakrishnan points out the following in his *Indian Philosophy*:

There is a cordial harmony between God and man in Indian thought, while the opposition between the two is more marked in the West. The mythologies of the peoples also indicate it. The myth of Prometheus, the representative man, who tries to help humanity by defending it against Zeus who desires to destroy the human race and supplant them with a new and better species, the story of the labours of Hercules, who tries to redeem the world, the conception of Christ as the Son of Man, indicate that man is the centre of attention in the West. Our point here is that the main tendency of the western culture is an opposition between man and God, where man resists the might of God, steals fire from him in the interests of humanity. In India, man is a product of

God. The whole world is due to the sacrifice of God.<sup>52</sup>

According to the *Yoga Sutras*, the true reason for our human failings is that we are inevitably subjected to maya, glamour, and illusion, which are inherent in the very substance of the three lowest levels of the cosmic physical plane. Through our recognition of a higher destiny and the ability to identify ourselves with our souls, we are able to transcend maya, glamour and illusion and thereby achieve liberation.

Perhaps the best answer and alternative view that one can give regarding the Western point of view is summed up in the Three Truths which appear in Mabel Collins’s *The Idyll of the White Lotus*, and which is worth repeating here:

There are three truths which are absolute  
and cannot be lost,  
But yet may remain silent for lack of  
speech.

The soul of man is immortal, and its future  
is the future  
Of a thing whose growth and splendor have  
no limit,

The principle which gives life dwells in us,  
and without us,  
Is undying and eternally beneficent, is not  
heard or seen  
Or smelt, but is perceived by the man who  
desires perception.

Each man is his own absolute law-giver, the  
dispenser of glory  
Or gloom to himself; the decreer of his life,  
his reward, his punishment.

These truths, which are as great as is life it-  
self, are as simple  
As the simplest mind of man. Feed the  
hungry with them.<sup>53</sup>

Now that this basic difference between eastern and western religious doctrines has been pointed out, one can return to answer the all-important question of how the five hindrances mentioned in the *Yoga Sutras* are to be dealt with so that they can be successfully overcome. Book II, Sutras 10 - 11 provide the answer:

These five hindrances, when subtly known, can be overcome by an opposing mental attitude.

Their activities are to be done away with, through the meditation process.<sup>54</sup>

Meditation is the practice for which the Orient is so well-known, and it can be safely stated that the Orientals have developed it to a level which one can call scientific. It is the heart and soul of the spiritual quest and, besides study, the most important means to esoteric understanding and occult wisdom.

Before considering the more technical aspects of meditation, it is best to look at a few definitions of it and thereby gain a more comprehensive view of what it entails. In Bailey's *Letters on Occult Meditation*, there are three definitions that are noteworthy and which are worded as follows:

Meditation is the expression of the intelligence that links life and form, the self and the not-self, and in time and in the three worlds the process of this connection eventuates on the plane of mind which links the higher and the lower.<sup>55</sup>

Meditation is the means whereby the higher consciousness is contacted.<sup>56</sup>

The basis of all occult growth is meditation, or those periods of silent gestation in which the soul grows in the silence.<sup>57</sup>

Meditation in the *Yoga Sutras* is treated in greater detail in Book III, which is subtitled "*Union Achieved and its Results*" and has as its topic the powers of the soul. The first part of this book treats meditation and its various stages, and the second part the twenty-three results of meditation.<sup>58</sup> These results refer to the various powers that emanate from meditation, but which ultimately need to be transcended, because they can become the very obstacles that stand in the way of spiritual union and liberation.<sup>59</sup>

The first five sutras of Book III are of vital

importance since they contain the key elements of occult meditation. They sum up the three indispensable stages of the meditation process, namely: *concentration*, *meditation* and *contemplation* which, when successfully followed, lead to *sanyama*. *Sanyama* is a Sanskrit word which is very difficult to translate into English, but which describes a state in which the meditator "*has learnt to pierce through all the veils and contact the reality behind.*"<sup>60</sup> To get a better idea of this process it is necessary to examine each stage more closely. Sutra 1 says the following about concentration:

Concentration is the fixing of the chitta (mind stuff) upon a particular object. This is dharana.<sup>61</sup>

Among the key elements in the commentary on this sutra, Bailey points out that to the untrained mind concentration "is one of the most difficult stages in the meditation process and involves constant unremitting ability to keep bringing the mind back to that 'object' upon which the aspirant has chosen to concentrate."<sup>62</sup> She suggests the choice of some object upon which to concentrate, which can be chosen from four distinct groups, namely *external objects*, such as images of the deity; *internal objects*, such as the centers in the etheric body; *qualities*, such as the various virtues; or *mental concepts* which may take the form of symbols or of words.<sup>63</sup> Concentrating on an object without the interference of any thoughts about other objects, when done successfully for the space of twelve seconds, is a sure sign that true concentration is being achieved.<sup>64</sup>

Sutra 2 is very straightforward, and simply states that "*Sustained Concentration (dharana) is meditation (dhyana).*"<sup>65</sup> Bailey expands on this by saying that meditation is but the extension of concentration, and grows out of one's facility in fixing the mind at will on any particular object. As such, it falls under the same rules and conditions as concentration, with the only difference between the two being the time element.<sup>66</sup>

The next stage of the meditation process, contemplation is, in a general sense, the culmination of the yogi's efforts. Bailey writes that in contemplation, the yogi loses sight of his or her brain consciousness; does not allow for emotional reactions regarding the meditation process; and even loses sight of his or her mental activities, "so that all the 'modifications' of the thinking process, all the emotional reactions of the desire-mind (*kama-manas*) vehicle are subdued, and the yogi is unaware of them. He is, however, intensely alive and alert, positive and awake, for the brain and the mind are held by him in a steady grip, and are used by him without any interference on their part."<sup>67</sup>

The outstanding characteristics of contemplation are *absorption in the soul consciousness, liberation from the three worlds, realization of oneness with all souls, and illumination*. Absorption in the soul consciousness allows for awareness of the soul in all things; liberation from the three worlds allows the yogi freedom from form, from desire and from the lower mental substance; realization of oneness with all souls brings about a true sense of group consciousness; and illumination, or perception of the light aspect of manifestation brings the yogi *en rapport* with the light which an object might be hiding.<sup>68</sup>

Sutra 4 of Book III sums up the three preceding sutras as follows:

When concentration, meditation and contemplation form one sequential act, then is sanyama achieved.

Reading Bailey's commentary on this sutra, arriving at the stage of sanyama is to be understood as a significant achievement. It entails the following: a freeing of the yogi from the three worlds; the ability to focus the attention

indefinitely and at will; polarization of the consciousness in the ego, or soul; the recognition of the lower man as simply an instrument for communicating with the three lower planes; the acquisition of the faculty of con-

templation, or the attitude of the real Identity towards the realm of the soul; and the ability to transmit to the brain, via the controlled mind, the knowledge of the self and its kingdom to the man on the physical plane. Sanyama is thus the attainment of the power of meditation, which is the objective of the Raja Yoga system.<sup>69</sup>

Sutra 5 states that "as a result of sanyama comes the shining forth of the light."<sup>70</sup> The light referred to in this

sutra is the light of the soul, and with it come *illumination of perception, lucidity of consciousness, the shining forth of insight, and illumination of the intellect*.<sup>71</sup>

The greater part of Book III is a description of the various powers or siddhis that are acquired as a result of soul consciousness, which will not be dealt with in this article. Many of them might appear as fantastic, and thus difficult to attain by the average disciple, so it is deemed more reasonable to point out how soul consciousness is expected to be experienced by those who can achieve it by means of regular meditation, rather than by those highly advanced disciples who take soul consciousness for granted, and in whom continuity of consciousness is fully developed.

Once the soul starts to assert itself; its presence will be experienced in a variety of ways, such as a sense of joy, a sense of heartfelt identification with other souls, a sense of deeper meaning resulting from the recognition of the subjective aspects of life, and a sense of true spiritual destiny and purpose. Soul consciousness also brings with it a new way of perceiving

**There is a bridge between time and Eternity, and this bridge is Atman, the Spirit of man. Neither day nor night cross that bridge, nor old age, nor death nor sorrow. Evil or sin cannot cross that bridge, because the world of the Spirit is pure. This is why when this bridge has been crossed, the eyes of the blind can see, the wounds of the wounded are healed, and the sick man becomes whole from his sickness.**

space and time, and we experience in a more direct and real sense what it means to live in the Eternal Now. The phenomenal world of concrete manifestation and the senses become just *that*, namely phenomenal, in which each player plays an intricate part, but also a part which in context of the greater whole is conditional and transitory, i.e. qualified by the restrictions of space and time.

As far as the discussion of the *Yoga Sutras* in this article is concerned one need go no further than to point out that even this detailed and scientific treatise on Raja Yoga only makes brief reference to what is to be expected when one advances beyond soul consciousness.

### The Higher Consciousness of the Spiritual Triad

There are several ways of approach by which one can try to understand the consciousness which is characteristic of the Spiritual Triad, and all of them are equally important to aid the disciple in trying to form a comprehensive idea or view. These ways of approach are closely interrelated, and are to be looked upon as fragments that go into the making of a whole.

The most practicable way is by means of a comprehensive understanding of all that has been given out in regard to the teaching about the antahkarana, or the building of the “rainbow bridge,” which forms a link between the lower and higher mind, and thus creates a pathway between the lowest aspect of the Spiritual Triad and the highest aspect of the personality. In a previous article dealing specifically with the antahkarana this author described this building process as follows:

(It) is dependent on the conscious effort and evocative power of the soul-infused personality, aided by visualization and the ability to keep the channel between soul-mind-brain open and aligned. The final stages of the building process extend to include the consciousness of the intuition and the spiritual will, and ultimately, the monad itself, by which time the role of the soul as mediator between that which is “lower” and that which is “higher” becomes redundant,

and a direct link between the three aspects of the monad and the three aspects of the personality becomes possible and effective, and by means of which the monad, or spirit, can express itself fully in the world of manifestation or the world of form.<sup>72</sup>

Another way of approach to the Spiritual Triad is by means of studying those qualities and properties which are characteristic of the initiate of the third degree, or the disciple who has appropriated and can make conscious use of his mental vehicle as it is employed in service of the soul. This is more succinctly expressed in Alice A. Bailey’s *The Rays and the Initiations*, which reads as follows:

After the third initiation, the “Way” is carried forward with great rapidity, and the “bridge” is finished which links perfectly the higher spiritual Triad and the lower material reflection. The three worlds of the Soul and the three worlds of the Personality become one world wherein the initiate works and functions, seeing no distinction, regarding one world as the world of inspiration and the other world as constituting the field of service, yet regarding both together as forming one world of activity.<sup>73</sup>

Thirdly, a way of approach to the Spiritual Triad can be made by studying the degree of awakening of the human energy centers, and how they are transmuted into and related to their corresponding higher centers. In this regard, one needs to examine the relationship between the three head centers, i.e. the crown center, the brow or ajna center, and the alta major center, and their significance as related to the opening of the third eye.

In *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* Bailey points out that one first needs to know that there is a close connection between the alta major center and the throat center, the heart center and the pituitary body, and between the head center and the pineal gland.<sup>74</sup> Further on she explains that the accurate realization by the physical brain of what the Ego is seeking to convey concerning the work to be done only becomes possible when two things are realized:

Direct alignment.

The transmission of the egoic energy or will to one or other of the three physical centres in the head:

The pineal gland.

The pituitary body.

The *alta major* centre, or that nerve centre at the top of the spine, where the cranium and the spine make approximate contact. When this congeries of nerves is fully developed, it forms a centre of communication between the vital energy of the spinal column (the kundalini fire) and the energy of the two head centres above enumerated. It is the physical correspondence to the *antaskarana* (sic) on higher levels.<sup>75</sup>

Bailey concludes her most essential observation about the above mentioned three centers as follows:

As these three types of energy, or the vibration of these three centres, begin to contact each other, a definite interplay is set up. This triple interplay forms in time a vortex or centre of force, which finds its place in the centre of the forehead, and takes eventually the semblance of an eye looking out between the other two. It is the eye of the inner vision, and he who has opened it can direct and control the energy of matter, see all things in the Eternal Now, and therefore, be in touch with causes more than with effects, read the akashic records, and see clairvoyantly. Therefore, its possessor can control the builders of low degree.<sup>76</sup>

Lastly, it needs to be said that although the monad first makes its influence felt after the disciple has taken the third initiation, there are several important steps before full monadic consciousness can be realized. Initiates of the third degree are disciples who are rapidly developing soul consciousness and who are adept at using their higher minds. It is only when disciples are in the process of preparing for the Great Renunciation, whereby they will be able to cut all binding ties from the concrete world of manifestation, that they will have the ability to fully appropriate the next plane of consciousness, that of *buddhi*, also known as the plane of intuition or pure reason. Even the

candidate preparing for the fifth initiation, which will qualify him as a Master, can reach no higher than the spiritual or atmic plane. It is only those Masters who have taken initiations higher than the fifth that can be said to possess monadic consciousness, a state of being that no one who manifests through a physical body can fathom, unless he is an Avatar who has incarnated for a specific purpose, and therefore, needs to make use of a physical body.

## Conclusion

Mankind's journey from its earliest beginnings, and its consequent odyssey from self-consciousness to group consciousness and beyond, is a work of arduous effort and striving that can only be achieved within the span of countless epochs and innumerable existences. Yet it is a journey which can be achieved with more and more surety as we witness the tangible results of our evolution, and follow the dictates of those great Sons of God who have walked before us, and due to their achievements, are qualified to point the way which leads us from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, and from death to immortality. It is by our firm decision to set our feet on the Spiritual Path that we find the Kingdom of God, and consequently, allow for the promise to be fulfilled that puts us in direct and spiritual kinship with God.

<sup>1</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (1962; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1977), 243.

<sup>2</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (1960; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), 263.

<sup>3</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, Vol. I (1962; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1979), 131.

<sup>4</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic* (1951; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1980), 212.

<sup>5</sup> <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2FBF02437424?LI=true> (accessed January 20, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirror\\_test](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirror_test) (accessed January 20, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (1952; reprint; Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1980), vi.

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- 36 Ibid., 121.
- 37 Alice A. Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, (1955; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1978), xv.
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