

Yoga

The Truth Revealed

PAUL REID

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Endorsements

This is one man's journey from being deceived by a guru, to discovering a new life with God. Here is an awakening of true faith following the struggle with doubt and disillusionment; drama and pathos in the midst of a devastating Australian bushfire. A clear comparison is made between the incompatible worldview of yoga and Eastern thought, and the truth of God's self-revelation in His Living Word, Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Written Word of the Bible. Paul Reid's story and analysis is readable, helpful and challenging. A book that young adults ought to read, and more mature readers will find equally worthwhile.

Rev. W.A. (Adrian) van Leen, Director, Concerned Christians Growth Ministries, Nollamara, W.A., Australia.

Paul Reid shares in a deeply reflective way about his journey from a yoga cult to ultimate fulfillment in the one true God. He clearly demonstrates that everyone has a worldview that influences their actions. Through his personal experience he reveals the underlying basis of yoga and the truth of Christianity. This book provides a valuable understanding for the reader on this important topic.

Jenny Stokes, Research Director, Salt Shakers, Melbourne, Australia.

Many are attracted to the allures of Eastern spirituality. But there is a dark side to all this as well. Paul Reid warns of the spiritual – and other – dangers built into the gods of the East. His many years of personal involvement make him well qualified to write this book. It will open the eyes of many.

Bill Muehlenberg, theologian and ethicist, Melbourne, Australia.

*“How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God,
follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”*

1 King 18:21

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Foreword

Yoga is an important part of the weekly regimen for many Australians.

Yoga reduces stress, increases fitness and strengthens body-mind unity. Some instructors who insist yoga is “secular” and “values-free,” introduce children to it at Australian schools and in after-school care programs. Many Christians, including those who articulate an evangelical faith or fundamentalist worldview, also practice yoga.

But the roots of yoga lie in ancient Indian philosophy and religion and there are a number of former yoga enthusiasts who have grave doubts about the spiritual influence of yogic practices, and serious reservations about the ethics of leaders of the broad movement. Paul Reid is among these.

In this engaging and illuminating book, Paul relates the story of his discovery of the benefits of yoga to address a chronic physical ailment and his immersion in yogic philosophy. He describes his experience of life in a spiritual community, the Raj School of Yoga, first in urban Melbourne and then in regional Queensland. He talks of a guru, authoritative teachings, ritual practices, ascetic values, and assorted fellow travellers. He observes how he and others felt intense devotion to their guru and suspended critical evaluation of his teachings, ethics and personal lifestyle. And he records his growing unease at apparent inconsistencies and contradictions, culminating in his decision to leave the community.

But that is only part of the story. Paul also writes frankly about his emotional wounds on leaving the community, later events involving the guru and his followers and his experience of the Ash Wednesday bushfires in 1983. He also examines his guru's lifestyle and teachings in the context of other forms of yoga and discusses the role of spiritual forces in yoga. In contrast to the preference for communal living, he shows the importance of the traditional family for social cohesion and community health. Importantly, he contrasts various elements of his experience with yogic philosophy, with his understanding of a biblical worldview, demonstrating the coherence and comprehensiveness of the latter.

Each of us is on a journey in search of truth and meaning. We all seek to live for some noble or rewarding purpose. We all yearn for hope in the face of daunting challenges, light in the midst of personal darkness. This is part of what it means to identify as a human person. In his spiritual quest, Paul Reid has become convinced that Jesus Christ is the ultimate reality.

As you read this book, it is my hope that you will be inspired to carefully re-examine the life and teachings of Jesus, and to reconsider the extraordinary claims and promises that Jesus made. But more than that, I encourage you to make it personal: like Paul, to take the plunge and experience ultimate reality for yourself and then share your discovery with others who need to hear.

Rod Benson
Director, Centre for Christian Ethics
Morling College, Sydney, Australia

Introduction

Australia, with its strict defamation laws, coupled with the average Aussie's scepticism regarding things spiritual, has made this nation fertile ground for cults. Some cults are immediately recognizable. They do not concern me as much as those of the more subtle variety. I offer this book out of concern for the thousands of disillusioned but otherwise ordinary people seeking meaning and purpose in their lives. Opportunistic gurus, whose guidance is promoted as beneficial, but in my experience detrimental, can all too easily ensnare these genuine seekers. I know; I fell under the spell of such a guru.

To some degree, gurus as a class are just as much "victims" of deception as their followers. They may have different methods to attract followers, but I believe that many display motives that are ultimately self-serving. Appearing as holy men and intellectual giants, the keepers of secret knowledge, they promote concern for the spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of those in their care. The seeker's deep desire for spiritual fulfilment makes them vulnerable to exploitation.

Where are they leading us? Is their path to nirvana valid? Do indeed many paths lead to Rome? Can all they teach be false? Is there such a thing as absolute truth? What follows is my very personal story. The conclusions I draw are my personal conclusions. I have learned them the hard way – many of my fellow compatriots suffering even more. This story is my story; a record of events that personally affected my life. However, in order not to defame anyone and to protect those who are still deeply hurting, all names of followers, students, organizations and places, as well as dates and extraneous details connected to the life of the guru, have been changed.

My solemn wish is that you the reader will not blindly accept my conclusions; they are only my opinions (based on my first-hand observation and experience), and I offer them in the public interest. Check them out for yourself. Just as any guru should not dictate regarding your life, nor should I. Examine, test and investigate all I have written. You are responsible for what you believe; where you spend eternity may just depend on it.

Paul Reid

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Chapter 1

Shattered Peace

I was surrounded by silence. My whole being was focussed on the sound of barely audible, rhythmic breathing. Inhaling.. and.. exhaling. Inhaling.. and.. exhaling. Forty yoga students sat together in silence. Time had stopped. This was our preparation for the guru's arrival. We sat cross-legged on the soft, carpeted floor, the smell of incense hanging in the air.

Presently, a tall, slim figure, a Hindu and Brahmin, strode into the room. His movements were limber and loose, his countenance conveyed authority and aloofness, his penetrating eyes unsettling, his smile reassuring. He took his place of privilege on the slightly elevated platform, just large enough for the traditional lotus pose of a yogi. Hanging onto every word that fell from his lips, our minds were caught up to otherworldly places, as we followed intently the wisdom flowing from the bearded holy man. Entranced by his spiritual revelations, comforted by waves of radiating kindness, he was the object of our adoration. This was our weekly men's class, and as usual, a special time for all.

Without warning, raised voices were heard, a commotion outside the classroom. The door to our "sanctuary" opened. All faces turned to see the perpetrator of this intrusion. To my amazement, the figure in the doorway was a fellow student, somebody we immediately recognized. The fair-haired young man was brandishing a revolver, angry and upset. The mesmeric calm of the guru's teaching was shattered. "Put it away David!" the guru said firmly, as though speaking to a person guilty of a mild misdemeanour. "I'll be out in a moment and we'll talk about the issue then." The agitated student retreated, his hostility inexplicably melting away. With a wave of his hand, the guru commanded into action those whose job it was to deal with such matters. "Just go and see what he wants. I'll deal with the matter later," he said calmly. As sudden as the threat came, it subsided. I was left puzzled. Throughout the episode, our guru had not budged from his lotus pose. He was in

control, his authority was intact, he was not perturbed one iota.

The place was a yoga school, a two-storey, century-old mansion with lofty ceilings, a grand house in the style typical of the Queen Victoria era. The location was a leafy inner suburb of Melbourne, Australia. The year was 1970 as I recall. The man, the object of our undivided attention, our guru, was Shri Jeevah Raj. Indian by birth, he came to Australia to establish “The Raj School of Yoga”. A man of immense talent, of noble bearing, he came to the West with impeccable credentials.

Yet what I had just witnessed was so utterly inconsistent with the high esteem in which we held Shri Jeevah Raj: an angry young man (a student of all people!), threatening our guru with a gun? It was incomprehensible. How could this be? How could a place of spiritual peace coexist with menacing violence? These were the thoughts that came to mind in a flash. How could this event be explained, be reconciled? However, nothing more was said of the incident; it just seemed to have not happened.

For many years it remained a mystery. Like my fellow students, my admiration for my guru grew over the following years into devotion. The incident of the gun and student was soon forgotten. Even the installation of bulletproof, double-glazing to the guru’s office raised not even a murmur of disquiet in my spirit.

Should the “alarm bells” have sounded? Had my ability to judge reality been so imperceptibly compromised that I had become blinded to reality? Did I know the real Jeevah Raj, this holy man from a world away, from a culture and religion so alluring yet so foreign? Here was a man who was inviting others to accompany him on a journey of spiritual enlightenment, appealing to those who were idealists, who wanted to improve society through ethical and moral wisdom. He was the dispenser of that wisdom, a man above all men.

I had willingly decided to follow this charismatic holy man from the East, with all my heart, mind and soul, and my purse! Little did I know at that time what dangers and disappointments lay ahead? It was to take more than a decade of service to the guru before I dared to question his actions, or doubt my commitment. As for seeing the ultimate truth of my

relationship with Jeevah Raj and his real intentions, another two decades transpired before all was revealed regarding the many strange happenings surrounding the person of Jeevah Raj.

In the meantime, an intriguing story of wealth, power and big business, a story of personal abuse, control and manipulation was to run its course, developing and maturing into an empire. Built by undoubtedly a talented and exceptional man, the empire in the end was to unravel, exposing the man of mystery to the glare of public scrutiny.

Chapter 2

The Guru and His Mission

In 1967 I graduated in architecture from the University of Melbourne, at the age of twenty-five. Without warning I started to experience severe eye muscle spasms. It soon became a chronic complaint, never letting up. Reading and drawing were next to impossible. The resulting lack of stereoscopic vision was a real handicap and headaches were the norm. Out of desperation I resorted to wearing an eye-patch, which was really a stopgap measure, and very unsatisfactory for my chosen profession of architecture. Eye muscle surgery offered the possibility of a more complete remedy, which was attempted with four operations, but to no avail. It was then suggested that yoga might help, so I decided to give it a go. "I had nothing to lose", I thought, and I just might get healed by doing those eye movement exercises I had heard about.

Right from our first meeting, Jeevah Raj the mystic captivated me, such was his charisma and hypnotic aura. I could see why some considered him a "Christ-like" figure! Jeevah Raj, the son of the founder of the Madras Ashram for Yoga Research in India, came from a highly revered family, steeped in the yoga tradition of simplicity and humility. His father, esteemed yogi and teacher, was recognized throughout India. He had simplified the practices of the Patanjali yoga tradition for export to the West. This tradition propounded mastery over worldly desires through the practice of detachment and self-discipline, leading to spiritual wisdom and ultimately self-realization. Jeevah Raj was surely destined to walk in his father's footsteps and to carry out his father's mission to bring a codified system of yoga to the West.

It was in the late 1960s that Jeevah Raj set up the "Raj School of Yoga" in Melbourne, Australia, thus taking the first step in introducing his father's teaching to the West. Jeevah Raj attracted many recruits to his school by conducting yoga classes at the university, where there was a

steady stream of students seeking after things spiritual. Their idealism was typical of university students throughout the Western world at that time. The late '60s were well and truly the "Age of Aquarius"; the Beatles were top of the charts, the constraints of conventional thinking were being thrown to the wind, and a drug dependant, peace-seeking, hippie generation was keen to experience anything alternative. In the era of eastern philosophies, yoga was just one of the more appealing on offer.

For me, yoga held out a different promise. I was desperate for physical healing, yet it was not long before there awakened within a desire for spiritual fulfilment in my life. To have met a genuine guru, all the way from India, now resident here in sleepy Australia, offering enlightenment! "What an opportunity, what a privilege!" I thought. However, a very different story was to be set in motion, which remained hidden from his students for decades. Was a simple life of self-denial and humility really the path desired by the guru? With the benefit of hindsight I can only conclude he secretly aspired to a much grander lifestyle. This was not something any of his students could have ever imagined; perhaps not even the guru himself was aware of his secret longing?

It was 1969 when I first met Jeevah Raj. As with everyone, he introduced himself as simply "Jeevah". He had a following of several hundred students, all convinced of the privilege of sitting under the teaching of an exceptional man. For us, every word he uttered was a pearl of wisdom. Coming to his weekly meetings, or consulting him one to one on troubling issues, we always took his advice eagerly: how to find contentment, how to make money, how to live, where to live, who to marry, the meaning of life and the afterlife. A man of great wisdom, patience and kindness, universally regarded as a humble man with a direct line to God.

Projecting an aristocratic air, Jeevah was a commanding figure, with a ready smile and a piercing gaze. His manner exuded confidence in a quiet and remote way. Possessing amazing intuitive powers, he was a master at managing people. Never did I see him fazed by anything, or in a situation that made him self-conscious.

His dress was in stark contrast to the stereotypical Indian holy man in brilliant orange silk robes with painted forehead. Jeevah's manner

never conveyed anything overtly religious. He was a very presentable and impressive person for the Westerner. He was smart and cool. Dressed in the western way he was non-threatening, with a dignified presence. This made the yoga package very presentable to the western mind, devoid of religious symbols. The cultural gulf was thereby minimized. Yet he still conveyed enormous persuasiveness and spiritual power. Some were attracted by his magnetic charisma, while others found it disconcerting. Either way, meeting Jeevah made an indelible impression.

Jeevah was a person of influence who attracted the well-educated and moneyed. Our teacher was handsome and hypnotic, and claimed to have been an advisor to the former Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. He also influenced political and business leaders in high positions in Australia and gave me the impression he was an important player on the world stage. He attracted the support of both former and current State premiers, federal ministers and members of parliament in Canberra, a high court judge and the rich and famous in general. Jeevah also had an uncanny ability to start businesses of all kinds, to be run by those who followed him, his yoga students, in order to finance the plans and projects he envisaged.

My reason for attending The Raj School of Yoga - to find a physical healing-was a common reason shared by many students. Their pressing needs included overcoming drug addiction, cancer, heart disease, and asthma among others. Then there were the stress-related ailments, and the psychological ailments (guilt, anger, fear, and anxiety). Jeevah also conducted yoga classes for the benefit of the inmates at the main city prison, where drug addiction was rife. Similarly, his classes held at the universities restored many students to health, giving them lives of purpose and an eagerness to absorb his special knowledge. With such outstanding credentials and an engrossing storytelling ability, he was able to attract many followers.

The ultimate purpose for the individual in the yoga tradition is to reach "samadhi" - spiritual self-realization, achieving oneness with the universal cosmic consciousness. This was the goal of the special knowledge taught by Jeevah. Although Jeevah's yoga instruction was said to be devoid of spiritual techniques like the chanting of mantras, the meditation we practiced (known as 'conditioning') had spiritual

overtones. True yoga is derived from Hinduism. Meditation in the Hindu tradition concentrates on the forces within the spinal column. These forces bring the person into a state of expanded consciousness. Conditioning preceded the yoga physical practices and centred the mind on controlled breathing.

This is what yoga says about itself. To quote Timothy Burgin, founder of "Yoga Basics", Asheville, USA:

*"The ancient yogis tell us that to reach the goal of yoga we must dissolve our egocentric nature and let go of our constant identification with ourselves. To do this, the sage, Patanjali tells us to devote ourselves to the pursuit of yoga while dedicating the fruits from our practice to a higher power. While this sounds serious and solemn, it is quite simple, easy and delightful to apply. As you sit and centre yourself before your yoga practice, take a moment to allow an intention to arise in your mind's eye. This can be your concept of God. Through this simple act of intention and dedication, our yoga practice becomes sacred."*¹

Jeevah himself was fatalistic and believed in karma, the Hindu belief that what will be, will be. This belief can influence one's behaviour, as demonstrated by the following event. One day I was travelling with Jeevah as a passenger in his car. For a mere student to be so invited was indeed a rare privilege not to be underestimated. Jeevah's car was also very desirable; a beautifully restored, fifteen-year-old Bentley, it conveyed an obvious aristocratic air, its two-tone silver paintwork and leather upholstery setting it apart. But very quickly I became alarmed at the way he was driving. Using his supreme self-confidence, he calmly wove his way through the thick traffic.

Our car, not small by any measure, seemed to force openings between cars where no opening existed, and without the use of the horn! Like the sharp, knife-edge bow of a warship, we cut through the waves of cars as though destiny was on our side. Across lines of traffic our progress was miraculously unimpeded. Whether by supernatural power, or by sheer bravado (whose origins lie somewhere else, probably on the Indian sub-continent), I couldn't hazard a guess. Despite their obvious anger, all other drivers deferred to the superior presence of the Bentley. Seated in the front, I felt the full force of their

hostile glares and was beside myself with embarrassment.

“Don’t worry,” said Jeevah. “We are protected. We won’t die no matter how I drive.”

My agonies with maniacal driving extended to his adoring students too. Jeevah’s idiosyncratic ways and mannerisms, far from being off-putting, were for some of his students to be emulated, so beards and classic cars proliferated.

Somehow I put these strange experiences aside and remained a great admirer of the man; Jeevah could really attract followers. The initial attraction to the guru was of course his personal charisma, and then his depth of wisdom for personal living. I was very attracted to the prospect of “spiritual fulfillment” (although without really knowing what that meant) and a deeper sense of purpose for life, as well as health and happiness.

Jeevah’s vision extended beyond merely the spiritual destiny of the individual. He had a plan to change society. His vehicle for this was his “Institute for Wellbeing and Scholarship”, set up in the 1970s. John, a student of Jeevah’s, made the work of the Institute possible. John was a generous philanthropist and Melbourne businessman, who financed the multi-faceted undertakings of the Institute.

The key aim of the Institute and a central theme to all of Jeevah’s teaching, was to formulate “The Blueprint for Living”, as he called it. The Institute was to provide a forum for the sharing of the many, diverse opinions on his theme, found in the various philosophical, cultural and spiritual traditions of the world, with the goal to define the ideal. Invited guest teachers and eminent scholars representing all these philosophies and traditions shared their insights at seminars and symposia. The general public, as well as professionals in their own fields, would be invited to question them on application of their knowledge and insight.

Jeevah explained that humanity has not yet made much progress towards its final destiny of self-realization and unity with the benevolent forces of nature. He believed that moral and spiritual values, essential to human growth, were virtually non-existent. For Jeevah, the key to

human progress was education, which should be reconstructed to enable society to improve itself, to reach the ideal.

Because Jeevah believed that disease could come about through the human mind and the way people thought, a congress was held with the theme “Man: His Mind, His Health”. International speakers on health and wellbeing from various world traditions came together to promote the advancement of knowledge. Ayurveda (traditional Indian medicine) and other alternative medical systems were represented. The staging of these events required the devoted support of a dedicated band of willing workers (Jeevah’s students) and in this regard there was no short supply.

It was Jeevah’s vision to eventually hold these international meetings at a purpose-built conference centre to be built in an idyllic rural setting, about two hour’s drive from Melbourne. Being aware of my architectural training, he asked me to put pen to paper and “materialize” his vision. Jeevah described the vision he had for the auditorium; it sounded like a spaceship, a hemisphere crowned with a very tall, tapering spire. I faithfully reproduced his ideas in sketch form; what a fanciful and strikingly unusual building! To be located on a hill in the midst of lush green rolling countryside, its spire soared into the heavens. However, this swirling, curving creation remained a fantasy, never to be realized. Instead, as a result of a mystical experience, Jeevah was to reveal a dramatic redirection for the organization he was creating.

Also part of the Institute’s work was a primary school in an inner Melbourne suburb. Called the Holistic School of Education, it catered for pupils aged 5 to 12 years, who received the highest standard of education. It was a non-profit, low-fee paying school with one dedicated teacher for each six students. Its aim was to provide the best of emotional and spiritual education. Spirituality in this sense may be defined as spirituality devoid of religious symbols, focussed on morality derived from humanism. The aim was to improve the human condition through the advancement of the ethical and higher self. At the time, I was only vaguely aware of this deeper meaning; yoga is derived from the Sanskrit word meaning ‘to yoke with the divinity’. By divinity is meant the universal divine essence (a force, not a person called God), and yoga is the means by which mankind can merge with this universal essence.

As students we considered Jeevah a visionary without equal. To actually be able to meet with him, one to one, to receive his personal attention, to discuss life's most difficult and personal problems, was an opportunity of a lifetime. As a philosopher we held him in high regard and through his wisdom and teaching, spiritual enlightenment could be realized. It was therefore our privilege to be associated with him and to be part of his visionary work. Such was our trust, what he said was invariably followed without question. His word was obeyed and regarded as faultless. Rather than considering ourselves as servants, we viewed ourselves as the recipients of a great benefactor. To be a follower was an honour.

Endnote:

1. www.yogabasics.com, Newsletter no.60, Feb 2006

Chapter 3

The Lives of the Followers

Some of Jeevah's yoga students showed extraordinary devotion, beyond that normally understood by any student/teacher relationship. Although initially we as yoga students came into the yoga school for reasons of personal growth, some would catch the vision for something greater. I was not alone in being attracted by his charisma, which grew into a conviction that Jeevah had profound insight into human beings and life. As a community of purpose, excited by being part of his work, we were in the vanguard of setting up a new and better way of life that was important to the future of humanity.

"Follower" is my term for those who were intimately involved with the fulfillment of this vision. And what a mighty organization it was to become. The original Raj School of Yoga was the 'seed' from which this organization grew. The 'seed', sown in a fertile soil (spiritually hungry minds of young adults), took root and quickly grew into a mighty 'tree'. The 'tree' had a superstructure of many branches. These were peripheral to the supporting trunk, which symbolically was Jeevah, whose vision, guidance and sustaining power had its roots in the 'soil' of yoga.

So with time, a complex, multi-faceted organization grew up, encompassing: the Raj School of Yoga, the School for Holistic Education, the Institute for Wellbeing and Scholarship, and a whole array of businesses and companies whose *raison d'être* was to help finance the work of the "Organization". At the core of the so-called Organization was a noble philosophy: the world was in dire need of overhaul in the areas of medicine, physical and emotional health, education, ethics and values (moral and spiritual). This gave birth to some very admirable, if not utopian, institutions and businesses and the pursuit of moneymaking activities. Schools for primary and secondary

children were set up. Seminars, workshops, and the occasional congress were held for the propagation of the vision.

Needless to say, a veritable army of dedicated, loyal, indefatigable workers was required to run the Organization, under the meticulous direction of Jeevah. Many were professional people; some at the top of their field, others not so exalted. Regardless, they were a very impressive group of individuals, with a broad range of talents, skills and knowledge valuable to the cause. Some had made their mark as business entrepreneurs, others were people of influence and connection. Still others, whose health had improved due to yoga, had great admiration for Jeevah. We were part of a team, spanning many occupations. There were plumbers, carpenters, electricians, business people, scientists, doctors, dentists and other health professionals, teachers, journalists, financiers, philanthropists, public servants, and architects. Even politicians were attracted to Jeevah.

To finance the work of the Organization, business enterprises were set up. One of the followers came from a family already established in the health food industry. With his knowledge, the follower set up a health food shop, the first of many. This was the forerunner of what was to become a national chain. Along with other students, I had a role to play in the conversion of a shop into the proposed bakery, preparing the plans for the building works. Another source of income for the Organization was derived from a medical clinic run by doctors who were also yoga students. The clinic incorporated Indian medical techniques thought by Jeevah to be beneficial and complementary to western medicine. Such a clinic was to be a prototype for future clinics, as more doctors joined Jeevah's Organization, subsidizing his work and providing an outlet for the promotion of Jeevah's personal medical knowledge.

Whether rich or poor, unknown or well known, whether expert or rank beginner, what mattered was the preparedness to serve. We were part of Jeevah's vision for humanity and were entrusted to carry out such plans; each person with his own skills was harnessed to work for the common good. We had answered the call to duty. We were the followers.

Sacrifice was very much the essence of this call. The followers

sacrificed personal freedoms normally taken for granted. For example, some of the single men lived in yoga houses, set up exclusively for the men students. Likewise, the women lived together in their house. This communal living was to encourage mutual support and to reinforce unity of values and attitudes. Living in a yoga house was by no means permanent of course, as a young man's desire to marry and naturally leave the yoga house was just as much a decision for Jeevah as for the young man seeking a permanent partner. To marry within the yoga community was assumed. The choice of the prospective spouse was again another matter for consultation with Jeevah. Placed in this same position myself, I vividly recall Jeevah informing me that the young lady I was considering was "already taken, promised to another".

I found life at the yoga house an intensely lonely experience. Coming from a conventional nuclear family that was inherently stable, I missed the warmth and variety common to such families, in which complementary dynamics were in play. This contrasted with the highly focussed and one-dimensional yoga house, which, akin to a boarding house, had an essentially transitory nature. Yet many thought the sacrifice was worth it.

Because his opinion was held in awe, Jeevah's counsel was sought on a whole host of matters: which course of study to take, what would be an appropriate career, how to prosper in what sort of business, how to resolve interpersonal relationship problems, and so on. We believed we were privileged to have Jeevah's counsel. His view on all matters was vital. To the outsider, no doubt, this would look like dependency, the sacrifice of a basic freedom such as personal autonomy. However, I saw nothing wrong. Neither did my colleagues. After all, Jeevah was no mere mortal.

For some, the sacrifices were readily acknowledged and gladly made. Joining Jeevah's Organization was a deliberate decision, these individuals being fully aware of what they were giving up. Most had come from a coveted position with a high salary and reputation. But for them, having been exposed to the values of the world, (business, politics, government, and academia), Jeevah had something the world did not: vision! To follow Jeevah meant having a vision and a purpose for one's life. Even though their role changed from a position of power and leadership, to one of servitude, having a vision made all the

difference. One young man from an illustrious family, well known to any Australian due to its well-deserved entrepreneurial activities over many generations, put it this way. “You might think that I’ve got it made: the family name, the fame, the fortune; but where’s the vision? Jeevah offered me a vision. He was not in the business of creating money, but of creating people; people who could show others how to be truly fulfilled human beings”.

Self-denial and discipline governed our personal lives. This was the underlying principle of the yoga philosophy. That is, to cultivate the higher self and to sublimate the attachments to worldly desire. In reality, this meant rising at 5 a.m., starting with meditation, followed by physical practices to ready the mind and body for the day’s activities. Our meditation, known as ‘conditioning’, conditioned the person for the day’s activities and focused the person on the yoga ideal. Life was austere, with no emphasis on entertainment or worldly distractions. Working for the yoga community was our focus.

The followers had many opportunities to give to the common good. Weekend working bees were held, helping to keep the Organization running smoothly. This generosity also extended to outside the Organization. Each winter the followers provided the manpower to deliver hot meals and firewood to the needy. Wherever chores were waiting, the volunteer workforce was called upon. Lawns had to be mown, gardens weeded and trimmed, buildings required continuous maintenance (even renovation or conversion for other purposes), and international guests needed to be collected from the airport. The volunteers were never out of a job!

Most of the followers were unpaid, volunteering whatever time they could afford. Probably most of the “inner core” people, those with full-time positions (yoga teachers, office staff etc.) received salaries to the best of my knowledge. But generally, the attitude was one of giving to a worthy cause, meaning we worked for no pay. This could even mean enormous hours for years. This was my situation, which I happily accepted. As an architect, I was called upon to do many and varied designs for the Raj School of Yoga and for the School of Holistic Education. Since coming to Australia, Jeevah had married an Australian lady, and I was called upon to design their family hideaway in the countryside.

I was one of many who answered the call to convert a two-storey warehouse into premises suitable for the Institute. With an army of Jeevah's enthusiastic student volunteers, the conversion had its moments of high drama. When a super-abundance of highly motivated "labourers" get to work in such close quarters, this should not have been entirely unexpected. I recall all too well a particular event. The task was to make a receptionist's office under the staircase, which lead to the upper floor. The walls around the staircase supported the entire upper level and roof. Therefore, as the stairwell was vital to the structural integrity of the building, I advised only a modest opening be cut in the masonry wall under the staircase. But before I knew it, the enthusiasm of the demolishers produced so large an opening that there was a real danger of imminent and catastrophic collapse. In the nick of time, with the aid of temporary props, a disaster was averted.

To the observer, this hive of activity would seem impressive, if not strange. The obvious zeal for serving displayed by the followers, dedicated to a vision, directed to someone higher was remarkable. They were the backbone of the yoga community. With unity of purpose, the followers were like drones in a beehive. Each devoted worker was busy with his assigned task, obedient to the 'royal bee'. The outsider might wonder, "But just how could more than one hundred people follow the explicit directions of one man? How could one man have so much influence over every detail of our personal lives? Why would I give up my personal comfort and income just to serve in a community of vision? Was our belief in his infallibility justified? Did he have a direct line to God"?

But being on the inside, these questions did not seem to come to mind. The community was like a world of its own, each of us gaining strength and security from our fellow members and particularly our leader. For a few, admiration of Jeevah grew into imitation of Jeevah, even dressing like Jeevah. Had they become clones? None of the followers thought so; we did not seem to question our lifestyle or think our loss of personal freedom strange.

The community that Jeevah had brought together was sometimes put to the test. At one time a student was doing major repairs to his motor vehicle. This was taking place at home in his garage alongside the

house. The petrol tank was involved. Somehow unnoticed, petrol started to leak out very, very slowly over some hours. Finding its way out of the garage, flowing down the paving, all the time being conveyed by the continuous groove in the concrete paving, it was now many metres from its source. As the petrol flowed, its vapours filled the open but unoccupied house. The “fuse” was primed and awaiting ignition. As night follows day, the inevitable explosion took place. The petrol tank, the car, the garage and the house, in quick time left the scene, never to be seen again. Somehow the surprised “mechanics” escaped to tell their story.

As the homeless “mechanic” was a yoga student, I was asked by Jeevah to come to the aid of the poor, unfortunate family. It was explained that due to their impoverished predicament, could I offer my services free of charge. I agreed to help preparing the necessary plans for the new house, representing a gift of perhaps a thousand dollars. The house was built. Then, some twelve months later, the ‘impoverished’ student bought himself a cabin cruiser.

Was my generosity taken advantage of? Only much later did I see that my free will to be generous was compromised by my eagerness to please my guru; to do his will, not my own.

Chapter 4

The End of the World

In the late 1970s Jeevah was visited by a vision. The vision was to have such powerful consequences that I can only presume it was not just a feeling or a fleeting “hunch”. Rather it must have been an apparition of such impact, held with such conviction that it had to be acted upon. As a consequence, the lives of Jeevah’s followers were about to be turned upside down. And the vision: Melbourne, population three million, a major metropolis by any standard, was facing extinction.

He may have read the prophecy of Nostradamus (French astrologer 1503-1566):

*“In the year 1999 and seven months,
From the sky will come the great king of terror,
Before and afterwards war reigns happily.”*

In Australia at that time there was general community concern regarding nuclear global war. Jeevah shared his vision of “Melbourne being consumed by a nuclear inferno”, coupled with “gigantic walls of water from the Pacific Ocean laying waste to coastal population centres”. He believed that certain parts of Queensland could provide a safe haven in the event of a nuclear war. Jeevah was following the advice of nuclear war analysts in the U.S., some of whom took their own advice, leaving America to settle in Queensland. Jeevah, too, decided to act on his vision. During meditation, the name of a particular rural town came to him. It was decided that this very out-of-the-way small town, unknown to most, was to be the new location for the whole operation; it was to be our safe haven. Its name was Beaumont.

As the Organization’s architect I was asked to fly to Queensland to familiarize myself with the town. The relocation meant much design work on my part. Situated in a cattle grazing district, the small country town, population ten thousand, was located about 150 km. (ninety miles) inland from a large coastal city. Jeevah explained how the town’s geographic location made it doomsday-proof, being a world-away from

the urban sprawl that hugs the Pacific seaboard. Driving from the coast, the road to the town is a difficult one, climbing up into the Great Dividing Range that is a formidable barrier to entering the interior of the continent. A mountain looms so large that the road seems to be headed for an abrupt halt, the sheer rock walls denying passage. Then, quite suddenly, the way through to the other side materializes. Once through the pass, leaving the semi-tropical vegetation behind, the road descends rapidly to the town, and the hot, dry plains so typical of the inland. Unlike the glitz and glamour so conspicuous on the coast, the future home for the yoga community was a sleepy town from another era.

Beaumont existed to serve the surrounding farming population, who not surprisingly held conservative if not old-fashioned attitudes (not necessarily a bad thing at all!). Unlike the coastal dwellers that could enjoy the climatic influences afforded by the Pacific Ocean, Beaumont in summer endured searing heat and hot winds from the inland, sometimes dust storms, while winter nights spawned biting cold, frosty mornings. The followers, coming as they did from cosmopolitan Melbourne, a bayside metropolis replete with a whole variety of cultural, sporting activities and amusements, and blessed with a mild climate as well, understandably might consider Beaumont a bit out-of-the way, even the end of the world? However, this was the very reason why it was so suitable. Jeevah once reassured me that these very features were the town's strengths; its remoteness to population centres and its location behind a mountain range, were superb impediments to the destructive power of war or tsunamis, and the resultant social chaos and upheaval associated with catastrophic events. Located in the sparsely populated inland, I could see the logic of his reasoning, even if with a certain reluctance.

Meanwhile, back in Melbourne I was busy with designing the houses for those moving to Beaumont. I had much time to ponder my own position; would I too move one day? It all hinged on how seriously I took Jeevah's vision of looming catastrophe. The gravity of the impending global catastrophe was a reality for Jeevah. Not only was he prepared to uproot what he had built, and to re-establish the operation two thousand kilometres (1200 miles) away, but his concern went as far as nuclear bomb shelters. He made this concern known to me. I was asked to inquire how such shelters were built. From my investigations, met

with skepticism from some authorities, I was able to put together material from the Commonwealth Department of Defence, and the Home Office in the U.K. I then awaited Jeevah's instructions.

The motivation for the relocation to Queensland was not only the survival of human life, however, but the survival of Jeevah's precious and idealistic plans. It was imperative that the Organization survives any global catastrophe. This would enable the survivors to reform some kind of post-industrial society. Jeevah's followers would be part of this relocation and would set up a self-sufficient, rural community and establish a school that would be unique, providing a holistic educational model for the world to follow. Many followers responded to this challenge as a rare opportunity to be in the vanguard of a movement, whose ideals would have a profound impact on future human advancement.

Chapter 5

Beaumont Beckons

In Melbourne, Jeevah and his inner-circle of followers were busy with early planning for the relocation to Queensland. As for the building designs, we were now a two-man team. Simon, an architect and follower of Jeevah, joined me. As I had a full-time day job with a firm of architects, I mainly worked for Jeevah in the evenings. Among Jeevah's projects were a variety of houses, including Jeevah's own home, a primary school and a conference centre. I embarked on the design work under Jeevah's instructions. Another follower, a structural engineer, was also part of our team.

In 1979 the first followers began moving to Beaumont. The Queensland community was set up at two locations, each with its own specific purpose and rationale: the country town of Beaumont; and a secluded farm, 20 km (12 miles) out of town at a place called Mindi Valley.

Those yoga followers not invited by Jeevah to live on the secluded farm, settled in the town itself. While a few families bought houses wherever they found one for sale, most of the town-dwellers took up residence in a purpose-built cluster housing development, which the design team and I had designed back in Melbourne. The "village", as it came to be known, consisted of eight houses and was located on an urban site, formerly used by a timber merchant. Just ten minutes walk from the "yoga village", located on the edge of this small town, was the School of Holistic Education; its first stage was to be completed at the same time as the village houses. The school was for the children of the yoga community and the general community too, at first catering for primary aged pupils, then later expanding to secondary. The site was generous enough to contain the proposed conference centre, the venue for international health symposia. The balance of the town-dwellers, the single men and the single women, lived in separate "yoga houses", as was the custom in Melbourne.

The aim of the yoga community was to integrate into the life of the town,

including business life. A variety of retail business and professional services were set up. These included a medical clinic; a health food store for organic produce (groceries, fruit and vegetables) as well as a bakery, all under the same roof. This “organic produce emporium” was the prototype of what was to become a national franchise chain. Other businesses envisaged included: the manufacturer of solar panels, voltaic cells and wind turbines for the generation of electricity; a construction company and a property development company. There were also other businesses in the developmental stage, all encouraged, if not inspired, by Jeevah. These examples reveal the Organization’s broad intellectual and business prowess. Whatever the skills the followers brought with them, these were the potential new businesses that could be established for the advancement of Jeevah’s vision. For the income generated by the followers from their business activity would help finance the work of the Organization.

My design work for the Queensland community continued apace, but from Melbourne. My efforts were mainly focussed on the design for the conference centre. The building was octagonal in plan. The auditorium, crowned by a dome, was to have seating for an audience of five hundred. A ring of meeting rooms for small workshop gatherings surrounded the auditorium.

The second site for the influx to Queensland, the self-sufficiency farm, was an essential part of the plan for survival; it was envisioned that crops would be grown there, as a source of food in the event of an emergency. It was to be home for at least half a dozen families, including Jeevah, his wife Ann and their four children. As Jeevah had explained, in times of great social unrest leading to perhaps breakdown of law and order, the farm would serve as a refuge for the yoga community. With probable shortages of food, fuel and power, and difficulties with communications and transport, the farm was really the final fallback position, the position of last resort when the going got really tough.

As the plans for relocation gained momentum, I was aware of becoming caught up in the magnitude of the vision. These were indeed heady days, even if tinged with unreality. But with Jeevah at the helm, the “ship” would surely make it to port; the move to Beaumont could be accomplished.

Jeevah governed the Organization in his own way, some might say in a dictatorial way. Due to his supreme self-confidence, he was definitely the commander-in-chief and the ultimate authority. I didn't question his tendency to make decisions while on the run, which often left me feeling his decisions were ill considered. Every matter, no matter how trivial, was subject to his critical comment. Sometimes his instructions to me regarding building matters seemed quite harebrained. Nevertheless, I accepted his decisions and would always acquiesce to his superior authority. Others might see Jeevah's executive style as proof of his great intuitive thinking, and the sign of a genius at work. Regardless, when in Jeevah's presence, I always deferred to his point of view; I believe most followers did the same.

By the end of 1980, Jeevah himself had left Melbourne permanently to take up residence in Queensland. Except for the conference centre, all buildings were completed and occupied, and most of the migration had occurred. Back in Melbourne, my work for the Organization had petered out. Like all those left behind, I was hearing news from up north, which only added to my feelings of "abandonment". I began to ponder my isolation; did I want to permanently stay behind, separated from all the action? I believed it would be my decision; I would not be unwelcome. Jeevah had created an ambitious enterprise, and his plans were a work in progress. I was beginning to feel attracted to the life up north, to be part of the move to Beaumont. An extraordinary community was being built under the inspiration and control of one man, a man of utopian vision and profound wisdom. Jeevah's admirers were prepared to work hard, to make financial and personal sacrifice to see the vision become a reality. But was I prepared to do the same? It was a daunting, yet alluring, prospect.

At the age of thirty-nine and still single, my life to date had been consumed by the mission of Jeevah's Organization, and of course my profession of architecture. I loved design and found the building of my own house in the country, into which I had just moved, very rewarding. Despite my house being a modest weekender, it was the opportunity any architect dreams of; to design his own house, without the constraints that naturally come with having a client who, of course, pays your fees! The site was very steep and strewn with magnificent boulders, some a good arm stretch across. One such cluster of

boulders presented quite a challenge, being right in the middle of where I wanted the house. But then the answer came to me. Rather than blasting this beautiful work of natural “art”, the boulders became an asset by designing the house around them, incorporating a fireplace within the cluster.

Even though my house was something precious to me, and I barely had had time to enjoy it, I was now giving serious thought to leaving it behind. I was now faced with the proposition, should I stay behind in Melbourne, while the rest of the followers made their home in Queensland, or should I throw in my lot and really become a follower?

Inside a battle was raging. Not to be part of the relocated Organization, I would surely be isolated and without purpose. To be part of the Organization on the other hand would provide security and a shared purpose, which satisfied my idealism and give purpose to my life. Even though I was swinging in my decision, desperate to find the necessary strength of commitment, in the end I decided to make the move, to sell my house, resign my position with the architectural firm, and moved to Queensland to join the community. It was September 1982.

Chapter 6

Disillusionment

With trailer in tow, containing the sum total of my worldly possessions: bed, armchair, architect's drawing board and stool, books and some clothes, I left Melbourne to drive to central Queensland. I was joining the yoga community! The journey would take at least four days of constant driving, just stopping at night. It was springtime in Australia and although apprehensive, I was looking forward to new things, a new season in my life.

Arriving at Beaumont, I was billeted at the yoga house for single men. Space was found for my drawing board and I was ready to get back into serving Jeevah as before. My immediate responsibility as architect was to continue with the design of the conference centre. As for the completed projects, I soon had the opportunity to see the finished buildings at first hand, the major one I had designed being Jeevah's own home at Mindi Valley. His 200-acre property was in reality a hideaway, a refuge offering the utmost safety in the event of nuclear war and the threat of social dislocation, criminal violence, and food shortages.

The drive to Mindi Valley was through farming country at first. Curving gently, the narrow road was essentially a gravel road with a strip of bitumen up the middle, barely adequate for one car. With frequent dips and blind crests, great caution was needed. When meeting an on-coming car, both cars had to move to the gravel.

Open farmland gave way to more frequent scruffy eucalyptus stands. Soon the bitumen petered out. The gravel surface meant any approaching vehicle was only visible as an enveloping cloud of choking dust. The car windows had to be wound up quickly; better to endure stifling heat than being suffocated by the dust! At the moment of passing, each car would be driving blind until through the dust cloud.

When you came across a house, which was not often, I noticed it was

made from weatherboard siding and usually dilapidated. Some were beyond habitation, having been abandoned to the harsh elements. In any case they were certainly humble abodes, lacking any greenery that would gladly offer much-welcomed relief; no evidence of gardening here. Rather, from front door to horizon, nothing but what nature provided. For the city-dweller, this was indeed an isolated part of the world; forgotten by time, treated harshly by a climate of extremes.

No group of buildings marked the spot. Mindi Valley was not a specific place marked by buildings, definitely not a village; it was more a district, an address, and just a name on a map. The last kilometre to the farm was a track rather than a road. Twisting over hump and hollow, across a ford, a gate had to be opened and then shut behind us, even though this was still a public road. How much further to the back-of-beyond? Then quite suddenly, around a bend, another gate loomed, barring the way. The attached sign announced "Private Road". Ominously, a security camera, perched on a post, recorded everyone's arrival. Why were our movements being monitored?

This was a place chosen for its remoteness, a place that was literally at the end of the road, being at the upper end of a valley. There was nowhere to go beyond Jeevah's property; the way out was the way one came in. Mount Sterling dominated the hills that closed in on three sides. From these hills the Mindi Creek made its way through the property. Along the banks lived giant monitor lizards. These goannas grow to over a metre and a half long (5 feet). Armed with a long tail capable of inflicting a heavy blow, their snake-like tongue flicks in and out contributing to an air of menace. Despite my love for country life, I found the farm unsettling, leaving me with a feeling of being in the wrong place, of being trapped. Was my anxiety justified or imagined?

Entering "The Farm", as it became known to the yoga community, driving through undulating grassland with stands of eucalypts, one soon came across five recently-built houses, all very similar and in close proximity to one another. Each was of the typical "Early Queenslander" style, perching very high on stilts to catch every cool breeze, their steep, corrugated roofs extending beyond their weatherboard walls to form generous, purposely shading verandahs. Sometimes the verandahs were on all four sides and filled-in with windows made from patterned, embossed glass, an attempt to mitigate the intense glare of the mid-

summer sky. Pity you couldn't see out however.

Upon closer inspection, it was obvious these houses were in reality double houses, each especially designed for two yoga families. Each family had its own suite of bedrooms and a retreat at opposite ends of the house. The middle section was the communal area for cooking, dining and relaxation. I learned that this was in accordance with Jeevah's wishes and was achieved by buying old houses, having them transported to the site in sections, where they were re-assembled and renovated. Was this good social planning? I had my doubts; visiting the homes of these families didn't impress me. I for one would not like to live this way. Shared houses were no doubt cheaper to establish and may have helped with feelings of isolation. However, Jeevah himself chose not to live this way; why then his followers? Was the reason one of exercising control? Regardless, he directed us in all matters, and there was little room to disagree. But then why would anyone want to disagree with a man of Jeevah's exceptional insights?

Jeevah's house was about three minutes' drive from the security camera at the farm gate. Leaving the shared houses behind, as the gravel driveway starts its climb, Jeevah's brand new, modern house comes into view, its impressive form and size setting it apart. Located on a gentle rise with a steep bushland backdrop, the house had wrap-around verandahs, providing commanding views over much of the property, including the shared houses. To one side, a large fenced-off yard restrains a powerful guard dog.

The imposing exterior sets the scene for the interior decor. Even to the untrained eye, it is obvious that no expense was spared on the finishes and fittings used throughout the generous spaces. The high ceilings display their chandeliers; the glistening, black and white checkerboard floors are made from imported Italian marble; elaborate, paneled doors are adorned with solid latches; an imposing study for the reception of VIPs. Also within the house is a large meeting room where Jeevah can hold yoga classes. This is definitely a superior residence befitting a person of Jeevah's stature.

I was not the only one who had been struck by the grandeur of Jeevah's home; living in the single men's quarters where a certain confidentiality might be expected, Jeevah's extravagant mansion had been alluded to

more than a few times. In fact, for some, it was a mystery why a man who taught detachment from worldly goods and materialism should require such an imposing and obviously grand house. For one particular student, this mystery required an explanation. It was during a yoga class at Jeevah's home that I recall an inquisitive, if not courageous, student asking a pointed question: "Jeevah", the student said, his hands and eyes indicating the room in which we were sitting, "why such a grand house"? Without hesitating, Jeevah, smiling confidently, coolly answered, "One day this house will become a hospital. We need to look ahead to the future and consider the needs of others".

The student seemed satisfied. After a slight pause, Jeevah moved on to further student questions, none of which touched on the need for a hospital. Whether nobody made the connection with nuclear war - presuming they knew of Jeevah's views on the matter - or whether the students were reassured by Jeevah's answer, I can only guess.

However, such talk of casualties requiring a hospital, presumably from war, caused a wave of fear to overtake me. My mind flashed back to the nuclear bomb-shelter discussion with Jeevah, some three years earlier in Melbourne. Although there had not been any mention of the matter in the meantime, Jeevah's answer indicated the topic was still "hot". Neither Jeevah, nor indeed myself, had forgotten it. But as to the shelter's existence, I was left wondering, such was Jeevah's off-hand reply to his student. My mind became consumed by confusion, bordering on panic. So much seemed to hinge on its existence, my very survival in fact. Yet Jeevah's silence on the matter was baffling. Anxiety gripped me, right to the pit of my stomach. This was the beginning of long-lasting anxiety problems affecting not just my stomach, but constricting breathing as well.

Many years later, while pondering this incident, I wondered whether Jeevah was genuine in his concern for nuclear war, or was it a ploy, a means by which he could increase student dependence on him? After all, his future plans could determine the students' chances of survival. Were we placing our lives in his hands? But for the present, this reasoning was not yet available to me, being so caught up by Jeevah's charismatic personality. To doubt the integrity of my esteemed teacher, this exceptional person who guided my life was too much to admit, too

much to think about. My mind numbed, refusing to ponder the gravity of the situation. The possibility of being seduced by somebody who was either deluded or otherwise so scheming, was too terrible to contemplate. My stomach was telling me I was in deep trouble. A crisis of faith awaited me.

As for the nuclear fallout shelter, I was blissfully ignorant of its existence or location. It may have been already incorporated into one of the buildings, without my knowledge. My not knowing was strange in itself, but I'm sure a select few were in the know. Many years later it was rumoured amongst some yoga students that the shelter did exist and was thought to be under the school. The existence of such a shelter would naturally remain confidential, known only to a limited number of people. But as far as I was concerned, nothing more was said about the shelter. Perhaps I was never meant to know?

The ultimate purpose behind the migration to Queensland, namely to survive a global catastrophe, remained confidential to the yoga community only. I certainly cannot imagine the town's inhabitants being aware of Jeevah's doomsday vision.

Had the townsfolk known the real reason for our presence, or about the existence of a nuclear fallout shelter, the reaction would have been shock and disbelief, followed by swift and strong opposition. They would not share such a radical mindset. Fortunately for Jeevah, the lid was kept on this explosive scenario.

Back in my quarters at the single men's house, things were just not working out. I felt lonely. The general atmosphere was impersonal and institutionalized, not because of unfriendliness, but because I was living among exclusively Jeevah's followers, and therefore, life was naturally focused on the work of the Organization, to the exclusion of personal interests. Gone was my own space and my own interests: the opportunity for classical music, watching TV, going to the movies, indulging my hobbies of photography, art and learning foreign languages. With the benefit of hindsight, my career development in my chosen profession as an architect too had receded to zero.

But I was beginning to see for the first time ever that I was allowing myself to be exploited. It was a trivial matter but I resented having to

pay board for living at the men's house. As I was serving the Organization, and receiving no payment, I reasoned my board should be provided without cost. In fact, never at any time had I been paid for architectural services I provided to Jeevah. Spread over thirteen years, this was considerable! Looking back I now recognize the power of the deception I was under. However, this "exploitation" was the case for many of the followers (probably all, if only they realized!). We were not encouraged to take holidays and we worked seven days a week for the greater good. But doubts were beginning to rise up from within; was I losing my individuality, being "locked away" from mainstream society? Was my destiny to stay submerged in my current circumstances, or could I radically change my current state of affairs?

As I was now living within the yoga community, I soon heard unfavourable comments about Jeevah's mode of operation. Others had noticed Jeevah's dictatorial methods beside myself. Even so, I was surprised when I overheard a follower criticizing a decision made by Jeevah. He got little sympathy from the others, one declaring "your ego is an impediment to the guru's higher purpose". Was Jeevah keeping control of the followers by reinforcing low self-esteem?

The community was tight-knit, with an extraordinary mission and purpose. This in itself was a pressure, a pressure to conform to the way the group thought and behaved. Loyalty to the group and ultimately to Jeevah was always assumed; after all, that is why we all made the great leap of faith to uproot ourselves, to come so far at considerable personal sacrifice, in order to be involved. Inherent in this loyalty lay the potential manipulation of the individual to the advantage of the visionary and all-powerful leader. Did I have these thoughts at that time? No. But sub-consciously, yes; I was ill at ease.

I came to live as part of the community Jeevah was creating, knowing that sacrifice was required. Although unstated, there was the subtle expectation that each person put the community interest before personal interest. After a while however, I did feel intimidated by the group's enthusiasm for serving Jeevah. If I could have believed enough in the ultimate goal, I rationalized, then perhaps the necessary sacrifice would have been endurable. However, striving to be a better person, to pursue detachment from worldly desire through practicing the spiritual life, to catch a glimpse of nirvana, all seemed unattainable now. My faith

was beginning to falter and my heart was not in it. My mind was confused and dangerously approaching “shut-down” mode. But I still had to resolve my lingering doubts regarding the man, Jeevah, a man of contradictions. Jeevah was the main recipient of privilege, while the followers, some highly qualified professionals, were subjected to pointless and demeaning tasks, like heavy manual labour around the farm. To leave the Organization, I would have to overcome feelings of guilt from the perceived disloyalty, as well as the sense of having wasted so much of my life in a fruitless endeavour.

Rapidly I was being overwhelmed with feelings of doubt about my reason for being part of this community. It would only take a single negative incident to be the straw that broke the camel's back. Little did I realize that this was about to happen. It was the observation of Jeevah's treatment of a fellow student that awakened something within me, giving me the answer to my foundational question: was Jeevah really the holy man we were led to believe? It happened during a refreshment break from work at Jeevah's farm, with a handful of students sitting with Jeevah, chatting informally. The student, Tom, turning to Jeevah, politely requested leave-of-absence to make a brief visit to his parents back in Melbourne. Having overheard the question, I was so shocked with Jeevah's short, curt response. “No Tom, not at the moment”. That was it! Nothing more was said by Jeevah or Tom; the matter was decided in an instant.

Struck by Jeevah's unkindness in denying permission for Tom to visit his family had a great impact on me. It was as though my eyes had been opened for the first time in thirteen years. I started to see the real man. Jeevah was not the man I thought he was. Somehow all my feelings of admiration, holding Jeevah in such high regard, had vanished. I couldn't get away from the Organization soon enough. As though being awakened from a bad dream, the allure of Jeevah and the Organization had instantly dimmed. I was awakening from a nightmare. No longer was there any attraction. To the contrary, getting away was all I could think about. After telling Jeevah politely of my decision, and hearing his cool and calm response – “Fine, Paul. You know you're always welcome back”, I immediately left the farm, determined never to return. Driving back to my quarters in town, still feeling dazed with all that had happened barely one hour ago, I pondered Jeevah's words of farewell; so detached, so accepting! After

thirteen years of commitment, his words were devoid of gratitude or grace; certainly no thank you.

Back at my quarters in town, I packed my trailer with my belongings in readiness for an early departure the next day. It was the end of November 1982 and my attempt to assimilate into the community had lasted only three months.

The journey home was hell on earth; the road inland passed through many kilometres of very inhospitable and sparsely inhabited country. Driving solo, it was a difficult journey at the best of times. Being December however and therefore early summer, high temperatures were the norm. But this was not a normal year. Australia in general was in the grip of a five-year drought, none more so than the region in which I found myself. The crops had failed, leaving the parched soil at the mercy of the wind. High winds and temperatures of at least 46 degrees Celsius (114 degrees Fahrenheit) in the shade unleashed their fury. I drove through raging dust storms, visibility reduced to only three or four car-lengths. Driving with the lights on helped to locate an oncoming vehicle, invisible until virtually upon you. Keeping my speed down to 70 kilometres (40 miles) per hour, and peering through the eerie red haze of airborne sand, many a time I lost track of the bitumen due to the sand drifts piling up on the road. Such slow progress just prolonged the agony. It was an endurance test for car and driver. Both needed constant water supply, disaster waiting to claim a victim.

The second day of my journey home saw a moderate improvement in driving conditions. But the poor car, no doubt exhausted by the previous day's onslaught, broke down. I waved down a passing car and got a ride to the next town. There I found a mechanic willing to return to the breakdown, some thirty minutes back along the highway. Eventually I was underway again, having lost a couple of hours.

Despite struggling with monotony and fatigue, yet determined to put the Organization far behind, I pushed on driving for six solid days, until I reached my destination. I no longer had a house of my own, having sold it for the purpose of joining the Organization, so it was to my parent's home on the edge of Melbourne that I took refuge from the Organization. Of course, my parents welcomed me and although the trek home was a nightmare, I considered it liberating to be free of the

Organization. This attitude surprised even myself. One week earlier I was none the wiser of my impending change of heart. Such a reversal of affection was hard to take in.

My three-month sojourn with Jeevah's community, observing it at close quarters, had destroyed a thirteen-year love affair with a fantasy. Those left behind were caught up in this fantasy, in something that could never be attained: perfection! What Jeevah was offering was unreal and unattainable. Yoga aimed at self-imposed rectitude or moral uprightness. I believe this is impossible to achieve (I will explain why later). For me, reality had triumphed; the fantasy had been swept away. Yet the future was not to be one of victorious celebration. There were to be consequences from my recent emotional drama. Some very powerful forces were at work!

Chapter 7

Ash Wednesday

February 16th 1983 – Ash Wednesday in the church calendar.

The summer of 1983 was hotter and much dryer than usual. Like Queensland, Melbourne too was in the grip of the five-year drought. Already north winds from the hot interior of the continent had turned into dust storms, blowing right into the heart of the city of Melbourne, reducing daylight into an eerie half-light.

If any day could be erased from the calendar, Wednesday, the sixteenth of February 1983, was that day. When the day was over, many people's lives would be irreparably changed, for disaster waited in the wings.

I rose at 7 a.m. Good to get an early start on another unbearably hot day. I had only one appointment today. My architectural practice had resumed after the Queensland interruption and my diary told me I should be back mid-afternoon. My client had a beach house; perhaps I might snatch a swim before returning. Anything to help to cope with the fierce heat predicted. I was staying with my parents. They lived in Upper Beaconsfield, a place of beautiful rolling hills interspersed with bushland, in close proximity to nature (kangaroos in our garden!) and the city of Melbourne.

A 150 metre-long (500 foot-long) gravel driveway, winding through eucalypts and bush, led to the house. Their house adjoined a fern gully, the home of wombats, cockatoos, king parrots and bellbirds. Finches and humming birds came to the windows, taking the nectar from the flowers of the native bush garden. The rear of the house had the main outlook – sweeping lawns, merging into farm paddocks, led the eye to a panoramic view of distant hills. Here kangaroos grazed early morning and evening. However, we were living in the most fire-prone part of the world – hot dry summers in combination with highly combustible eucalyptus trees. Gum trees contain eucalyptus oil which burns fiercely, even more so when green. This was a recipe for uncontrollable

bushfires, so typical of south eastern Australia.

My first awareness of impending danger came as the weather bureau kept revising the forecast maximum temperature. Having breakfast I heard that it was declared a day of total fire ban and 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit) was expected. On such days the radio was vital to keep the public informed of approaching fires. As the day wore on, the expected top temperature was increased by 5 degrees. On my return journey to Upper Beaconsfield after seeing my client, the radio updated this to 42 degrees Celsius (107 degrees Fahrenheit). News bulletins gave sketchy details of very serious fires breaking out across two states, causing deaths and massive property damage. This confirmed my worst fears. We would almost certainly be caught up in this emergency.

Like all Upper Beaconsfield residents, it was urgent that I get home to put our fire plan into action. Dad had recently bought a fire-fighting pump, complete with long canvas hoses, the type used by professional fire-fighters. Wisely, he regarded his home, located in a beautiful bushland setting, as being vulnerable to wildfire.

It was 3.30 p.m. when I got home. The thermometer was indicating 44 degrees Celsius (111 degrees Fahrenheit). An hour later, Dad just managed to get home before Upper Beaconsfield was sealed off due to the impending danger. With a stiff wind, the air was like a blast furnace. Mum drew my attention to some birds she had been watching through the window.

“Look, those poor birds”, she said.

“What’s wrong with them? They can’t seem to fly properly. They just flutter around near the ground”.

And ominously, there was a growing smell of smoke in the air. Over the next hour, the smoke haze thickened, causing the daylight to take on a distinctly orange tinge, a sort of twilight that reflected the fires of hell. Our normally coloured world had become orange monochrome, adding to our feelings of menace and foreboding. We could look directly at the orange “disc” that was the sun, the cause of all this anxiety and mayhem. Suspended above the horizon, indicating at least another four

hours before sunset, we longed for its demise and the chance of some relief.

The radio reported a deteriorating situation, with more fires breaking out. Victoria is by no means a small State, being 800 kilometres (500 miles) from east to west and 500 kilometres (300 miles) north to south. Yet this vast area was in real danger of being ablaze from end to end. Although the fires might seem a long way off now, we were at the mercy of wind speed and wind direction. The fires might reach us sooner, rather than later, if the spread of embers caused spot fires to break out ahead of the advancing front. Regardless, we had a lot to do. Our fire-fighting preparations were our top priority.

Firstly, to dress properly meant wearing woolen clothing covering the entire body, with only the face showing. Heavy leather boots and gloves were to be worn while the headgear consisted of helmet, neck shield and goggles. The necessary equipment included water-filled buckets and mops placed strategically around the outside perimeter of the house. These were used to extinguish flying embers, which, driven by the wind, built up on the windowsills, igniting them. Then there was the key weapon in the fire-fighting armory, the petrol-driven, pressurizing pump with its special hoses. Other preparations were the filling of baths and basins with water and any extra buckets placed around the interior of the house. Gaps under external doors were plugged with wet, rolled up towels, and doormats were thrown well clear; many a house has been lost due to embers settling on a doormat. The roof gutters were checked for the presence of dry leaves; once cleaned they were filled with water by blocking up the downpipes. We also parked the cars on mown grassy clearings away from trees. Finally we made sure the dog stayed inside the house. This completed our preparations.

We kept an eye open for any sign of fire. We were soon rewarded with a rosy red glow on the northern horizon. We became apprehensive when this developed into a huge billowing plume of smoke, which fortunately did not approach us despite a strong northerly blowing. We later learned that this was the burning down of the township of Cockatoo. With the radio constantly updating the fire danger around the state, we learned that a cool change accompanied by showers was going to arrive in our area early evening. This we took as good news, reasoning that the cool change would dampen down the intensity of the

existing fires and signal the end of further outbreaks. How mistaken we were! But as I believed the danger had passed, I decided to keep my scheduled evening class. I was learning to paint in the Japanese style.

The sun was just about to slide under the horizon when I set off. But within several minutes I was driving through burned-out countryside, with no flames in sight however. "The fire came this close"! I thought. "How come we knew nothing of this? Nothing on the radio had mentioned this fire".

Sensing renewed danger I turned around to go home. Stopping at the same roadblock that I had passed through a few minutes earlier, the officials said I couldn't pass. They explained that it was just too dangerous to enter country that hadn't been burned yet. As I couldn't dissuade them, I left, determined to find some other way back home.

I was convinced that, as a resident of the embargoed area, I had a right, if not a duty, to be at home defending my house. Studying the road map I decided to detour around the affected area, and if I hurried I just might find a way back home before more roadblocks were set up. With persistence and by way of some lengthy detours on back roads, I eventually made it home. Little did I realize then how crucial my being home was to be. To fail would have resulted in dire consequences, such were the dramatic and dangerous events about to overwhelm us. But in our ignorance we remained unsuspecting of the imminent danger. In fact, so relieved were we, believing that the promised cool change was the end of our problems, we relaxed in front of the television.

However the reality was something else. We were in fact facing impending danger of extreme magnitude. Rather than reducing the danger, the cool change was guaranteed to bring a quantum leap in the spread of fire. How? An explanation of fire behaviour is necessary here. A cool change in Melbourne means two things; one, very strong winds suddenly spring up, accompanying the drop in temperature, and two, the wind direction changes by a critical ninety degrees. Change of direction means a flank becomes a front. A front is the destructive head of the fire, and is relatively narrow. Flanks on the other hand are long, say 15 kilometres (9 miles) for example, and represent the path the fire has travelled over many hours. So with the cool change, the flank becomes a new fire front of extraordinary width, 15 kilometers in this

example. Unfortunately, my parents and I were ignorant of this fact. Rather than good news, the approaching cool change was bad news.

It was not quite nightfall. At ten minutes past nine, we were barely into the movie when an enormous gust of wind shook the house, the power going off immediately. The cool change had arrived, but so had the fire! Rushing outside, the wind almost knocked me off my feet. I couldn't believe what I saw – a boiling mass of fire, seething with burning gases, was churning on the western horizon. It appeared to be less than a kilometre away (about half a mile). Growing before my very eyes, it was a mountain of black and fiery red satanic grandeur. Rolling forward as surf breakers do, cresting, curving, but never collapsing. As I stared straight at this fearful, mesmeric monster, I realized that with the wind striking my face head-on, it was headed this way.

“It's here!” I screamed. Mum, Dad and myself sprang into action. First, Mum persuaded Skipper, our dog, into the house; he was agitated enough as it was without roaming free in the fire. Then all three of us walked into the pool for a complete soaking of our protective clothing. Leaving the pool, I immediately started the petrol-driven pump. Pulling the starter cord, the engine fired-up, the hoses stiffened as the water started to flow from the swimming pool; pools are great for fires as well as swimming! But Dad, perhaps due to panic, stepped forward and to my amazement, turned the pump off; it hadn't been primed, he reasoned, and proceeded to do so by removing the plug. Showing complete lack of teamwork, I restarted the pump causing plug and a fountain to explode into the unsuspecting face of my fellow firefighter.

When we got our act together, we went about hosing down the house and the surrounding garden. Such was the power of the hose, water could be projected 30 metres (100 feet). Within minutes, burning leaves and small pieces of twigs rained down from the sky. These caused spot-fires to break out. We were kept busy, scouting around the house surrounds, deciding where next to direct the water. And those hoses weighed a ton.

Dad commented later, “Paul, you were cool under pressure out there. Weren't you afraid”?

Casting my mind back, I did remember being calm. But for many years

thereafter, my memory of the fire was sketchy, just a blur. The events had been half-forgotten, pushed down into my sub-conscious. We were all scared; we just showed it in different ways.

Then, something quite amazing happened. Like the parting of the Red Sea, miraculously the mountain of fire divided into two. Although we now had two fires to contend with, this was indeed to our advantage as the fire intensity had been halved. Despite this, the noise of the fire was unforgettable. Like standing beside the railway tracks with a thousand locomotives thundering past, the heavens roared with the sounds of exploding eucalyptus oil and gas. The crackling of burning branches magnified a million times over, contributed to a noise that drowned out our voices. Although night had fallen and it should have been dark, we had no trouble seeing; the flames lit up everything. None of us had ever experienced anything like this before. We felt so small and insignificant in the midst of this mighty juggernaut.

One of the fires, the more intense of the two, moved like an arrow, passing the house only a hundred yards away. Propelled by the 80 kilometre-an-hour (50 mile-an-hour) wind, it quickly moved passed the house and on into the distance. This left us with the secondary fires emanating from its flanks. The other fire seemed to lose its power as it approached, probably because a hill shielded our house from the full force of the gale. Nevertheless we had two fires to fight and were defending the house on two sides. Using our fire hoses we successfully overcame each threat as it arose, being kept constantly on the move.

After four hours of fighting the fires, we were able to venture out 100 metres or so (100 yards), inspecting the extent of the destruction. Walking along the driveway towards what was our front gate, now reduced to ash, picking our way over still-burning, fallen branches and debris, we passed a smouldering tree, which promptly toppled over behind us. It was obviously too dangerous to be out.

While we were preoccupied with our local fire around the house, the enormous fire-front had traveled as far as the eye could see, perhaps 10 to 15 kilometres (about 8 miles). To behold the panorama was sheer drama; in the darkness of the night, the sight of the flames was like a vision of Dante's inferno.

We were present at a piece of theatre, a sinister spectacle. The horizon was aflame from end to end, demonstrating an awesome power over which mere man has no control.

As amateur firefighters, there were moments bordering on the slapstick, or was it incompetence in combination with panic? Trying to tame the involuntary gyrations of the fire hose was nearly impossible. Having a mind of its own, it tried to move my aim somewhere else. Poor Mum was on the receiving end in one of these episodes; straying into the line of fire, she was knocked off her feet. However, being doused again did her no harm at all.

Through it all, Skipper kept up his constant howling from inside the house; he thought he was missing out on the fun! He was pushed back inside the house each time Mum went in to do her patrol for sparks; the wind can drive sparks through cracks around doors and windows. For this we had buckets of water at the ready.

By 1.30 a.m. (it was now the next day, Thursday), the circle of fire threatening us had been put out, or had at least died right down of its own accord. The wind had stopped blowing. With the flames now out, darkness returned. All was still. Just a myriad of glowing "lights" decorated the jet black, silhouetted trees. These were the glowing embers, reminding us that nothing had escaped the fire's attention. Smoke hung heavily in the night air. It was still very hot, and despite our earlier dunking in the pool, we were bone dry. There were no more spot-fires breaking out and we considered we had the upper hand.

During these events, we had not seen any sign of the professional firefighters or police. Concerned for the safety of our friend, Lois, we decided to drive to her place, three minutes away. To go visiting at 2 a.m. does seem weird, but these were the weirdest of times. We pulled up in front of the grand, hundred-year old, two-storey home, many towering pine trees hanging over the roof. Featuring a tower, it was a house from a by-gone era. Lois was usually alone in looking after her three children, and the house couldn't be kept in the condition a grand mansion demanded. To our surprise, a fire truck was outside the house. Immediately we were strongly urged by the fire officer to go home, as an approaching fire was about to hit the house. The next day we were told that this piece of local history had survived. Ironically, three months

later, the house was burned down when fire spread from a faulty fireplace into an adjoining cupboard full of paper. Poor Lois! Fire eventually had its day of victory.

We returned home utterly exhausted. After comforting poor, neglected Skipper, we flopped onto our beds without changing, ready to spring up to fight any flare-ups. Due to the extreme stress of the experience, sleeping was difficult and I drifted in and out of light sleep. I was also being reminded of our narrow escape from death by the frequent explosions all through the night. The fire had quickly disposed of the small to medium trees and undergrowth, but the giant trees of the gully took longer to succumb. With their trunks smouldering as they burned internally, causing their sap to boil, they eventually crumpled under their own weight, crashing to the ground. We were too numb to imagine what sight awaited us with the coming of daylight. With so much natural beauty consumed by the flames, would we recognize Upper Beaconsfield as the place we once knew?

Chapter 8

The Aftermath

Thursday February 17th 1983

That culprit, the sun, was already up. I stirred early. It was 5 a.m. My body was aching all over and I hadn't really slept, what with the highly charged emotions. How strange! There were no birdcalls to be heard, not a single one greeted me. As if in deep mourning, a deathly silence hung over what was formerly nature's wonderland. As I gathered my senses, I became aware of an acrid odour. Not just the smell of smoke – I could readily identify that smell all right. No, some other strange, unfamiliar smell was evident. It was ash.

I struggled off the bed to my feet, my mind adjusting to the reality of the fires. Making my way to the kitchen, the events of last night hit me. Out of habit I tried to boil the kettle for a cup of tea but of course, the power was off. This meant we had no way to cook or wash, and the food in the refrigerator would be deteriorating. We were dependent on an electric pump to make the water flow, so we couldn't flush the toilet either. But we could bucket water from the almost empty swimming pool.

Dad joined me in the kitchen, wanting to phone family and friends with news of our safety. Then we realized, of course, that the phone had been disconnected last night, along with the power. These conditions were to prevail for the next three days.

Weak orange daylight came through the windows and the blackened landscape could be seen through the smoke haze. With the orange sun in the sky once again, I wondered whether it was going to torment us today. On the battery radio I caught news of the death and destruction poured out on the affected states, Victoria and South Australia. (The final count was 72 deaths and over 2000 houses destroyed.)

Mum and Dad had two neighbours, both about three minutes walk away. Their houses were clearly visible, now that the fire had burned

so much bushland away. Both houses had survived. As for our neighbours themselves, we couldn't tell, as nobody had passed our front gate for many hours. It was unusually quiet. No traffic at all! Had the world beyond vanished?

After something to eat we decided to drive into the village, taking Skipper with us in the car as well. The village centre of Upper Beaconsfield was very small; three shops, a post office and a church. Nearby houses were on quarter acre blocks, but the 400 odd houses that formed Upper Beaconsfield tended to be scattered on large acreages, a small number being on farms. The ten-minute drive to the village was one of shock and deep sadness. Except for a feeble orange glow, all colour had been annihilated, presenting us with a vista entirely of black and grey. With so many familiar houses and trees not to be seen, you realize how dependent you are on familiar landmarks to find your way about. So our drive along roads we knew so well was somehow unnerving, like being in a dream.

But this was no dream – more a nightmare. House after house had been destroyed. What had been homes to so many vibrant, sensitive human beings had been cruelly obliterated. Fire never shows mercy; it destroys indiscriminately. Each house was reduced to a pile of charred remains. Sheets of metal roofing covered up many, as though modesty demanded the remains be hidden from view. Roofing sheets were twisted into obscene contortions. The occasional fireplace with chimney stood like a tombstone, indicating where a house once stood. Structures that survived the fire stuck out like sore thumbs – a garden shed, a garage, a clothesline. To find a complete house was a rarity. Just why do some survive, whereas most do not, was to be a subject for hot debate over the months and years to come. Often a letterbox survived, complete with house number. From the letterbox, a path always led confidently to the front door – except there was none.

The tree-lined road leading to the village was obliterated. No longer a tunnel formed by over-arching trees, the road was now lined with blackened tree trunks. Having lost all branches to the fire, the trunks were like silent sentinels, standing to attention. A dead horse lay beside the road. Burned-out cars, tractors and farm machinery, all bore testimony to the ferocity of the fire. The road was littered with burned debris blown there by the high winds.

In the village, the extent of the tragedy became evident. Gone were the church, the general store, the butcher and the petrol station with mechanic's garage. Just the post office and milk bar remained unscathed. Metal road signs, once pointing to their destination, now hung limply, having melted in the heat. Driving out of the village we passed through a police roadblock. Ominously we noticed that no one was being allowed into Upper Beaconsfield. Perhaps we couldn't come back today. Anxious to reassure our family and friends of our safety, we drove to the nearest town, Berwick, where the phones would be working. Phoning my concerned brothers Robert and John, we were touched to hear of their great concern for our safety. They had been searching emergency centres, peering under blankets at the faces of fire victims, to no avail. After making our phone calls, we reported to the disaster-operations centre, which had been hastily set up. The homeless were clothed and fed here, and the injured received medical attention. In our case we had to register our personal details as survivors. We were informed that nobody could enter the disaster areas until the coroner and police had attended to those who perished. Some, no doubt, we were bound to know. We were told the area was sealed off and getting back there today was impossible.

While wandering around the tents that made up the disaster centre, we came across a police officer that Dad knew. We pleaded our case, and as a result were allowed to join a special convoy of assorted vehicles - newspaper and television reporters, insurance assessors and so on - all under police escort.

Arriving home late morning we were shocked to see a fire emergency taking place at our neighbours across the road. Three fire trucks and two police vehicles were in attendance while a bulldozer was frantically cutting a firebreak. We were informed that a bushfire was about to sweep up the hill and engulf the house, and perhaps ours too. The fire did arrive with great danger to all, but in the end it was repelled.

Friday February 18th 1983

I decided to go and investigate what had happened to my former house at the other end of Upper Beaconsfield. This was my special creation I had personally built in a bushland setting. Although it was no longer my possession, having sold the house to go and join Jeevah's Organization

in Queensland, I was naturally interested in its fate. Arriving at the site I found that the owners were there too, on the point of departing. The house was gone. Brief words were exchanged. It was such a painful meeting. They had lost everything. Just the customary twisted metal roofing and brick chimney marked the spot. I strolled around the rock garden, which I had lovingly laid out. The tears welled up. The injustice of it all, I thought. The house had a special place in my heart, but it was only material, I rationalized. Others had lost more than I. Glancing across the road to my former neighbour, the Medwin's, it was obvious they had also lost their house. I was later to learn that the mother and the daughter had died at home, while their men-folk had been away fighting fires, and had survived. As for my circumstances, there would be no place for self-pity.

Driving back to Mum and Dad's, I noticed local people chatting outside the post office, the nerve-centre of the village. In the current emergency, with communications down, the owners of the post office, Ray and Elva Ratcliff, played a vital role in village life. I stopped to join them, to find out who had been affected. The mood was somber. I learned that eleven fire fighters perished in thick bushland, trapped in their trucks when their engines failed to start due to the heat. This was just a mile away. Also there were residents I knew who had died. In total, twenty-one people had died in Upper Beaconsfield and 186 houses were lost.

Saturday February 19th

Somehow I had coped with the bushfire crisis. I just had to rise to the occasion. It was a matter of, you cope or you die; there wasn't much choice in the matter.

Now, with the crisis behind me, things were catching up with me. Not only had I been under stress from the fires, but also from that period of my life built on the man, Jeevah. And the separation was only ten weeks old. The overriding feeling was one of numbness and emotional exhaustion. I found making decisions difficult. My brain just didn't want to work. It was later that I realized this was the way I was coping with so much loss; loss of relationships, loss of purpose, loss of time and loss of possessions.

Sunday February 20th

Through the postmaster Ray and his wife Elva, I was made aware that

a church service for the suffering townsfolk was to take place that day. The former church was gone, of course, but the service was to be held out-of-doors, in a small park in the centre of the village.

With a spiritual void in my life, I was very keen to go to the service. Tragedy was confronting me with life-and-death issues. In times of crisis, the dross of life falls away, exposing things eternal. At some time in every person's life fundamental questions have to be faced and a response given. For me, this was that time. The one thing that had survived the yoga years, which came through the fires undiminished, was my urge to find God, whoever and wherever He might be.

The mood was somber, the voices hushed, as a crowd of perhaps four hundred materialized. It was mid-morning, a cool day. Under the open sky, rain clouds were trying to deliver their promise. United in shared grief, the residents of Upper Beaconsfield, irrespective of belief, came together to receive solace. The church folk had assembled musical instruments and a table for Holy Communion. Upon the table stood a solitary object. It was a contorted cross. Twisted on its base, bent forward as if still burdened, it spoke of extreme suffering. It had gone through the trials of fire yet was still able to stand. It had been rescued from the ruins of the old church, and it spoke to me about endurance and perseverance, despite life's trials. Occupying the place of honour on the table, it symbolized man's suffering and man's determination to persevere. It was dawning upon me that this contorted cross also had a deeper meaning: had God suffered immeasurably more, a suffering that He did not have to endure but did so for my benefit?

Hundreds of people turned up to the memorial service. To see their faces was very moving. Among them were the weary fire fighters, many still with ash on their faces. One was wearing an eye-bandage. They came to mourn their dead comrades. We wept as the congregation was told of the supreme sacrifice by eleven of their colleagues, both men and women, just a mile away. Residents who had suffered loss of family and loved ones were there too, and those with injuries. Those who suffered material loss, loss of a home and possessions containing life's memories, stood in the midst of those more fortunate, those able to give loving support. We remembered all those who had perished and those too sick to attend; many were in hospitals, having been burned, some horrifically.

The community had come together in weakness, acknowledging its dependence on the supernatural for its strength to recover.

I could see that alone without God, man was lost; who else can heal the scarred soul, the tormented mind? The minister said it all: "We worship a God whom Himself has suffered. God the Father sent His Son Jesus to endure the ultimate suffering on our behalf. God therefore understands our suffering, and offers to be with us in the midst of the suffering, thereby sharing the burden, even carrying us through."

As the Psalmist records in the twenty-third psalm:

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want,
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
He leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul.
He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even
though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me; Your rod and your staff, they
comfort me.*

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

Chapter 9

Hope Restored

*Hope deferred makes the heart grow sick,
But a longing fulfilled, revives and strengthens.*
Proverbs 13:12

It was a mere ten weeks after leaving Jeevah's Organization when the bushfires hit. This was already a difficult time for me, without the added trauma of the bushfires. I was overwhelmed with feelings of loss and grief. Each day was one without purpose and without hope. The simplest of things were like mountains to be scaled. I just wasn't able to! Even the making of simple decisions left me exhausted.

With the bushfire experience, my reduction as a fully operational person had reached its lowest point. It was the final act in the drama of disillusionment. Most of the former things in my life had passed away. Some had either completely vanished from my life, such as my yoga friendships and yoga involvement, my guru, my house, and the beautiful environment and idyllic village that was Upper Beaconsfield. Other longings had not been fulfilled, such as a life-partner, a developing career, having a family, having peace in my heart.

Psychiatric problems throughout the fire-ravaged areas were rife and residents were offered counselling and medical services as part of the bushfire emergency. As I was having anxiety and panic attacks, as well as sleep problems, I accepted sedation therapy to stabilize these symptoms with success. Meanwhile I was receiving constant prayer support, and my life was starting to turn around.

The impact of the bushfires was so profound that I knew an impenetrable "curtain" had come down on the drama that was my life, separating the past from the future. In my mind's eye I pictured a chasm. This chasm was so wide and so deep that it couldn't be crossed. The past was behind me, on the far side of the chasm, unable to touch or hurt me in the present; my future was therefore protected.

As though the fire was a cleansing agent, all the “rubbish” was consumed and was no more. I could now start with a clean sheet. It was year zero and my new life began here. One era was over and there was no alternative but to embark on another. Although confident that the past had been dealt a fatal blow, I was like an infant taking my first tentative steps. For this I needed a hope in the future. I needed to be revived and strengthened and healed. I needed a hope of things eternal.

With the loss of the village church, naturally a new one was to be built. Church member, Barry Medwin, my former neighbour who had lost his family in the fires, approached four architects including myself, each being invited to submit a design for the new church of St. Johns. In contrast to my frequent despair, I was inspired to create something new and beautiful that would rise out of the ashes. Within me something quite extraordinary had happened. From a person who wasn't functioning well at all, I found myself full of creativity. I considered this miraculous because my creativity had been destroyed by recent events. It was as if the concept fell out of the sky, the arrangement of the various parts of the church plan, although geometrically complex, fitted together so simply and effortlessly, like a jig-saw puzzle. From the beginning it was a design that fulfilled every need, without alteration. When the time came to decide which architect had been successful, I was amazed and exhilarated to have my design chosen.

To this very day, when I reflect on how the design for St. John's materialized, as if unaided by any strenuous effort on my part, I stand in awe. A profound healing was taking place within; where this came from I was determined to discover. Then I could personally give thanks. For I knew that the credit lay with somebody greater than myself.

Having been appointed architect for the rebuilding of St. John's Anglican Church, I set about building a scale model to go on public display for the purpose of raising money. By common consent, the residents of Upper Beaconsfield, whether church goers or not, overwhelmingly approved of the proposed new church. It was a unifying act, a symbol of new life for a hurting community, like a phoenix that was about to rise out of the ashes, bringing hope for the future.

The new design was to incorporate a memorial chapel. It was an

octagonal annex, a separate building in its own right, with its own architectural atmosphere. It was to recreate something of the former church, by means of seven beautiful stained-glass windows, being exact copies of the originals. The contorted, brass cross which was salvaged from the ruins and used to such powerful effect at the outdoor service was to be part of the memorial chapel too.

With the plans for a new church, birthing new hope in the community at large, so for me hope was rekindled; to be encouraged, to be needed, to be appreciated, to be noticed, built up my confidence.

As the church designs developed, I had ample opportunity to get to know in particular the minister Roger and his wife Regina. They always welcomed me with open arms into their home, nurturing my curiosity about the God of the Bible. So I decided to start attending services and also the weekly Bible studies. It was here that my search began for the truth about different religions and how they differ from Christianity. I continued searching, asking questions.

My emotional state was fragile. I needed to be rescued, physically and spiritually. But how could I be sure Christianity was the right path? Unlike my life under Jeevah's guidance, a life characterized by striving through one's own efforts to reach perfection, Roger and Regina explained that the God of the Bible had provided eternal life for all those prepared to humble themselves and ask forgiveness for sin, admitting their dependence on Him. Then, this loving God provided entrance into eternal life as a free gift. Free?...now that was radical! Up to now, all I had experienced was give, give, give!

I struggled with the idea that Christianity was the only way to eternal life. If this was true, why were the other religions not valid? Eventually my spiritual eyes were opened to a loving God who provided this free gift through His grace, not through personal striving. I could not deny that striving is the way of all the religions (I had checked that out!), but not the way of faith in Jesus Christ.

I was now ready to receive this gift of grace for myself. After all those years of striving to be good enough to reach God through self-realization, I had never reached Him. What I hadn't realized was that I could never have perfected myself because there is nobody on earth

without sin, no matter how hard and how long we try. Once I realized I needed to be set free from my sin, in a brief prayer in the name of His Son, Jesus, I was set free from the sins of my past. I felt God's wonderful love, His Holy Spirit cleansing me. It was nothing of myself. It was accomplished entirely by Him.

This was the beginning of a new life, dedicating my life to following Jesus the Messiah.

But this was not the only blessing. He knew my heart, my longings, intimately. Now a follower of the ultimate person, Jesus Himself, it was a joy to worship God as often as possible, not just on Sunday. The church was still meeting in the community hall, which had survived the fires. It was here that I got to know the church pianist, Cheryl. A year later we could both see that God had a plan for us together as husband and wife. On Saturday the 21st of December 1985 (two and a half years after the fires), we were married by Roger the minister, in the brand new St. John's. It was a joyous occasion. During the service the heavens opened and heavy rain pummeled the metal roof; a fitting sign of reassurance when remembering what fire had formerly done.

Immediately after the bushfires I was kept busy designing houses for those who had lost everything in the fires. Many I knew personally. Many I did not. But all who asked me to design their new houses obviously had a great need. It was my pleasure to help them wherever I could.

One such family, Heinz and Gerda Moritz, having lost two houses, offered to sell one of these properties to Cheryl and myself. The setting was ideal. It was seven acres, part bush, part pasture, with glorious views towards distance hills. This piece of land was recovering well and wildlife was returning in abundance. Cheryl and I were delighted with the property. We bought the land and set about building a house to our own design. We reused the concrete floor slab from the previous burned-out house; the builder topped the slab with concrete to cover the molten remains. A compact and cosy house, it blended beautifully with the environment. I was enjoying being creative again.

Further blessings were to follow with the arrival of children; first a son, Matthew, then a daughter, Naomi. All that I had lost before had been

restored, and so much more again. To walk with God through one's life, allowing His will to prevail, is a privilege. He had plans to heal me, to remake me; it was a work in progress.

God fills you with hope through the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

*If we only have hope in this life we are to be pitied;
but, hope in eternal life is a blessing. (1 Corinthians 15:19)*

*May you know and understand the hope to which God has called you,
the riches of His glorious inheritance. (Ephesians 1:18)*

May the God of hope fill you with joy and peace. (Romans 15:13)

Chapter 10

Healing

Emotional Healing

Over the years Jeevah the mystic had shaped hundreds of lives, enticing them with the promise of nirvana, while at the same time harnessing the giftings these young admirers brought with them. They willingly bestowed upon him the means by which he could achieve his goals, such was their trust in their guru's integrity. Altruism may have been his motivation in the early days, but was self-advancement the primary motive in his life in his latter years?

It wasn't long after the Organization moved to Queensland that the occasional follower dropped out. I was completely unaware that within a few years, the trickle of disaffection had become a distinct trend. The departure from the Organization of some key people was very telling. However, the news of this disenchantment didn't reach my ears. If only the former followers had shared their concerns with each other, I for one, would have not felt so isolated or intimidated by "bailing out". Also, an earlier public airing may have curtailed Jeevah's excesses. But this is mere speculation. The fact remained that followers were leaving. They believed, as I did, that they had been used and their trust betrayed. But as victims we remained silent.

After thirteen years under the influence and guidance of Jeevah, I felt sapped of my personal worth. To be healed emotionally was to take time and effort. There had to be a deliberate cutting off from all thoughts and memories of my life in the Organization. As I handed my grief over to the God who knows all, and who heals and restores all, my emotional healing gathered apace.

In cases of emotional trauma, there is the need to deal with the past before healing can begin to take place. Living outside of time, (impossible for us to comprehend but nevertheless true), the God of the Bible has authority over the past, the present and the future. Unlike us,

God therefore has access to the past. He also has a plan for our life, both present and future. This can only be fully realized as we give Him the reins of our life. He has a purpose far greater than we could ever imagine or comprehend – a much better future than we could ever plan for ourselves. As the Psalmist said, *“My times are in His hands.”* (Psalm 31:15)

What are the keys to emotional healing? The first key is to hand over one’s life to Jesus the healer.

1. Ask God for forgiveness.

“If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

2. Receive Him and become His child.

“For as many as received Him, to them He gave the power to become the sons of God.” (John 1:12)

3. With God’s help, make a deliberate choice to put behind you the hurts of the past. Look forward with joy to the new purpose God has for you.

“Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on towards the goal”. (Philippians 3:13b-14a)

In my case, renouncing the elements of the past gave me the ability to move on. I burned my yoga books because they represented Jeevah. I had to consciously reject reflecting on the negative events of the past whenever they showed signs of surfacing.

I had to forgive myself. I had to allow myself to say, “I was wrong, I made a mistake.” This faces up to reality rather than putting the blame on others. I do not blame Jeevah for his influence on my life. I had the freedom to choose. This doesn’t absolve Jeevah; he did do wrong, (whether intentionally or not), but this is between him and God. With God’s help, I found it possible to forgive those who had wronged me. This brought freedom and release.

In reflecting on my chosen path for those lost years, I now acknowledge some basic wrong choices:

I placed too much confidence in a leader, to the extent that I eventually

lost all self-confidence. The boundaries between group identity and personal identity became blurred. I was secure in my identity within the group, but in this situation I was unable to express myself as an individual. Taking on some of Jeevah's personal characteristics, such as growing a beard, led to a further reduction in my personal identity and ability to make decisions.

I wrongly depended upon a man for finding solutions to my personal problems, and for providing the guidelines to life. This dependence ultimately led to a seeming inability to think for myself or analyze situations without that man's involvement. In my eyes, anything the leader did was right. I would try to justify his actions, no matter how harsh these actions actually were. Again, my sense of personal judgement had been clouded as I had been mesmerized by the ideals of the group.

All my activity became centered on the leader's agenda, which seemed to supercede any of my personal goals or individual interests. This led to a dramatic loss of spontaneity and sense of humor. As a group, we were all far too serious, and took ourselves far too seriously.

While absorbed within the yoga years, I became increasingly isolated from family and old friends, and a sort of alienation from those who didn't follow the yoga ideal.

My over-exaggerated sense of loyalty to the group made my leaving difficult due to an overriding sense of guilt. I was spiritually bound to the group, the bonds of which were difficult to break.

I now realize the essential role families play in society. The family unit possesses the strongest ties people can ever have with one another. Cults and elitist groups are all too aware of the distinct advantages that close bonding of its followers bestows on the success of the group. Loyalty to the cultic 'family' is fostered, not through love, but through fear: the fear of the consequences arising from questioning the dictates of the leader. To be cast out means being denied a refuge. Individual freedom is curtailed, on the pretext that we have a duty to trust implicitly the infallible leader who never errs, and who believes he knows what is best for you.

Even though the Organization did not indulge in cultic practices as commonly understood, (worship ceremonies and rites), it did display other less obvious “cultic” characteristics: devotion and homage to a leader, and the exploitation of the followers (who willingly co-operated) for the personal advantage of the leader, albeit hidden. I was drawn in by something that seemed good in the beginning, but I became captivated, indoctrinated, and was unable to discern the negative influence on my life.

There are many different types of cults, but there are some basic principles, varying from moderate to severe, common to them all. The following signs can help us determine the likelihood of a group being a cult:

1. The leader is the ultimate authority, supposedly never wrong, and never to be questioned.
2. The leader is in total command of finances, and made sure that he received a more than adequate share.
3. Fear tactics are used to gain and maintain control emphasizing the strong possibility of a global disaster.
4. By intimidation, whether implied or overt, followers are made to feel guilty for leaving the group. Leaving is viewed as disloyalty.
5. Those inside the group are told to cut themselves off from the ex-followers, and those who are negative towards the group.
6. Followers feel they had to strive to be ‘good’.
7. There are many similar stories of grievance or abuse among those who have left the group.

When I finally did make the break, the feelings of guilt and anxiety followed me. For many months I was plagued by panic attacks, the inability to think clearly, low self-esteem and low self-confidence. I felt depressed, lonely and seemed to have an inability to make decisions.

If it were not for the grace of God, I would not have found a way out of that “pit”. Through counselling received from the church, I was able to put behind me the hurts of the past and the things that were either denied me or “stolen” from me over the past thirteen years: home, career, creativity, money, independence, marriage, children, self-esteem, self-confidence, peace of mind.

The reality of dark spiritual forces working against us should never be discounted; they really do exist. Discounting them only empowers them, allowing them to influence the skeptic's life undetected. I offer a real-life example for your thoughtful consideration.

Nearly three years after coming out of yoga, I revisited Beaumont with my wife Cheryl, as we had to pass through the town on route to a holiday destination. In our motel that night I had a vivid reminder of the spiritual roots of the life I had left when I had a nightmare. It was the intensity of the fear that woke me up, panicking and in a sweat. Although awake, I was unaware of being awake for a time that seemed an eternity. I couldn't break loose from the nightmare such was the reality of the experience; being asleep was more real than being awake! I was spooked by what I saw: a leering figure was about to take delight in stabbing me with a long-bladed knife. The whole atmosphere surrounding the vision projected darkness and malevolence.

Did this nightmare occur because we were in the close vicinity to the Organization, and that malevolent spirits now regarded me as the "enemy"? Still in Beaumont I was keen to show Cheryl around the various facilities established by the Organization. We dropped in on various followers, all of whom I knew of course, but we were both struck by the general heaviness of the spiritual atmosphere; the farm in particular we found oppressive – the surveillance camera didn't help of course!

Before committing to any group, whether secular or spiritual, you might find useful the following ten warning signs of a potentially unsafe group or unsafe leader, as suggested by Rick Ross.¹

1. Absolute authoritarianism without accountability.
2. No tolerance for questions or critical inquiry.
3. No meaningful financial disclosure regarding expenses, such as an independently audited financial statement.
4. Unreasonable fear about the outside world, such as impending catastrophe, evil conspiracies and persecutions.
5. There is no legitimate reason to leave; former followers are always wrong in leaving, are negative or even evil.
6. Former members often relate the same stories of abuse and reflect a similar pattern of grievances.

7. There are records, books, news articles, or television programs that document the abuses of the group/leader.
8. Followers feel they can never be “good enough”.
9. The group/leader is always right.
10. The group/leader is the exclusive means of knowing “truth” or receiving validation, no other process of discovery is really acceptable or credible.

Ten signs of a safe group/leader:

1. A safe group/leader will answer your questions without becoming judgmental and punitive.
2. A safe group/leader will disclose information such as finances and often offer an independently audited financial statement regarding expenses. Safe groups and leaders will tell you more than you want to know.
3. A safe group/leader is often democratic, sharing decision making and encouraging accountability and oversight.
4. A safe group/leader may have disgruntled former followers, but will not vilify, excommunicate and forbid others from associating with them.
5. A safe group/leader will not have a paper trail of overwhelmingly negative records, books, articles and statements about them.
6. A safe group/leader will encourage family communication, community interaction and existing friendships, and not feel threatened.
7. A safe group/leader will recognize reasonable boundaries and limitations when dealing with others.
8. A safe group/leader will encourage critical thinking, individual autonomy and feelings of self-esteem.
9. A safe group/leader will admit failings and mistakes, and accept constructive criticism and advice.
10. A safe group/leader will not be the only source of knowledge and learning, excluding everyone else, but value dialogue and the free exchange of ideas.

Check things out, know the facts and examine the evidence. A safe group will be patient with your decision-making process. If a group/leader grows angry and anxious just because you want to make an informed and careful decision before joining, beware.

Physical healing

Stressful or hurtful experiences can have physical consequences, which may surface many years later. It was fourteen years after leaving the Organization that I was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Like a time bomb in my body, the stress of former years had triggered off a cell

growth abnormality, of which I was unaware. However I was aware of a slow, creeping chronic fatigue gradually overtaking me. I also had frequent bouts of bronchitis, unable to be shifted with numerous courses of antibiotics, and a persistent cough. For several years doctors were unable to diagnose my condition, sending me for tests for hypoglycaemia and asthma, to no avail. In December 1996 I went for a CT scan which showed probable lymphoma, a cancer of the lymphatic system. Diagnostic surgery confirmed that I did indeed have non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, and a less common small-cell variety, which would be unresponsive to any orthodox medical treatment. I was given a four to seven year life expectancy.

With no prospects of a cure through the medical profession, I turned to natural therapy. I was given the name of a health retreat in Queensland, run by naturopaths, which offered short-term, live-in sessions involving fasting, colonic cleansing and natural therapy. At the same time Cheryl and I were reading as much information as we could get our hands on about natural therapy. Faith in the God of the Bible was also a key to my healing. When depression presented a battle, I fought with determination, holding on to the promise of life through faith in God, rather than focusing on the prospect of terminal illness. We continued to believe that God would heal by both natural and supernatural means. Natural therapy meant obedience to a strict, healthy diet, and taking the best nutritional supplements we could find. Making use of all the healing properties in God's creation played as much importance as my overall belief that God would heal.

The first year proved to be the most difficult. Keeping hope and faith alive was not always easy, but vital. We discovered that the way we spoke about the illness was important. It was often necessary to explain to people why I was eating a predominantly raw vegetarian diet, or why I didn't have enough energy to do things on certain days. Instead of saying, "I've got lymphoma", I had to train myself to say, "I'm recovering from cancer."

One year after diagnosis, I was no longer suffering from chronic fatigue. The occasional cold was thrown off within a week without resorting to antibiotics. Eighteen months after the diagnosis of the lymphoma, I decided to visit my cancer specialist to report my amazing good health. A physical examination showed that the spleen was quite normal and

not swollen as it was previously. Neither was there any swelling of the lymph nodes. The specialist advised that there was no need for another CT scan, which involved some degree of exposure to radioactivity. The physical evidence was enough!

Having recovered from cancer without resorting to orthodox medical treatment, I am so grateful to a God who heals, emotionally and physically, and grateful to the many faithful servants He sent along to help me understand the healing properties in His creation. As a result of this victory over cancer, Cheryl has written a book called *The Healing Power of Food*, which describes in detail the measures others can take also. It is a blessing to be able to share this with others and see them prosper in health.

End Note

1. Rick Ross, The Ross Institute, www.rickross.com

Chapter 11

Death of the Guru

Twenty-two years had elapsed since cutting all ties with Jeevah. It had been a period of complete separation.

Then, out of the blue, the news came; Jeevah had died. The news spread along the network of former followers, each contributing his piece of information about their former guru and the secret life that he was leading in recent years. It took my breath away to hear the revelations. Could this story of bizarre behaviour be true? Apparently it was; the evidence was so compelling, yet so tragic at the same time.

However, for me personally, I was amazed how suddenly my situation of “silent exile” had changed. No news of Jeevah had reached my ears for decades, not even a trickle or tit-bit. Jeevah might not have ever existed. But then suddenly, a mass of information, (intrigue, allegations, scandal and personal details), came like a virtual torrent, and in such a public way via the Australian news media. My lengthy absence from the Organization meant I was not at all entangled in the revelations, yet, knowing so many of the personalities

involved, the news caused me to mull over that past era. As the details emerged, I spent the following weeks swinging between feelings of sadness and a sense of closure; finally the truth was coming out. As dramatic as these events were however, I maintained my healing from the emotional trauma of the “yoga years”.

It seems that Jeevah’s secret life had started when he announced that the time had come in his spiritual journey, to withdraw from the Organization, and to move into a life of introspection and mediation. This was of itself nothing unusual. It was the custom for any elderly Indian holy man in the last phase of his life, to go into retreat, leaving behind the world and its fleshly desires. It was a time of preparation for reaching nirvana. Jeevah said he was “wiping his tape”, and if he happened to see a follower in the street, there should be no mutual

recognition. His retreat was many hundreds of kilometres away, well into the tropics. Jeevah's planned retreat was with the blessing of his wife and family.

I find the concept of self-enlightenment by definition, pregnant with self-importance, even a delusion. This was evident from Jeevah's exalted sense of self-esteem. For example, in addition to describing himself as "a well respected educationalist, author and philosopher", his followers report that in his latter years, he demanded to be addressed in grandiose terms, for example, "Dr." Raj, and "Professor" Raj. He also adopted the title, "Ambassador for World Peace." Dr. Raj always flew internationally in seat 1A, first class of course. When in need of hospitalization, the "professor" had a VIP suite and his own personal physician in attendance.

For his spiritual retreat, Jeevah chose an up-market, ritzy beach resort. Festooned with magnificent bougainvillea, the resort hugged pure white, sandy beaches lined with palm trees, bowing towards the turquoise Pacific. It was the playground for the rich and famous, featuring expensive restaurants and a golf club with celebrity membership. Jeevah had a passion for golf, and according to his own stories, was able at will, to hit a hole-in-one. I personally recall his love of golf when designing his holiday house back in Victoria; it was but a minute's walk from "his" golf course. Now, as the owner of super luxury cars, Jeevah lived a life surrounded by glamour; this extended to his fascination for expensive works of art. This lifestyle seems the direct opposite to his teaching on self-control and detachment from worldly desires and possessions, and his persona of "a holy man". But Jeevah was well away from the prying eyes of the followers, who probably would never have found out, had not the events surrounding his death become public.

It was the suicide of one of his female students that triggered the glare of publicity. Jeevah had divorced his wife of forty years and mother of his children, in order to marry the female yoga student. She was some thirty years his junior; he was around seventy. She committed suicide soon after Jeevah's own death in order to follow him to nirvana. I was stunned; yet so grateful not to be mixed up with all this drama. Many thoughts from the past flashed into my mind, as I had had close contact with Jeevah's former wife and their children as their family architect.

It came to light that Jeevah had died from cancer, although he had disputed the nature of his terminal illness. Jeevah claimed he was a medical doctor and could heal cancer. His interest in healing cancer went back to the Melbourne years.

In this regard, I remember my friend and fellow student, a pharmacist, taking supplies of kerosene for Jeevah's "kero cure". This was destined for his "patients", not himself. The outcome of the "cure" remained unknown.

But Jeevah's key healing-tool for all diseases was the mind. Cultivation of "right thinking" as he called it, and related attitudes, was supposed to promote good health. In the prospectus for one of his conferences on health, Jeevah, in his capacity as president, wrote:

"Because the world today is well and truly on the slippery slope of materialism and greed, leading to unhealthy attitudes and thinking patterns, we need to pause before we succumb entirely to accepting disease rather than health as the norm."

This statement at least, I fully agree with. My own healing confirms the role of positive mental attitude.

He went on to make recommendations: positive thinking, self-discipline, eating and drinking in moderation, regular exercise, and minimizing the over-indulgent ego, sensualism and lust. And of course he taught his students that their ultimate goal was perfection, to be achieved by "sublimating the desires for this world." Jeevah's failure to live up to his high moral standards, central to his teaching, I suggest, is a malaise common to all of mankind, and not just peculiar to Jeevah. However, to have taught that perfection can be attained through man's own efforts, I believe is wrong.

"Disease was mind-made," said Jeevah many a time. It seems that in the latter phase of his life at least, worldly pleasures in partnership with what some would say were delusions of self-importance, overtook his idealism. Dying from cancer was the ultimate irony.

Jeevah's death allowed the ex-followers the freedom to express their

feelings of personal, emotional and financial abuse. One of the most prominent ex-supporters of Jeevah's vision, particularly in a financial way, was John. For the first ten years or so, he had enormous respect for Jeevah, due to being cured from asthma through yoga breathing techniques.

John decided to donate \$800,000, now worth many millions of dollars in today's money, to enable Jeevah to set up the *Institute for Wellbeing and Scholarship*. Its mission was to change the health of the world. John's money also went to establishing the School of Holistic Education.

John, an experienced investor and property developer, generously contributed the profits from his projects to the Institute's work. But things didn't work out as expected. It was in the early 1980s when John and his wife took an overseas trip lasting three months. Prior to leaving they made arrangements for the supply of funds to be withdrawn from their account, necessary for the ongoing projects. The success of these projects was vital for the continued viability of the Institute. Upon return from their holiday, much to their complete bewilderment, they found their building project account empty.

However, fate was about to make things much worse. The Australian property market suddenly crashed, compounding the problem of the empty bank account. John and his wife not only had no personal funds to their name, but the banks foreclosed on their projects, which they lost. John retired on the pension and was rebuffed when he asked Jeevah for financial help. Meanwhile, Jeevah's house at Mindi Valley was looking a picture, the marble floors reflecting the glow of the chandeliers.

With Jeevah's death I felt at liberty to make contact with ex-followers, my friends from the yoga years. It was decades since we'd had contact. I quickly learned that generally the ex-followers were very reticent to share; they were still hurting. However, there was one disenchanted ex-follower who was indeed not reticent about his past involvement with the Organization. To the contrary! Rather than turning his back on this catalogue of sordid events, excising them from his day to day thinking, Max became preoccupied with exposing the truth about the man who was shaping the lives of hundreds.

For him, Jeevah had to be opposed at every opportunity. For probably more than anyone, this former follower had seen the inner workings of the Organization and had experienced first-hand Jeevah's mode of operation. He was the classic insider and he was not impressed with what he saw. His mission was to strip away the holy man image, to make known to those still following their guru that they had been conned, and to bring some reality into the situation.

Soon after Max and his wife left Melbourne and moved to Beaumont, they bought a fruit shop and café business. Six months later, Jeevah instructed them to sell the business. Later Max discovered that a company controlled by Jeevah bought it.

Jeevah had plans for Max's obvious business talents. First he was appointed as bookkeeper for the numerous businesses operating within the Institute, all of which Jeevah controlled.

Then Jeevah appointed Max as managing director of a property development company, of which Jeevah was the principal beneficiary and shareholder. Whatever the enterprise, it was Jeevah who was really in control, keeping his cards close to his chest. That was the nature of the man, someone beyond reproach, whose decisions were not to be challenged.

Max's position as one of the inner circle and therefore "in the know" more than most, was able to solve for me a mystery; was the nuclear fallout shelter ever built, and if so, where?

Max revealed that indeed it had been built; it was located on the school site, being part of the hexagonal-shaped assembly hall. The hall was partly built into the hillside, the spare earth forming grassy mounds, upon which the children could play.

In the event of an impending nuclear disaster (given adequate warning), these small hills would be bulldozed towards the hexagon building, blocking off the entrance and providing protection from nuclear fall-out. The shelter was fitted out with survival gear, including air filters imported from Switzerland. In such an event, Jeevah would select a handful of people, no doubt his closest "disciples", to go into the "hall",

and earth would be moved to enclose it. Max mentioned the possibility of a second shelter under Jeevah's house.

One of a handful of very talented business minds, Max had been a key player in generating finances for the Institute. Along with Richard, he was setting up organic produce health stores for the Institute. (In their post-yoga years both Max and Richard were destined each to have his own extremely successful, Australia-wide chain of such stores). Finances were also flourishing through property development, but high-risk strategies were used.

With the economic bust of 1988, Jeevah's unorthodox business skills were shown to be inadequate. The Institute's businesses went into receivership, and as economic collapse was a looming reality, an emergency meeting of the board was called. Max was the man of the moment. He submitted a rescue plan with an ultimatum: "Follow the plan or we've had it." Max's plan involved massive restructuring and reform, and pinpointed thirty-six areas that were draining the Institute's finances. It was diplomatically suggested that perhaps Jeevah should from now on, just devote himself to the spiritual wellbeing of the followers, and leave the affairs of business to others. The survival of the Institute depended on it.

Max knew that he had to persuade Jeevah that his plan was the only way back to financial viability. In giving up control, Jeevah would have all his financial needs met. "How much do you think you would need for yourself and family?" Max asked Jeevah.

"Ninety thousand and year", was Jeevah's confident reply.

This figure was more than double that received by the most significant follower (not that many followers were fortunate enough to be on the payroll!). Additionally, Jeevah received a living allowance, free lease of a car, the Institute paid for his house, and his children's school fees waived.

So ninety thousand it was; Jeevah's personal needs had indeed been taken care of, commensurate to a person of his stature and exalted position.

Out of necessity, Jeevah had relented, allowing Max to take the reins. Jeevah withdrew from the financial management to concentrate purely on the Institute's spiritual advancement, appointing Max as economic controller of all the business activities that came under the umbrella of the Institute. Keeping his word to get the Institute out of debt, Max got down to work.

First, Max wanted to put into place a viable income strategy. It became obvious that Jeevah was not the financial expert that he claimed to be. Max uncovered non-viable aspects one by one, all needing reform. A typical example of the uneconomic business practices put in place by Jeevah, one among many, concerned the operation of the School of Holistic Education. Unrealistically it didn't charge fees or pay salaries to the teachers. These policies were reversed. From now on hot meals were served only twice a week instead of daily. The six students per teacher ratio was doubled. And so the program for restructuring spread across all the business entities that made up the Institute.

Another strategy was to build upon the Institute's success stories, one being the establishment of after-hours medical clinics, potentially a rich source of income. These provided much needed finances, until the other businesses became viable. Thanks to Max's rescue plan, the Institute was able to make headway, moving away from its precarious position.

But after a while it became evident that Jeevah was still making economic decisions. Jeevah had requested that a particular medical clinic was to operate only on weekends and public holidays and was to be manned by trained doctors from the Institute, who were to work on a rostered basis for no remuneration. The considerable profits were meant to subsidize the school.

Evidence of questionable dealings began to accumulate. Max confronted Jeevah about such matters and put to him that he had been misleading the members of the Institute about financial matters. Jeevah responded by saying that Max had to have faith in what he was doing, and that he was doing God's work. At this point Max resigned.

Jeevah's obsession with his exalted spiritual position was blatantly demonstrated by his acquiring a second bushland property at Mindi

Valley. Max remembers that it was purchased strictly for Jeevah's exclusive use. Described as "sacred land", Jeevah decreed that absolutely no one else was to set foot on his "hallowed ground". Its existence came to light when bushfires threatened to engulf it, requiring "unholy firefighters" to enter the sacred land. Once again, Jeevah had demanded, and got, special reverence and privileges he considered were due to him.

While most ex-students felt wounded and unable to talk about their experiences in the Institute, Max was different. He wanted to expose Jeevah and took great pains to do so. One plan of action was having ex-students write articles to newspapers describing their experiences. Another was more amusing: one evening, and purely by chance, their paths crossed in a large coastal city, an hour and a half's drive from Jeevah's home at Mindi Valley. Max spotted Jeevah scanning the shelves in a video library. Their eyes met. Jeevah took off like a jackrabbit, apparently afraid that his "home away from home", which to date had remained a secret, was about to be discovered. Max tailed Jeevah's car, but his attempts to get close were thwarted by "mysterious traffic movements". Max believes Jeevah had minders driving in convoy as escorts, enabling him to disappear into the night. Max was not about to give up. Enlisting the help of others, his patience was eventually rewarded, and Jeevah's secret pad was "busted". Soon the immediate neighbourhood knew exactly who the Indian gentleman was and what he was up to, courtesy of a letterbox drop.

Max took advantage of every opportunity to bring the spotlight onto the real person that was Jeevah, to unmask the pretender. No doubt Jeevah felt pressurized. More often than not he would have been left wondering who was behind the "happenings" and constantly wary of what each new day might bring. His wariness of outsiders was already well known, and his pre-occupation with his personal safety (the security camera at his isolated farm, and the bulletproof glazing to his office, already mentioned). He was very selective in the people he appointed to be close to him. He was obsessed with his privacy, and well guarded by his faithful inner circle against intrusion. No doubt Max has more to reveal about his endeavours to expose the mysterious Jeevah. Needless to say, Jeevah's delusions of grandeur and persecution grew with the passage of time, helped along of course by Max's mission, not forgetting the mysterious "happenings".

Although the many personal stories fitted together like a jigsaw puzzle, producing a picture of disaffection, the aspect of free will needs to be remembered. Regardless of the degree to which the leader took advantage of those he lead, we the followers must take some responsibility for going along with the guru's plans. To apportion blame however would be unfair, as genuine suffering cannot be denied. Not all of the aggrieved followers have shared their stories, preferring to forget the past, not "wishing to open up old wounds". Their reluctance is understandable. Then there are those few who, despite the evidence, still have unswerving faith in Jeevah, desiring to preserve his past achievements for future generations.

Chapter 12

Was this really yoga?

Many would think of Jeevah's work, goals and ambitions as admirable. They would see him as a person of great potential, who set out to do only good, but was finally overtaken by the attraction of money, prestige and power. "It could have happened to anyone," you might say.

Others would defend yoga teachings and point the finger at Jeevah, implying that he could not have been a true yogi.

However I believe that indeed Jeevah was the authentic yogi and that he was faithful to yoga's teachings. Shouldn't we therefore ask, what part then did yoga play in Jeevah's downfall?

I now see Jeevah's shortcomings as a direct consequence of a life built upon the wrong foundation. The foundation appeared to be humility and doing good, with a heart to help humanity. But for Jeevah, 'self' was in fact the foundation.

Jeevah taught that it is by looking within that we will find God. Yoga claims that the true self is actually one and the same as the god-head, and in opposition to the egocentric self with its attachment to worldly desires. Jeevah taught that through our own efforts we could reach purification of the self, and enlightenment. In other words, we can become God. This is orthodox yoga teaching.

My response to this would be "How can we become God through our own efforts when we are persistent wrong doers by nature?" What a forlorn hope, that human beings can overcome wrongdoing by doing what is right. Yoga claims it has the techniques to achieve just that, namely, that by just trying hard enough, given enough time, and despite the imperfect individuals that we are, we will eventually perfect ourselves.

Yet despite the odds being stacked against the student of yoga, this was indeed Jeevah's expectation, that with perseverance and self-discipline, the student can perfect himself. So rather than Jeevah being a false exponent of yoga, as the apologists claim, Jeevah was faithful in his presentation of real yoga.

The pursuit of perfection, and equating man with God, I believe only fed Jeevah's human weaknesses. This is not to excuse Jeevah and blame yoga, nor the other way around, for both man and method have avoided the issue of accountability. Yogic philosophy and its gurus do not ascribe to accountability. Jeevah was accountable to no one. He was subject to no authority outside of himself; not to God, not to his students. Why? Because as the enlightened teacher, by definition he was master, and we his students trailed a long way behind on the path to enlightenment. His "wisdom" flowed down to us; our "wisdom" never flowed up to him! Jeevah was being consistent with yoga teaching. He was his own ultimate authority. He was being true to yoga. His foundation was self, which was his god.

Jeevah's weakness for the life of luxury, while his disciples went without, was not uncommon amongst Indian gurus in particular, as well as those in the West. First hand stories are testimony to their conspicuous self-indulgence and gratification of all the senses. This lends weight to the argument that the philosophy itself was ineffective in cultivating in its followers the attributes one normally associates with God. But then, could it be that the "gods" of yoga represent the epitome of rampant sensualism? Indian divine literature describes life as the play of consciousness, akin to the god Lord Shiva, dancing on the field of pleasure.¹

Muktananda, the highly revered and world-renowned guru of Siddha Yoga fame, lived a life of luxury in his latter years. Australian-born Michael Graham, one of his devotees for twenty-eight years, described his guru as all-too-human in his indulgence in luxury and self-gratification. Nothing but the absolute best that money could buy would do for the comfort of the guru, while everyone, including staff, had to pay their own way.²

This regime of self-indulgence reached new heights when the guru's successors, Gurumayi and Nityananda, vied for the ascendancy to the

“throne”. Michael Graham relates a glaring example concerning the guru Nityananda, who, with his female attendant, took off on a luxury holiday. Driving around Europe in luxury cars, flitting from city to city, the guru bought expensive clothes and dined in the finest of restaurants. This escapade was considered necessary as, in their absence, the guru’s quarters back in India were being fitted out in sheer opulence in an attempt to outdo his rival, Gurumayi. Such was the lofty life of the gurus; born to rule and to be adored, whatever the cost to the lowly followers, those considered subservient.³

How was this contradictory and hypocritical behaviour explained away? Logically it can’t be explained away, but suffice to say, Indian followers believe that gurus live only in the upper reaches of pure spirituality and that they only sully their souls with the pleasures of the world for the upliftment of their disciples, and never for their own gratification.⁴

The parallels with Jeevah are quite striking. Charismatic gurus indulge themselves, while the deluded and spiritually hungry followers live in poverty (which they deserve due to karma), and at the same time struggle to abstain from life’s pleasures in the interest of achieving self-realization. The followers are exhorted to follow the guru’s teachings, while the guru seems to be exempt. It is an obscene contradiction. Surely the presence of manipulation and moral inconsistency seems obvious to the outsider, but such is the power of deception at work in the life of the insider that he remains grateful for his blessed circumstances!

History shows us that people are only too eager to be led by a strong-willed leader, someone of strength, vision and charisma, someone persuasive and who has all the answers. Coupled with the absence of faith in the one true God, this is a recipe for manipulation, even manipulation of entire nations.

This can be seen in politics and religions. For example, Germany of the 1930’s, arguably the most cultured country in Europe, stooped to being led by a megalomaniac. The populous of post First World War Germany, desperate for a solution to the prevailing social and economic chaos, was highly vulnerable to the messianic rhetoric of a national “saviour”. In the end, Germany sold its soul to a mere man who claimed to have the remedies for the country’s woes. And indeed the leader did

have remedies and did do good - for a while. That was the bait! A morally bankrupt philosophy was then sold to the public by a godless leadership, obsessed with occult beliefs.

This so-called Christian nation should have “smelt a rat”. Instead, they had little understanding of the God of the Bible, whom they professed to follow. In attempting to exterminate the Jewish nation and all things Jewish, the Nazi party and their followers disregarded God’s clearly stated position regarding His chosen people. How ironic considering Jesus was a Jew, the Bible was written by Jews, the church was founded by Jews and originally consisted only of Jewish believers. But this only indicates the power of deception when personal responsibility is replaced by infatuation with a charismatic leader.

Of course I’m not suggesting for a moment that Jeevah mesmerized a whole nation; far from it! Nevertheless, he was a leader who promised utopia to those prepared to follow him, perhaps numbering a couple of hundred souls, while shaping the lives of many hundreds more. Although he failed to deliver, he did do some good. After all, who would want to follow a man who didn’t at least appear to be doing good? His students eagerly sought his advice on a whole range of matters pertaining to life, starting in an innocent way and imperceptibly moving to complete control in the case of some. This was all with their willing cooperation and gratitude. Before long, all areas of life were open to his advice. Some had become completely dependent on a man, giving up their rights as individuals. Being led was an open-ended thing, overly trusting, blinded to what would eventually become Jeevah’s self-serving motives.

Were the followers purely victims? Every person must answer for one’s own life. Although we make mistakes, we are not completely excused for failing to see some of the pitfalls in life.

I was personally seduced by Jeevah’s charisma, his apparent kindness, his so-called holiness, unlike anyone I had ever met before. His vision to make the world a better place made his invitation to be involved very beguiling. But I know now that had my life been built on the right foundation, particularly in my university years, I would have recognized the snare that lay ahead. I was forty-two years of age before I realized that the Bible was the only true foundation in life, placing God in His

rightful place, having authority over all things in my life.

I believe that we as followers disregarded our consciences, even disregarding commonsense. Without the Bible, in which intellectual honesty is esteemed, we were easy prey to the intellectual “sleight of hand”, and to the logic-deficient system that was yoga. Eastern philosophies tend to be “ways of the heart”, to the exclusion of thought; thinking was not highly valued. Commonsense was not considered a virtue. This enabled contradictions and anomalies to be disregarded.

Jeevah spent much time counselling students face-to-face. Appointments were made in his busy schedule. Some students consulted Jeevah more regularly than others, due to the variety and intensity of problems one can have. I too received counsel from Jeevah, and on one particular occasion, without my mentioning the purpose for the appointment, Jeevah knew exactly what was on my mind. He had the advice already ‘on-tap’ and I departed hard-pressed to explain what I had just experienced. How did he know what I was thinking? Had he read my mind? It took many years before I could explain what had taken place.

Some who are involved in western yoga, attracted by the physical benefits, will say that my story does not reflect an example of true yoga. They would say that Jeevah was just a bad example, saying that all yoga is intrinsically good. However

I see things differently. Contrary to the belief of probably the majority of yoga teachers and students alike in the West, I firmly believe that all expressions of yoga have spiritual roots, and this being the case, the question must be asked, “Are these spiritual roots from a good source or bad source?”

Like many, I was searching for answers to life’s problems.

Some may look to horoscopes, tarot cards and clairvoyants, others to great men. But only the God of the Bible knows the answers to life’s questions. Trouble comes when people search in the wrong places. There is only one place to go to find your direction for life. People are comfortable in being led if it means we can abdicate responsibility. Following a strong leader or the crowd (the herd instinct), is often more

appealing than thinking for themselves. I now recognize my weakness in wanting to follow a man, a guru, and accepting him as master of my life. I have since discovered that there is only one leader worth following, that is, God, in the person of Jesus Christ, the only Son of God.

End Notes

1. Graham, Michael, *The Experience of Ultimate Truth*, J. H. Books, Secunderabad, India, 2004, p 116
2. Ibid, p. 117
3. Ibid, p. 118
4. Ibid, p. 115

Chapter 13

The Spiritual Roots of Yoga

There are many forms of yoga, ranging from the yoga practiced by Indian yogis, steeped in occult practices, mantras and traditions, to the popularized yoga for the Western consumer. Yoga as practiced in the West has the image of being healthful, giving us control over mind, body and spirit. But true yoga can never be separated from its spiritual roots.

The word 'yoga' comes from the Sanskrit root, 'yui' which means 'to unite' with the infinite and supreme, universal consciousness. Like all eastern religions, yoga is amoral, meaning its "commandments" (the do's and don't's for the yogic life) exist insofar as they serve the "self" and its edification. It is a system of self-realization and self-perfection. It is utterly "experienced-based" (as against "word-based"), and progress is measured by the nature of spiritual phenomena experienced.

A yogi's ultimate aim is to be able to attain this 'union' with the Eternal Self with the help of certain mental and physical exercises. Yoga is a strict spiritual discipline involving "the mind-body complex". This means both mind and body are inseparably interconnected in the disciplines and practices (or exercises) of the yoga student. As the body is a source of distraction to the progress of the true-self, it has to be mastered by the mind. By quietening the mind and looking within, one can discover the true-self and so unite with 'god'.

Yoga is one of the six great spiritual teachings of Hinduism, with its own distinct interpretation of the Hindu sacred scripture, the Vedas. Hinduism came into being about 6000 years ago.¹

Yoga subscribes to the Hindu idea that reality is but an illusion; this concept is shared with Buddhism and Vedanta too. "Life is but a dream, and no more real than images that pass across our vision when dreaming, at which time we think are so real. Only upon awakening do we smile with relief. And so it is with our waking state, from which we can also wake when truth dawns upon us."²

Most Westerners see yoga as a purely practical tool for the balancing of body, emotions and mind through postures, breathing techniques and meditation. However the spiritual aim of yoga is difficult for Westerners to comprehend, but nevertheless vital to grasp. Not to do so is to remain ignorant of the essential and foundational aim of yoga and thereby start on a serious journey with unforeseen implications. As previously stated, the aim of yoga is to unite with the infinite and supreme, universal consciousness. What is not readily conveyed through words is that this "union" involves the loss of identity.

Jeevah explained it this way: "Imagine a water droplet about to drop into the ocean. As the droplet enters the ocean, although it disappears, it is still there, but now in a merged form, indistinguishable to the infinite number of other water droplets. So it is with you Paul. You are that water droplet.

When you go to be with 'god', you merge with the infinite 'ocean' of consciousness. You will exist in another form, indistinguishable from 'god'. You have become one with 'god'".

I can't help feeling that when identity has been lost, a person ceases to exist! Yet unaware of this dire prospect, most people in the West see yoga today as nothing much more than a series of physical exercises. For the Western consumer, yoga is presented as a technique to master the mind and the body, devoid of spiritual consequences.

Yoga that is supposedly devoid of religious dogma is known as Hatha yoga. However at the roots of Hatha yoga, physical processes and spiritual power are closely linked. In all styles of yoga, the spiritual and physical cannot be separated. All forms of yoga have their roots in mystical Hinduism.

Through physical strengthening of the body, some believe that they

develop a deeper sense of who they are as a person, leading to improvement of self-esteem. It is believed that as the body becomes more flexible, so the mind becomes more open to deeper things. Yoga is seen as a balancing tool that relaxes when feeling stressed, and inspires when feeling dull and unmotivated. Through relaxation techniques and guided meditation, not only physical benefits happen, but also the person gains the strength to be himself, and so follow his heart. Popularized Western yoga is attractive because there is no dogma to embrace. Most Westerners see it as just another form of exercise, and a good one at that – a form of exercise that does not strain or over-exert the body, and one which offers great health benefits.

Some of the claimed benefits of yoga are:

- Strengthening of the heart and circulation;
- Dissipation of stress through controlled breathing;
- Increased vitality and clarity of thinking through improved lung function and increased oxygen flow;
- Strengthening of the hips, spine and legs through controlled exercises;
- Toning of the whole body;
- Relaxation of the nervous system;
- Improved flexibility and relaxation of the muscular system;
- Release of toxins and the calming of the mind.

The list of health benefits is impressive, but regardless, I would advise people not to practice yoga. Instead I would recommend pursuing health benefits through lifestyle, nutrition and some of the practices outlined later.

The foundation of Jeevah's organization was Patanjali yoga. Patanjali was an early Hindu scholar who was believed to be reincarnated in human form to help humanity. He wrote 196 statements, or 'sutras', covering all aspects of life, including a code of conduct by which a noble and honourable life can be lived. Each sutra contains an idea that is supposed to guide the student towards knowledge of their true self.

For example, "Everything around you is constantly changing. However there is something within you that is not changing. Inquiring into and observing this 'something', brings one closer to the truth of existence, the truth of what we are".

While Patanjali yoga seems to be free of religious practices, it is subtly entwined with religion, that religion being Hinduism. Patanjali yoga, stripped of mantras and ceremonial rites that are integral to Hinduism, was the version of yoga taught at our school. It was a synthesis of all yoga forms, a distilled methodology, freed from extraneous, religious non-essentials. Patanjali taught eight disciplines that were necessary in yoga:

1. Abstinence from harming others, from theft and greed
2. Physical and mental purity
3. Physical posture exercises designed to bring about such mastery of the body that one's concentration is not distracted
4. Breath control, in order to gain mastery of the vital energy by which we live
5. Withdrawal or mental detachment from desire
6. Fixing the mind of a single point, the spiritual energy centre of the body
7. Meditation; being able to direct a steady, unbroken flow of thought towards the point on which one is concentrating
8. "Self-collectedness": being able to see the object of concentration as it really is, without mental distortion. In this final discipline, one could experience "bliss", in losing consciousness of the body, breath, mind, intelligence and ego.³

Common to all forms of yoga is the attention to breathing and the cultivation of stillness within. Meditation is a practice of withdrawing from the busy world for fifteen to twenty minutes each day to take part in a procedure for releasing stress. Meditators must avoid concentrating on anything in particular. Concentration holds the mind at one level and will not allow it to submerge into a deeper level. The aim is not to direct your mind in any specific direction. The purpose is supposedly to give the meditator deep rest, making him more energetically active. Meditation is meant to bring about a state of consciousness, which allows the mind to be awake while the body is in a state of deep rest. By allowing the mind to go into neutral the person is supposedly brought into tune with the universe.⁴

With meditation comes the cultivating of the power of the mind over the body. The progressive steps are firstly the observation of the breathing,

and then the emptying of the mind by focusing on rhythmical or controlled breathing. Secondly the physical movements or exercises. The emptying of the mind places the person in a state whereby he becomes susceptible to unknown spiritual “forces” or entities beyond his experience. This is because his thinking power has been suspended, and his free will to choose what is right and wrong is not operating. At this point supernatural powers of the darker side may enter his mind. In our yoga school, this practice of emptying the mind was performed as preparation for the physical exercises. The stilling of one’s mind was known as ‘conditioning’ and had an integral part to play in the practices to follow.

In traditional Indian yoga, mind and body control can produce some remarkable effects. Some more experienced yoga practitioners can sometimes consciously control what are normally involuntary functions of the human body including pulse rate, digestion and kidney activity. Alpha brainwaves, which correspond to a state of serenity and peaceful alertness, can be measured. An experiment on a Hindu doctor in 1963 showed the rhythm of the alpha brainwaves to be so regular and monotonous that they were difficult to interrupt, even with distractions such as strong light, loud noises and the immersion of the hands in iced water for forty-five minutes.⁵

Jeevah too confirmed that indeed great feats were possible when the yoga adept had mastered his own body, thereby exercising complete control over normally involuntary functions. One such feat was to stop breathing but not die. This brought the person into a state of hibernation where breathing is suspended. According to Jeevah, a person in such a state had once been placed into a sealed chamber without air. The person remained in the chamber beyond the time limit for human survival, yet the person came out of the chamber unaffected. Another feat that showed the degree of mind over body was the ability to mentally track the passage of something swallowed, through the digestive system. If a rose petal was swallowed, a person could have control of the rose petal’s exit from the body.

The traditional Hindu yogi was able to choose when to leave his body and this world. Yogis believe that when the mind is so perfected and has reached such an exalted level of purity one can leave the physical body and end one’s life. According to the author of “Death of a Guru”,

this actually happened. Rabindranath Maharaj, son of a renowned yogi, describes his father's death after a progressive life of meditation.

Rabindranath was only five years old at the time.⁶

Kundalini yoga is the darker side of yoga. Kundalini is the word used to describe an immensely powerful energy force believed to lie coiled and dormant at the base of the spine. Kundalini yoga involves various techniques for awakening the energy force and making it rise slowly up the spinal column. As it rises, it passes through the seven psychic centres of the human body, with the highest one at the top of the skull. As it contacts each psychic centre, various psychic experiences take place. When eventually the practitioner becomes skilled enough to raise the kundalini to the highest centre, he receives the ability to perform miracles. These miracles, which do occur, are made possible through occult powers.⁷

In the West there is a predisposition to rubbish things spiritual, that is, phenomena resulting from the activities of spirits, which can enter our dimension of the five senses. This scepticism is a deception, resulting in the acceptance of a lie. What is this lie?...that the "world" of spirit forces, both angels and demons, is always a figment of the imagination.

Yoga tailor-made for the West therefore downplays the spiritual, but this is not to say that it doesn't exist. Jeevah's yoga teaching didn't overtly display the use of the miraculous through the use of spiritual power. We did not practice kundalini yoga, with its obvious occult base. However like all genuine yoga groups we did practice pranayama (breathing combined with movement). These practices stimulate energy centres (chakras) and open up powers and energies that may be asleep in the individual. I do believe that such powers influenced Jeevah. He had an uncanny ability to read minds.

He had seemingly supernatural control over individuals who succumbed to his authority. Did Jeevah alone inspire two hundred people into unswerving loyalty, or was he assisted by a supernatural power? It is my belief that spirits did in fact assist him, even if he was unaware of their presence. Why would Jeevah openly admit to spiritual assistance anyway when he could claim the kudos for himself? Nor would spirit beings "break their cover", knowing full well they ran the

risk of being acted against, thus losing their power over the individual.

Westerners deny the Hindu roots with its obvious unattractive ceremony, by pointing to the good outcomes and benefits from the “cleansed” version of yoga so often practiced in the West. But does offering healing from physical ailments like asthma and drug addiction mean that yoga can only be good? My experience has shown otherwise. Denying the existence of the spirit world out of fear or skepticism doesn’t prove anything. Seeking truth will eventually resolve the matter one way or the other.

End Notes

1. Allan, J., Yoga – A Christian Analysis, U.K. 1983, p.12
2. Graham, Michael, The Experience of Ultimate Truth, J. H. Books, Secunderabad, India, 2004, p. 183
3. Allan, J., Yoga – A Christian Analysis, U.K. 1983, p. 15
4. Burrell, M.C., The Challenge of the Cults, U.K., 1981, p.99
5. Allan, J., op. cit., p.9
6. Maharaj, R. R., Death of a Guru, U.K 1978
7. Allan, J., op. cit., p.6

Chapter 14

Meditation

“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings as eagles; They shall run and not be weary. And they shall walk and not faint.” Isaiah 40:31

Meditation is one of the most popular alternative health remedies of the century. It claims to have the answer for stress, cancer, heart disease and many other ailments. How can meditation have such a positive effect upon the body?

Meditation is thought to be the tool that can help you take a deliberate break from the stream of thoughts that are constantly flowing in and out of your mind. Some people use it to promote spiritual growth or find inner peace, while others use it as a relaxation and stress-reduction tool. But which kind of meditation?

Before we decide to practice meditation, it is important to understand that there are two types of meditation. Firstly, the original form, Biblical meditation, and secondly, the form of meditation that has its roots in eastern religion. These are the only two forms of meditation.

Let us compare the two. Biblical meditation can be described as pondering verses from the Bible. This may involve memorizing a verse and considering how this may apply to one's life.

Joshua 1:8 tells us: *“Do not let this Book of the law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”*

Biblical meditation involves listening to God. He is a person who speaks

into the lives of individuals.

“I am the Good Shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.”
(John 10:14)

“He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out. ...He goes on ahead of them and His sheep follow Him because they know His voice.”
(John 10:3-4)

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will speak into the lives of all those who choose to be a part of His fold. Only He can give us the right and true direction for life. Hearing God speak to us comes through quietly listening and meditating on the Scriptures.

As the Old Testament Prophet, Elijah, waited on the mountain to hear God’s message to the people, the word of the Lord came to Elijah, not in the powerful wind; not in the earthquake, not in the fire, but finally in a gentle whisper. (1 Kings 19:11-13).

This implies that God wants us to listen carefully, in quietness, for the still small voice of God. The mind is focused, not on self, but on listening with anticipation for the God of the Bible to speak to us.

This kind of meditation is active, not passive, although without stress or striving. Relaxing in God’s presence, and putting our own thoughts aside is a key to hearing His voice. But how do we recognize God’s voice? The key is to know Jesus the Shepherd. As we get to know the Shepherd more, we become more familiar with His voice.

“His sheep follow Him because they know His voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from Him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” (John 10:4-5)

The book of Psalms has many references to meditation. Here we find reference to meditating on the Scriptures:

“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked...but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night.” (Psalm 1:1-2)

Meditation can also be reflecting on the works and deeds of God. This is acknowledging God's greatness and power and giving Him thanks and praise for what He has done.

"I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds." (Psalm 77:12)

"I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done." (Psalm 143:5)

Meditating on the works of God requires the mind to be still, while surrounded by the beauty of God's creation. Majestic mountains, the crystal clear water of a lake, the ocean, the sky, a forest or a garden, can all be the focus for reflecting upon God's awesome qualities. Only He could create such beauty, with such design and order, from the minute detail to awesome grandeur. Praise must go to Him, the creator, our creator Father God. This God is a personal God who wants to relate to us. Meditating on the splendour of God's creation should not be confused with the kind of meditation that worships nature, or "mother earth", without acknowledgement of a personal creator.

While Biblical meditation requires the stilling of the mind in order to focus on God, rather than ourselves, it does not involve the numbing of the mind, or sending the mind to sleep.

"My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises." (Psalm 119:148)

Biblical meditation involves thoughts. However not negative thoughts. Our thoughts must be pleasing to God.

"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord." (Psalm 19:14)

What are the positive benefits of Biblical meditation? It develops a sense of trust in our Creator. In meditating on His greatness we understand that He can solve the greatest problems in life, and we can give our cares and worries to Him.

"Cast all your anxiety on to Him because He cares for You." (1 Peter

5:7)

It helps clarify the right direction in life, the path God wants us to take. *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.”* (Proverbs 3:5)

It gives hope, knowing that God is for us, and in control of our situation. It keeps us positive, not through our own efforts, but because of a powerful God who is outside of ourselves.

Now let’s look at meditation that has its roots in yoga or eastern religion. Unlike Biblical meditation, which encourages the mind to ponder, or to think, eastern meditation demands no effort.

An instructor gives the following advice:

“Tell your mind that it can go wherever it likes and that whenever it is ready, you will still be here sitting quite still, exactly where you are. Simply watch your thoughts. Be a witness to them and don’t try to stop them. Have no preference for good thoughts or bad thoughts; just let them come in whatever shape or form without identifying them or owning them.” 1

This advice is in direct contrast to the Biblical advice:

“May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Your sight O Lord.” (Psalm 14:19)

The Bible implies that only good thoughts are acceptable to God, and these are the only thoughts that we should allow to enter our mind.

“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.” (Philippians 4:8)

Eastern meditation moves through five stages:

1. Object-based (The mind focuses on a ‘thing’ such as a lighted candle or an object.)
2. Subtle (The mind focuses on elements of the earth: fire, water and air. The subtleties of the senses become more acute.)

3. "I"-ness (The self becomes an uncomplicated point of reference from which all other-less states dissolve.)
4. Objectlessness (The mind needs no support at this point. The mind experiences vast and endless stillness.)²

Once the goal has been reached, it seems that the word 'meditation' no longer applies. In the fourth stage the mind cannot be credited for pondering on thoughts. Instead, the mind has been emptied of all thoughts.

The benefits of the mindless state are supposedly as follows:

"As each wave rises and falls, merging with the ocean, so each individual soul is able to merge with supreme consciousness in the ultimate experience of deep meditation. This blissful state is one in which the student is free from the senses, free from pleasure and pain and free from the concepts of the mind."³

It is true that a person can benefit temporarily from being cut off from emotional pain and stress. But this is only temporary. Instead of dealing with the problems, this kind of meditation is just sending the problems out of sight, out of mind, for a short period, after which they will come flooding back. Biblical meditation on the other hand gives us a permanent way of dealing with emotional pain. Casting our cares and burdens upon the Lord, and believing in faith that He will take care of us, is a much more permanent solution.

"Do not be worried about food or clothes. After all, isn't life more than food? And isn't the body worth more than clothes? Look at the birds. They don't plant seeds or gather a harvest and put it in barns; your Father in Heaven takes care of them! Aren't you worth much more than birds? Which one of you can live a few more years by worrying about it? Instead, be concerned above everything else with His kingdom and with what He requires, and He will provide you with all these things. So don't worry about tomorrow, it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings." (Matthew 6:25-27)

While eastern meditation may seem to offer temporary relief from stress, grief and emotional pain, there are side effects. Resorting to this kind of respite can be an escape, and may not encourage one to take

action in dealing with their problems.

From a spiritual point of view, emptying the mind lays the mind open to receiving the influence of all kinds of spiritual powers.

Powers of darkness may enter the mind, giving rise to fear, nightmares and negative thoughts at a later time. Biblical meditation on the other hand offers the full protection of a powerful God, who will see to it that no dark forces enter our minds while we are focused on Him.

Instead of emptying the mind, wait on God and ask Him to fill your mind with His thoughts. These steps may be useful:

1. God requires a clean heart, so ask Him to forgive you for any sin.
2. Give God your burdens.
3. Put on the armour of God, (Ephesians 6:10-20). This is asking for God's protection against forces of evil.
4. Wait on God. Ask Him to speak.

Why do people resort to eastern meditation for relief from their problems? Could it be that eastern meditation has the effect of a fast-acting drug? How quick people can be to try it because it is popular and seems to have immediate benefits, but ignore the remedy for our souls provided through a personal relationship with the God of the Bible.

How similar can eastern meditation be to drugs? Former yogi, Rabindranath Maharaj, reports the following:

“Often while I was deep in meditation the gods became visible and talked with me. At times I seemed to be transported by astral projection to distant planets or to worlds in other dimensions. It would be years before I would learn that such experiences were being duplicated in laboratories under the watchful eye of parapsychologists through the use of hypnosis and LSD. In my yogic trances most often I would be alone with Shiva the Destroyer, sitting fearfully at his feet, the huge cobra coiled about his neck staring at me, hissing and darting out its tongue threateningly.”⁴

And on another occasion:

“I meditated as much as ever and still experienced heavenly music, psychedelic colours, astral travel and spirit visitations in my trances.”**5**

“I didn’t need drugs to have visions of other worlds and weird beings, and to see psychedelic colours and to sense a oneness with the universe and the feeling that I was god...I got it all by transcendental meditation.”**6**

Rabindranath Maharaj, now a Christian and who wouldn’t advocate the practice of yoga under any circumstances, believes that “the whole drug culture is based on the same deception as Hinduism: that is the deception about the unity of life and that life evolves upward to union with the universe.”**7**

The personal testimony of Rabindranath Maharaj is a powerful one indeed. Born and reared into a devout Hindu family, society, and nation, who could contradict his conclusions? His insights and opinions based on first-hand experience, well equip him to declare that only Jesus Christ is Lord:

“Jesus Christ said that He is the way, not a way, so that eliminates Krishna and everyone else. Jesus did not come to destroy sinners – like Krishna said of himself – but to save them. Jesus is not just one of many gods. He is the only true God.”**8**

We can all be supremely confident in the knowledge that God reached down his hand of love to a dying world. He sent His Son Jesus, who is alive today. He will forgive us, cleanse us and place us in unity with God the Creator. All we have to do is ask.

End Notes:

1. Universal Well Being Magazine, Yoga edition, 2004
2. Ibid
3. Ibid

4. Maharaj, R. R., Death of a Guru, U.K 1978, p. 75

5. Ibid p. 107

6. Ibid p. 158

7. Ibid p. 159

8. Ibid p. 140

Chapter 15

The God Within

To his yoga students Jeevah made it abundantly clear that, “Yoga is not a religion but a methodology that enables one to become god; it is above religion because it has been liberated and cleansed from religious ceremonial, ritual, and worship.” For us in the West, this is a subtle distinction but nevertheless true. In stating that yoga was not a religion he is not denying it is spiritual; to the contrary he is claiming it is the highest form of spirituality, the exact essence of spirituality. He would explain that yoga’s methods are not aimed at earning merit in order to appease god, but rather to master oneself, to perfect oneself, thereby discovering the god within. Meditation is the method employed to find the god within, cultivating detachment of the true self from the world.

I now realize that looking within to find god brings about a focus upon oneself, which inevitably leads to elevation of ‘self’. Yoga justifies this focus on the self as necessary in order to discover the true-self. This true self is supposedly god within us, as distinct from the natural-self. The natural-self is to be diminished through cultivating detachment from worldly desires.

Yoga, whether Hatha yoga or Kundalini yoga, or any other form of yoga, treats ‘self’ as god. Self-realization is to find the god within, to unite with god, to become god.

The aim of meditation, practiced in eastern religion, is self-realization. This is achieved through an altered state of consciousness, derived through meditation. When self-realization is achieved, the person supposedly escapes the wheel of reincarnation and enters ‘samadhi’ or bliss.

In his book, “Death of a Guru”, Rabindranath Maharaj, as a young

Indian yogi, explains his feelings as he himself aspired to become a great yogi as his deceased father had been:

“Although I did not yet consider myself to have fully achieved Self-realization, I felt that I was very close to jivanmukti, the highest ideal for man set forth in the Bagavad-Gita. To attain this deliverance from original ignorance while still in the body would assure me that I would never be reincarnated again, but would be reunited with Brahman, my true Self, forever. I was now convinced that this was the state my father had reached, and I sought the same liberation from the illusion of individual existence. I was the one and only Brahman, pure existence-consciousness-bliss; so it was to be expected that other people, recognizing the degree to which I had realized this loftiest ideal, should bow down and worship me. Indeed, seated before a mirror I worshiped myself. And why not? I was God. Krishna, in the precious and beautiful Bhagavad-Gita had promised this divine knowledge to the one who practiced yoga.” **1**

However years later, the young guru had an encounter with the one true God, as he was about to bestow his blessing on a poor girl who offered him a few coins, for her a great sacrifice:

“I glanced at her offering of coins uncomfortably. Of course I had much to give her in exchange. Reaching out to touch her forehead in bestowal of my blessing, I was startled by a voice of unmistakable omnipotent authority: “You...are...not... God!”...My arm froze in mid-air. The words smote me like the slash of a cutlass felling the tall green cane. Instinctively I knew that the true God, the Creator of all, had spoken these words, and I began to tremble...I felt that I must fall at the holy feet of the true God and ask his forgiveness.” **2**

In Hindu yogic philosophy, self-effort is the means of salvation.

This is in direct opposition to Biblical Christianity, where human effort will never help us to reach God. Salvation is through Jesus Christ alone. Salvation is only found by humbling ourselves to accept His forgiveness for sins, and by His grace alone can we be seen fit for heaven. Acknowledging only Jesus Christ as our Saviour, can save us.

“For it is by grace are we saved through faith – and this is not from

yourselves, it is a gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.”
(Ephesians 2:8,9)

“It is by the name of Jesus Christ...Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:10-12)

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ.” (1 Timothy 2:5)

We can only really understand and come to know the true God through a divine revelation. How is this divine revelation possible? Only through seeking. Those who are seeking have taken the first step to finding the true God. However it is important not to give up the search until you have encountered the supernatural experience – a divine revelation of Jesus: not just a man, but God. Part of seeking is studying the Bible and praying.

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.” (Luke 11:9,10)

Yoga strives for idealism without fault; wanting to change the individual and the world to a higher, selfless state; to banish greed and selfishness. This sounds like a noble ideal. It sounds selfless, and yet this whole philosophy is based on the ‘goodness’ of self; self is god; self can achieve great things without the help of the true God, the God of the Bible.

The Bible teaches the opposite: humility. This means being humble enough to admit that you are wrong, that you need forgiveness. Jesus Christ is the only one who can forgive. Unless we look to Him for forgiveness, He died for nothing. He is God.

My personal experience in yoga was one of continual striving for good. However I now see it as striving to serve self. What is the true motivation for good works? Our yoga school in particular was a model when it came to ‘goodness’. It was idealistic, without fault, wanting to change the world to a higher selfless state. It aimed to banish greed

and selfishness, yet the true God was not in it. All our striving was from humanistic effort. Unless a person is serving out of true love for God and willingness to serve Him alone, helping becomes self-centred. As yoga students we helped others because in so doing we helped ourselves. We dedicated ourselves to good works to promote our journey to self-realization, the sublimation of self.

The focus was self; it was plainly selfishness and deceptively sold as altruism.

“There are only two religions: man is god, or God is God.” (Frank Peretti)

‘Man is god’ is the religion of humanism; the belief that everything is god and god is everything is known as pantheism. In western yoga, humanism and pantheism merge.

Stripping eastern yoga of its religious elements brings yoga into agreement with humanist thought, which predominates in the West. Secular humanism considers all forms of the supernatural as myth, and that the supernatural – that is, anything outside nature does not exist. Humanism implies that nature is everything and there is no supernatural. This is the humanist’s ‘worldview’. **3**

A worldview is any ideology, philosophy, theology, movement or religion that provides an overarching approach to understanding God, the world, and man’s relations to God and the world. **4**

Everyone has a worldview. Not to have one would be not to think. Our worldview serves as a basis for evaluation. We measure the facts, ideas or opinions around us against our own worldview. In order to formulate a correct worldview it is important to discern, to discriminate and to weigh up all things against truth.

A Biblical worldview is based on the following presuppositions:

- God created heaven and earth by His supernatural power
- Truth and non-truth; right and wrong, are spelt out clearly in the Bible
- Disobedience to God and the Bible is sin
- God is the final authority

A humanist worldview is based on these presuppositions:

- There is no God
- The world came into being of its own accord
- There are no absolutes.
- We should be free to choose our own values.
- Self is the final authority

Whichever worldview we choose, the choice is ours to make. However the choice we do make determines the kind of eternity we are destined for. Every man's destiny is in his own hands. Can there be a more profound decision?

End Notes:

1. Maharaj, R. R., Death of a Guru, U.K 1978, p. 60
2. Ibid, p. 108
3. Noebel, D.A., Understanding the Times, U.S.A., 1996, p.26
4. Ibid, p. 58

Chapter 16

How Do We Recognize Truth?

*“When it’s all been said and done,
There is just one thing that matters
Did I do my best to live for truth To live my life for You
When it’s all been said and done,
All my treasures will mean nothing
Only what I’ve done for love’s reward
Will stand the test of time.”*

Jim Cowan, 1999

If we are serious about finding the truth then we need to search with all our heart. We need to ask God to show us the truth.

“Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33)

“When the Holy Spirit comes He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13)

“Jesus said, ‘I am the way, the truth and the life.’” (John 14:6)

“You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.” (John 8:32)

Searching for the truth is like searching for gold or a precious pearl. Not all that glitters is gold. Pearls are not easy to find.

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant seeking pearls. And when he finally found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.” (Matthew 13:45-46)

Truth is the most valuable possession, but how do we recognize it?

Francis Schaeffer was a great thinker of the 20th Century. He had a great impact on university students, reasoning the difference between truth and falsehood. Through his writings and lectures he illustrated convincingly that some things are absolutely true and some things are absolutely false. Right and wrong, truth and error, are not matters of personal opinion or individual preference.

Using the illustration of a coin: a coin is truly solid - it is not a liquid or a gas, regardless of personal opinion, even when that opinion is a majority opinion! There are scientific principles that prove that the coin is solid. Regarding religion, some may believe that Hinduism is the truth, others believe in Islam.

Both cannot be right because their ideas about who God is are radically different. But the principles for finding out which religion is true and which ones are false remain the same. The true religion is the one that is closest to reality, and the closer we are to Christian belief, the closer we are to reality. **1**

Dr. Schaeffer held that if we read the Bible, use our commonsense and look at the world correctly, we should conclude that the teachings of the Bible are true. If our view of the world is incorrect, we must come to a correct worldview before we can understand most teachings of the Bible. **2**

Dr. Schaeffer showed that Hinduism, Buddhism and pantheism have certain things in common at their foundation (that everything is god, and though god is infinite, god is not personal). The Bible teaches that God is both personal and infinite and created the world out of nothing rather

than emanating the world out of himself. The God of the Bible is different from the god of the pantheist. And both views cannot be right.

3

According to most eastern thinking, the material world around us is an illusion (including mankind by deduction), and that god, who is impersonal unconsciousness, is the only reality. This surely means that there can be no way of knowing whether anything is real because our world is an illusion. But this flies in the face of commonsense. According to the Bible, there is reality, there is truth, and apart from the Bible's teachings there is no way of really knowing how we in fact know what is true. 4

The other option is to believe that there is no God. An atheist believes that the world simply happened because of a combination of time, energy, matter and chance. In this view, chance is viewed as some kind of creator; chance almost becomes some thing that creates. To say that everything happened by chance is an irrational statement of faith. 5

Scientists who reject the concept of a Creator God should nevertheless agree (even if grudgingly) that all living things exhibit evidence of design. The human brain is perhaps the most outstanding, orderly arrangement of matter in the universe, and much more complex than the most complicated computer ever built. The complexity of the inter-related and inter-dependant parts of the human body is seen with all the organs; take the eye (an extension of the brain), for example. The human eye cannot function as intended if any one part is missing, undeveloped or deformed; consider the following possibilities:

- an eye without a retina would mean no image,
- an eye without muscles would give blurred vision
- an eye without a lubrication system (tear ducts) would cause a dry eyeball (or worse),
- an eye without an adjusting iris aperture would have no control of brightness,
- an eye without regular eyelid movements leads to a contaminated cornea...

...and so on. The presence of each and the proper functioning of each are essential for the eye to be an eye.

This multiplicity of inter-related and inter-dependant systems necessary for proper function is known as the quality of irreducible complexity: the

eye can't be simplified and still exist; nor is there a "primitive eye" which developed into the eye of today. As the eye is a mechanism that could not possibly have been formed by successive, slight modifications (as evolution claims), it therefore could not have evolved. The inescapable conclusion is that there has to be an intelligent designer. And so it is with the whole creation; the imprint of design is all over it!

If the universe shows evidence of intelligent design, then who is the designer? The Bible tells us *that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* (Genesis 1:1) and *"For by Him (Jesus Christ), were all things created, things in heaven, and on earth, visible and invisible..."* (Colossians 1:16) **6**

Humanism, the religion that man is god, is based upon only man's ideas; it has no basis for absolute truth and falsehood, right and wrong. In denying the existence of God, a humanist has no real explanation of why the world and man are here, or why anything is right or wrong; therefore everything is permitted. Morality and laws are based on simple majority opinion, or worse, on what a leader believes is best. **7**

A humanist may say that he believes in god, but this is not God. If everything is god, and god is everything, then man is god, animals are gods, the stars are gods, and a heap of manure is god. The true God is a supernatural person who wants to be an authority in our lives. However He does not force His way in. He gives us the freedom to choose.

Only the Bible's teaching about God and reality is consistent with what really is (i.e. truth); that God created the world intentionally, with a reason and a purpose, because He is an intelligent, purposeful, infinite, personal God.

Francis Schaeffer warned that we must never decide to become a Christian on the basis of someone else's life. Our faith must be based on the objective truth of God's perfect word, the Bible, where there is no error. I became a dedicated follower of Jeevah, because of the outstanding person I thought him to be and the moral standards he taught. I did not ask myself whether Jeevah's philosophies were based on a foundation of truth. If I had done so, I would have discovered the error of eastern religion, which is the root of yoga. I would have

discovered that there is indeed a personal God who, through relationship with Him, wants to make a difference in my life and in all of history. This difference in our lives is not made by means of our own efforts, but in God's strength. The difference that God makes in the lives of His followers is proof of the existence of the God of the Bible. **8**

The concept of God central to eastern religion is not a personal God. It is an impersonal god, a force that is one with the universe and is the universe. The Hindu god is supposedly in everything, including all of mankind. This teaching rejects the distinction between the Creator and the creation. It also rejects the truth that there is only one true God.

Yet the Bible says, "*There is no other God but one.*" (1Corinthians 8:4)

The God of the Bible is the creator of the universe. He is a personal God to whom we can relate on a personal level. God speaks to us using the personal pronoun "I".

"I am the Lord, and there is no other, apart from me there is no God... It is I who made the earth, and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshalled their starry hosts." (Isaiah 45:5,12)

The creation testifies to the necessity of there being an intelligent designer, a God with a mind, who has made deliberate design decisions. This is in stark contrast to the idea of god as a force, working by chance, with no intelligence or design.

The God of the Bible is pure and holy. He cannot tolerate sin. Because everyone has sinned at one time or another, we could never be pure enough to be accepted by the true God. However God has made a way for us. We can ask for forgiveness through His Son Jesus Christ. In doing so, we can enter into a relationship with a personal God. Eastern religion claims that because god is within us, then no one is sinful. It claims there is no need for repentance; we do not need forgiveness; we simply strive to be the best we can, because God is supposedly within us. **9**

When Jesus made the statement, "*The kingdom of God is within you,*" (Luke 17:21) he was speaking to the Pharisees, a sceptical religious

group of the day. He did not mean that each of them individually was God, and did not mean that God was dwelling in them. The Pharisees had been asking Jesus about the Kingdom of God, and in answer to their question, He simply stated that the Kingdom of God was standing in their midst. That is to say, Jesus Himself, in the midst of them, represented the Kingdom of God. **10**

Eastern religion looks for happiness in life without facing the sin issue. The Bible teaches that we can never be happy and will never have true joy until we come into right relationship with Jesus Christ. **11**

Eastern religion strives to make others happy, to do good, to be good. But how can we make others happy when the root cause of unhappiness is ignored.

It takes faith to believe in a God we cannot see. This is why throughout history men and women have resorted to gods they can see. They have made idols and images. They have substituted the one true invisible god for materialism, success, pleasure or self-promotion. However God makes it clear that all mankind is without excuse.

“For the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they (people) are without excuse.”
(Romans 1:20)

It is the responsibility of each individual to search for truth. Those who seek long enough and hard enough, with a humble heart, will surely find it. Being willing to accept God's forgiveness is the beginning to discovering the truth. Unless we do, Jesus Christ died for nothing. He is God. He died that we may know Him, and with knowing Him as a person, comes the ability to discern the truth.

What is Truth?

Jesus said, *“I am the Truth.”* (John 14:6)

“When He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth.”
(John 16:13)

Truth calls us to obedience: *“I walk continually in your truth.”* (Psalm 26:3)

God's word is Truth: *“Your Law is true.”* (Psalm 119:142)

End Notes

1. Parkhurst Jr., L.G., Francis Schaeffer- the man and his message, U.S.A., 1985, p. 119-120
2. Ibid, p. 122
3. Ibid p. 123
4. Ibid p. 123-124
5. Ibid p. 124-125
6. Ham, K., Is there really a God?, Australia, 1998, p. 5-6
7. Parkhurst Jr., L.G., op. cit, p. 132-133
8. Ibid p. 15-17
9. Enroth, R. A Guide to Cults and New Religions, U.S.A., 1983, p. 56
10. Berry, H.J., Examining the Cults, U.S.A.,1979, p. 118
11. Ibid p. 115-116

Chapter 17

The Do-It-Yourself God

“I believe in God”, many will glibly say. Sadly, under scrutiny it often becomes apparent that this “god” is nebulous, lacking substance or evidence for existence. This god is always a benefactor and servile, never expecting a response from the believer, and comes “obligation free.” Being thoroughly one-dimensional, I believe this god is actually an extension of the person himself, an expression of the believer’s needs. As a consequence, the identity of this divine entity is forever changing, according to the mood of the believer. These gods are as numerous, as are the personal opinions held by individuals on what god should be like.

Despite the multiplicity of concepts for God, many refer to a universal force with greater-than-human powers. This makes God an ‘it’ rather than a ‘Him’. It is believed that this universal force can help in achieving life’s goals and pursuits, bringing success in business and self-healing through the power of the mind.

But this is not how it should be. Firstly it is important for anyone who believes in a god to identify their god, to clarify which god we are talking about. The God of the Bible is not a universal force, but a person who wants to have a relationship with us. He wants to speak to those willing to listen. How does He speak? Through divine revelation, through our thoughts, but always confirmed through God’s written message to mankind, the Bible. There is only one true God – the God of the Bible.

Therefore those who believe in god the force (rather than God the Person), must identify their god as a different god to that of the Bible. Such believers claim to be in control of their circumstances and lives,

with a bit of help from god the force, who is there to serve them. But are people really above God?

Who should be serving whom? Isn't mankind actually weak and powerless compared to the awesome power of the true God?

The true God desires that we declare, *"You are in charge of my life God, and I will go wherever you lead me. I will humble myself and admit that without you I am nothing"*. How do we reach this position?

"Humble yourself under the almighty hand of God, and He will exalt you in due time." 1 Peter 5:6

Because our lives fall short of God's holiness (like every human being that has ever existed), we need to be cleansed and made holy. Only God can do this:

"If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

Then we are adopted into His family as his children, He as our Heavenly Father:

"For as many as received Him, (Jesus), to them He gave the power to become the Sons of God." John 1:12

As we live in obedience and repentance, His blessings, protection and guidance are then available:

"Cast all your cares onto the Lord, for He cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7

God will take delight in seeing our lives fulfilled as He originally intended. His plan for our life needs our co-operation:

Jesus said, *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He that abides in me, I will abide in Him. For without me you can do nothing."* John 15:5

Now that God lives in us (as Temples of the Holy Spirit), we have a duty of care under God to use and maintain our body as He intended, not as the world would have us do. After all, how can we be effective for God if unwell due to our life style and habits? He can heal us when we are sick, and renew our minds regarding our health obligations.

There has recently been an explosion of interest in spiritual healing for physical sickness. Statistics show that those who believe in "god" have

a greater chance of being healed. However it is imperative to ask, "which god?" The Bible states that nobody should have fellowship with false gods.

False gods can indeed heal; through these healings they can then exercise influence over the subject, displaying the real malevolent intentions of these spiritual forces.

Believe it or not, spiritual forces are real; there are many at work in the universe. Who are they? Where did they come from? At the foundation of the universe, God created.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Genesis 1:1

Prior to this there was a battle in the heavenly realm. An angel, Lucifer, originally created by God as a beautiful supernatural being, a servant of the Almighty God, became jealous of God's power. As a result, Lucifer and a band of fallen angels were thrown out of heaven, forming their own powerful force.

"How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, You who once laid low the nations!" Isaiah 14:12

Together, Lucifer and his demons have been raging war against mankind, trying to blind them to the truth of the true God. Only the sacrifice of God's Son, Jesus, cancelled the power of Lucifer and his angels over mankind. But because God gave mankind freewill, He does not force His Son, His message, His truth, onto the people He created. It is up to each individual to search for truth with all their heart.

"Seek the Lord, while He may be found." Isaiah 55:6

"I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me." Proverbs 8:17

"Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart." Psalm 119:2

"The Lord is with you when you are with him. If you seek him he will be

found by you, but if you forsake him he will forsake you." 2 Chronicles 15:2b

To find the true God requires humility and an open heart. It requires a willingness to read and accept the message God has provided for us in the Bible.

So, what if we say, "I believe in God"? How do we know whether our God is the true God? We know if we can answer "yes" to the following four questions:

- Do I believe that God alone created the heavens and the earth by His supernatural power?
- Do I believe that God is a Person who wants to be intimately involved in my life?
- Have I accepted God's forgiveness for personal sin?
- Have I placed the God of the Bible in control of my life?

Unless we can answer 'yes' to all of the above questions, we are following a different god.

The God of the Bible wants relationship with us. He asks us to *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength."* (Mark 12:30)

A person following a different god may see healings and may see miracles, but ultimately a "pay-back" will be required. This may come in the form of emotional problems, nightmares and even extending further down the generations.

"I am the Lord your God... You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol... You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name." (Commandments 1, 2, and 3 of the 10 commandments – Exodus 20:1-7)

God is a gracious and forgiving God. In Old Testament times, His people, the Israelites, strayed many times from the true God into worship of false gods. Continually God challenged them and brought them back to Himself. God spoke directly to the prophet Moses with

accompanying signs of thunder, lightning and smoke on Mount Sinai. God said to Moses, *“Tell the Israelites this: You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven: Do not make any god to be alongside me; do not make for yourself gods of silver or gold.”* (Exodus 20:23)

But soon after that, the Israelites had forsaken the true God. They made and worshiped a golden calf. Moses’ successor, Joshua, who led the Israelites into the Promised Land, reminded the Israelites of the absolute importance of worshipping the one true God:

“If you violate the covenant of the Lord your God, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the Lord’s anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land he has given you.” (Joshua 22:16)

“Now fear the Lord and serve Him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River, and serve the Lord. Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:14-15)

Later in history, the prophet Elijah proved to the Israelites that their God was the true God. As recorded in the Bible, there was a drought in Israel. God had kept back the rain because the people were praying to Baal instead of the true God, Jehovah.

“How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; But if Baal is God, follow Him.” But the people said nothing. Then Elijah gave the people a test. He said that they should make two altars – one for Baal and one for Jehovah. They were to put an offering on each altar. The god who would send fire from heaven would be the true God. The prophets of Baal tried first. They prayed all day. They jumped on the altar, cut themselves and shouted, “Baal, hear us!” But there was no answer. No fire came.

In the evening, Elijah poured water on his altar. He prayed, “O Lord God of Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel.” Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench around the altar.

“When the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!” (1 Kings 18:21-39)

Who is the true God? The God of the Bible is not just for the Israelites. Jehovah is God of gods and Lord of lords.

Chapter 18

Who is the true God?

Those involved in western yoga will claim that yoga is not a religion. Strictly speaking they are half-right; it is more a methodology with a spiritual goal. But to claim that yoga is purely physical would be wrong, as even a cursory reading of yoga literature will soon make clear. Yoga likens itself to an 'umbrella'; under it and in it and all around it are gathered all the world's religions, belief systems and philosophies.

This is why yoga is so appealing to the West. Because it is supposedly devoid of religion, you can bring to it any religious philosophy you like...even Jesus Christ. In fact Jesus Christ may be worshipped as one of the Hindu gods. But is this the true Jesus?

Followers of eastern religion would claim that Jesus was only a man, equal to other gods and figureheads. They would claim that Jesus Christ belongs no more to Christianity than any other religion. However, the Jesus who appears in other religions is not the true Jesus. There is only one Jesus. He is supernatural God. He became man for a period of time to fulfil God's purpose for mankind so that through His death on the cross we might be forgiven for our sins and have eternal life. Through God's supernatural power Jesus rose from the dead and became alive again. He lives today and makes a difference in the lives of His followers. This is the true Jesus.

The word 'god' and 'God' have different meanings. A 'god' is something to be worshiped. It can be an object, materialism, a philosophy or "god-in-everything", including self. To a Christian, there is only one person who should be worshiped, and that is God the person, the God of the Bible. Christianity states that Jesus Christ is the only way to Heaven. This is criticized by other religions, yet most religions claim that worship of their god is a path to their particular version of the afterlife. Where Christianity differs is in the distinction between truth and falsehood, right and wrong. Christianity states that there are absolutes, and these are

set down for us in God's word, the Bible.

Why should we trust the Bible?

The Bible is the genuine word of a trustworthy God because:

1. It has not been tampered with. Nor has it evolved or undergone "improvement". It remains the same as originally written because it was complete and perfect from the beginning. It is therefore the exact representation of what God said and did. The Dead Sea Scrolls are evidence of this.

2. It is always historically correct. It has no errors regarding historical personages and events. Secular history and archaeology will not disagree. Any present contradiction will be inevitably resolved through future discovery.

3. It is without scientific absurdity. It affirms experiential science. That is, science that is based on the long-established scientific method (able to be repeatedly tested and demonstrated in the present). This is not to be confused with historical science which cannot be proven as it concerns past events and therefore ineligible for validation using the scientific method. Historical science will always remain untestable theory, unable to be proved. An example is the theory of evolution.

4. All prophetic events that should have been fulfilled have in fact been fulfilled to the letter. As the Bible is thirty-percent prophecy, this measure provides very convincing validation of the authenticity of divine authorship.

Unlike eastern religions, the God of the Bible is a person whom we can know through relationship. The Bible addresses God in the plural, with differing functions. He is actually three persons in one: God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (the Trinity). God has always existed in a personal loving way as three persons. Personal relationship is at the core of existence in God Himself.

God is whole and complete. By His freewill, God created our universe and mankind, not out of need, but out of a desire to have us share in the relationships He already enjoyed within the Trinity. Created in the image of God, man has a reason for his need to be in a relationship

with some other person; it is inherent in the God-given gift of personality. To be a man (or a woman) alone is to be incomplete. The Trinity answers the questions modern man poses. The Doctrine of the Trinity wasn't invented in order to answer modern man's questions; it has always been there in the Bible. It answers powerfully modern man's questions and solves His problems. The existence of the Trinity means that mankind has been created to communicate with God. A relationship with God includes God speaking to man, and man to God. God can speak to us through the Bible, our thoughts and our conscience. He can tell us true things about Himself and the world. We can speak to God directly through prayer and God will answer. **1**

Francis Schaeffer, author and apologist for the Christian faith, said many times: "Man is who he is, no matter what he says he is. He is created in the image of the infinite, personal God who is there." **2**

What about the competing gods of other religions? Do many paths lead to Rome? A cursory study of their vastly different natures and attributes will soon show they are not the same as the God of the Bible. Nor are they the same as each other; they are actually many different paths leading to many different destinations! They must be therefore distinctly separate gods. Can they all be valid?

Despite the claims of the religions of the world, there can only be one true God. By definition, the term God means the Supreme Being, or "the ultimate one". To say otherwise is a contradiction in terms. There cannot be many "ultimate ones", as this denies the very meaning of ultimate, of one being higher than all the others. Only one can be supreme or ultimate. The "Ultimate One" (God) is ultimate in every possible attribute, for example love, kindness, patience, wisdom, truth, power and servanthood, to name a few. Therefore how can there be a multiplicity or panoply of 'gods'? Do they share around amongst themselves the godly attributes?? If so, they must be deficient in some way. But God cannot be deficient, meaning none of them would be the "ultimate one". No! Logic demands there can be only one "ultimate one", while all others must be the "lesser ones". It follows therefore that these deficient "gods" are not God at all. They are false gods, pretenders to the title of "supreme being" and are actually spirits. For the Christian, spirits are malevolent, while spiritual beings are angels whose role is to serve God.

Only the Judeo-Christian faith offers eternal life with God as a free gift. This is known as grace; God rewards us with eternal life, even though we do not deserve it. All other faiths or religions offer their ultimate goal to the adherents through the good works of their adherents. Striving is involved here - one's own personal efforts and sacrifices. For the Christian, the personal sacrifices required by other religions don't apply.

God Himself has taken care of the Christian's shortcomings (sin). He made the necessary sacrifice on behalf of the believers in Christ. This is a substituting sacrifice.

The Bible requires faith in the free gift of salvation offered, not good works. The means by which a believer in the Bible reaches the God of the Bible can never be good works. No matter if an infinite number of good works were performed, the aspirant could never reach the God of the Bible.

Eastern religion deals with the issue of forgiveness in a very practical way. Followers of eastern religion believe that it is just and right that each person pays for their own sin. The way to a higher state of consciousness, and therefore 'god', is earned through meditation and acts of service. Those who do not take efforts to achieve this state pay the price by re-entering the world as a less-valued being. This is the point of reincarnation. Paying the penalty for one's own sin seems logical. And so does the idea of acts of service to compensate for our wrongdoing. It is a natural human tendency to draw up a list of checks and balances, with good points on one side and bad points on the other, and how pleasing it is to be able to work at earning enough good points to outweigh the bad. But this is not Christianity. Christianity deals with the issue of forgiveness in a supernatural way.

God, in His supernatural wisdom, has made a plan that transcends human thinking patterns. C.S. Lewis said that Christianity is something that mankind "could not have guessed," but that, once revealed, is recognizable as indisputable truth.³

The idea of the one true God sending His Son to take on the sins of those who will accept His forgiveness is inconceivable to the natural mind. Yet those who take the step of faith and accept God's forgiveness

through Jesus Christ discover a supernatural release from guilt, a weight removed and a new freedom. All this, without having to pay penance. The only requirement is humility.

The Bible tells us that the “points system” only leads to pride. And pride is the biggest hindrance to a relationship with the true God. God says that the only way to eternal life is through accepting the forgiveness offered by His Son, Jesus Christ.

There is a reason for this: accepting God's forgiveness and asking God to take control of our life through a personal relationship with Him involves humility. No longer are we in control. God is in control. Humility is the very thing that God requires because lack of it is pride, and pride is the stumbling block, the barrier between man and God.

Denying self in the Christian context takes on a different meaning to denying self in the form of eastern religion. For the Christian faith, denying self is saying, “Yes God, you are in charge of my life. Not I, but You Lord. You are the person in charge of my life”. For eastern religion, denying self means self-sacrifice, denial of materialism and worldly pleasures, acts of service, kindness and goodness for the sake of humanity, all for the purpose of becoming ‘god’. Goodness and god are one. There is no personal God - God is just an impersonal force of goodness.

To understand the true God we must understand the first book of the Bible - Genesis. Our world today is not the perfect world

God originally created. God gave man freewill and unfortunately, Adam and Eve chose to use their freewill to disobey God.

From that time on, the creation has paid the price. We all sin and we all pay the price of guilt. Only Christianity can free us from guilt, not through personal compensation, but through acknowledgement of the price that Jesus Christ has paid for us through His death on the cross.

Salvation by God's grace is a total work, dealing with the past, the present and the future. Christ's death made possible God's forgiveness of our sins. When we give our life to Christ, God cancels out our past sins, changes our present life, as we have a relationship with the true God, and gives us hope for the future. This hope is eternal life; Jesus

promises us a home in heaven with Him after we die.

Jesus said, *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. I am going there to prepare a place for you.”* (John 14:1-2)

Cancellation of sin does not mean that we no longer sin. However as a person maintains a relationship with Jesus Christ and endeavours to understand the Bible, God works His cleansing power in our lives. We cannot be perfect, but perfection is not a condition for salvation. Only God is perfect and only a perfect God can save us from our sins. As the Holy Spirit teaches us the true meaning of the Bible, we can receive strength to resist temptation, and our desire to be obedient to Jesus Christ grows.

Endnotes

1. Parkhurst Jr., L. G., Francis Schaeffer - the man and his message, U.S.A., 1985, p.147
2. Ibid, p.159
3. Noebel, D. A., Understanding the Times, U.S.A., 1996, p.18

Chapter 19

Life's Four Key Questions

Apocalyptic groups are springing up with increasing rapidity. As the year 2000 approached, heralding a new millennium, we saw the coxing out into the open the spiritually weird and wonderful. A common theme was a charismatic leader who predicts global catastrophic events, the antidote for which is obtained by joining the group. The leader alone has exclusive access to this secret knowledge.

The Bible too foretells a period of great global turmoil, accompanied by great human suffering. Known as the Great Tribulation, it involves cataclysmic events on an unprecedented global scale, demanding urgent solutions. Using charisma, spiritual feats and political savvy, a rising political star out of nowhere convinces the nations of the world to trust him in the role of benevolent dictator and “saviour”, the man with all the answers for a world in dire straits. As absolute ruler, however, his true intentions are soon revealed. Using strong powers of deception, he persuades most, compelling the rest to worship him and him alone. These Biblical prophecies were written over 2000 years ago, yet in recent times we see the rising up of similar authoritarian charismatic leaders (albeit short-lived). A pattern is being uncannily “rehearsed”; catastrophic events are predicted, followed by the rising up of a leader with all the answers, ensnaring the unwary by deception.

I am reminded of the saying, “Future events cast their shadow before them”. Jeevah’s vision of catastrophe cast a shadow over the lives of the followers. Was he a fainter example of this phenomenon? Uprooted from their former lives in a distant city, the transition was not easy for many of Jeevah’s followers, including myself. Our loyalty to Jeevah kept us going; or was it our dependence? I sought his guidance on everything. He satisfied my hunger for things spiritual, for glimpsing

otherworldly knowledge.

Since the beginning of time, to know the future has motivated mankind to seek many and varied wise men and women; prophets, clairvoyants, palm reader, tarot cards and many others. Religion has fulfilled this hunger of the soul to be reassured regarding the future. Deep down every person longs to know the answers to the four eternal questions, which your belief system must answer:

Who am I?

Where did I come from?

Why am I here?

Where am I going?

I thought Jeevah could answer these four eternal questions. But could he?

In expecting answers from Jeevah, I was also giving him power. My dependence on Jeevah's wisdom, my devotion to seeing Jeevah's plans realized, had unwittingly given him power over my life. With this comes the danger of manipulation and exploitation. Many worked years for nothing, some gave thousands of dollars, even hundreds of thousands, and later regretted their degree of trust.

Is there an infallible measure for determining whom to trust? If only we had a written guidebook on such matters, something that was absolutely reliable and truthful, proven to be of the highest integrity since the beginning of time. "Sounds too good to be true," you might say. It is true that no man could write such a book; all men and women are in the final analysis corruptible. But what if God wrote the book? After all He would surely qualify, right? Only He is morally incorruptible. Well that book has been written - the Bible. If you are truly searching for the absolute, unchanging truth, it deserves to be read (before discarding it).

Your belief system must answer the four key questions. In a nutshell, Hinduism's answers the above questions like this:

1. Man originated from the most insignificant of life forms (a worm!). Man was utterly insignificant in the beginning. This is where you came

from.

2. You are in an unreal reality. All that you see in time and space is not real. What you experience is only temporary and has no real meaning (called maya). You are not real. This is what you are.

3. Man is doomed to endless cycles of birth, death and rebirth. Man dies and is born as another creature, hopefully a more highly evolved life form. This continues ad infinitum until finally the perfected man's soul escapes the cycle of reincarnation.

This is why you are here: to escape from being here.

4. You are going to merge with the "Great Nothingness". You will then not exist as an individual. This is where you are going. Since yoga has its origins in Hinduism, it might be helpful to see how they differ. I believe it will be seen that they are essentially the same, two variations on a theme as it were. Let me try to explain.

As recorded in Hinduism's sacred scriptures, the Vedas, man's goal is to eventually reach salvation or union with the world soul. This is called moksha. Brahmans, Hinduism's priests, taught that salvation was attainable by performing elaborate sacrificial rituals in order to placate the many gods.

Later other sacred writings, the Upanishads, taught that through reincarnation a person's soul progresses through many life forms, then through classes of human beings in turn, performing duties according to the level he finds himself.

These things include moral, social and religious duties, all-important to the Hindu. During my involvement with Jeevah and his teaching of yoga, never was mention made of yoga's origins. Rather Jeevah claimed that yoga was superior to all religions and faiths. While religions emphasized ritual and the centrality of a holy person who was to be worshipped, yoga was pure "religion". Yoga was the original spiritual essence that all religion has corrupted in their many and varied expressions we see in the world today.

Jeevah explained that yoga had stripped away Hinduism's cultural and religious overlay to reveal a methodology freed from peripheral

religious rituals and observances, not essential to reaching moksha. Through self-discipline, holding one's physical passions in check, a person's soul may escape the cycle of death and rebirth and be joined with the world soul, that is, moksha.

However, as previously mentioned, the similarities are profound; the goal was the same, the method of achieving the goal common to both: yoga is indeed derived from Hinduism.

Yoga is in fact one of the many dogmas embraced by the huge "umbrella" that is Hinduism. The fact that Hinduism allows for the worship of 330 million gods gives some indication of the enormous ability of the religion to take on many guises, accommodating even contradictory doctrines!

Vedanta, a variant of Hinduism, is a good example. According to Vedanta, the creator-god Brahman, has incarnated himself in human form many times such as Christ, Buddha, Krishna, Sri Ramakrishna and many others. These highly dissimilar "gods" are called avatars, meaning super-saviours. I believe Jeevah had high regard, even reverence for all these avatars just mentioned, as he presented me with a set of scripture booklets covering all of those holy men.

Yoga is a highly disciplined journey to reach perfection through self-effort. Yoga teaches that the soul longs to get back to where it belongs: union with the world soul through reincarnation. A person's soul may begin as a worm, then through death and rebirth, the soul evolves, moving higher in the order of things until it becomes a human being. This is consistent with the theory of evolution, as understood in the West. The goal is to refine oneself through birth and rebirth to eventually escape this earthly existence. At this point the soul (atman) joins with the world soul (paramatman).

If we do not acknowledge a personal creator, a God who designed the universe with ultimate precision, then we must believe in an impersonal force. If we claim to be logical, rational beings, then we are obligated to discover which of the claimants is really the title-holder to the throne of the universe.

If all gods bar one are false, then so too, all religions are false, bar one.

The true God is for you to discover. Then you will know where to place your heart, your life. This knowledge will be liberating. To know your true self, you must know the true God.

Chapter 20

The Ultimate Reality

What is the bottom line about yoga? Is yoga the way to become one with “god” as it claims to be? Yoga declares that this is its ultimate goal. As mentioned earlier, the word “yoga” is derived from the Sanskrit root, meaning to yoke (or connect) with “god”. Practitioners in the West, who have secularized yoga, all too often overlook this.

Yoga claims to enable the aspirant to reach “god”. First we need to acknowledge that if we aspire to become one with “god”, then we obviously fall short of who this “god” is: his qualities and attributes etc. are not our qualities and attributes. We are frail and imperfect human beings who aspire to be the perfect “god”. To achieve this is the goal of yoga. This is what yoga claims to make possible for the aspirant; to make an imperfect human into the perfect “god”.

Therefore the central question that demands an answer is this:
How do we become worthy enough to become one with God and live with him for eternity?

The teachings of genuine, traditional yoga were directed at overcoming human weakness in order to become perfect. The teaching consists of disciplines, practices and the cultivation of right thinking to be performed over a lifetime at great personal sacrifice. Therefore yoga answers this central question with the words: through human effort.

Having considered how Yoga answers the question, how do all the world religions answer the same question? Knowing the answer then is the key to the ultimate reality. It is beholden upon each human being concerned for his eternal future to investigate how each religion answers this question. This includes yoga.

In doing so, an unmistakable pattern or common theme emerges, a striking uniformity to the answers. Over and over again, yoga and the religions /philosophies of the world offer the same answer. And that answer is:

We become worthy by perfecting ourselves through our own efforts, performing good works, rituals and practices. That's it! That's the message and method of all the religions including yoga.

However one religion and one religion only, gives a different answer. In this it stands alone. It is so radically and utterly different in its answer that it offends many. Its answer is the exact opposite to that provided by all the other ways to "god".

The answer:

Through our own efforts it will never be possible to be worthy enough to live with God, not even for a split-second, let alone for all eternity. Where does this leave us? If relying on ourselves, then we are to be pitied because we live without hope. But there is hope because this exceptional religion has the answer no other has. This religion, (which actually isn't a religion because God, not man, designed it), reveals that it is God Himself who has made us worthy to live with Him forever. For this, He has an ingenious plan. The plan pre-existed our creation by God, such was His foreknowledge. This plan is a free gift from God; this demonstrates His eagerness to have us with Him for eternity, rather than being eternally separated. What proof of His love for us!

And what is this plan? Because man was, is, and will always be unworthy, only a perfect God could cancel our unworthiness. Imperfect man has been perfected by a perfect God. God has taken action; He has performed a sacrificial act. He has paid the price which we should have paid (but never could).

To say that this plan deserves your attention would be the greatest understatement of all time! There is much more to God's plan than I can even begin to outline in this book. Read the good news about God's plan in the Bible. Discover the sheer daring of God's plan. What a joy to know that God is fully aware of our dilemma; no amount of striving (through yoga, for example) will achieve salvation. We need not be condemned to a life of eternal hopelessness, but can confidently look

forward to achieving the ultimate purpose for our earthly existence: to live with God forever.

Jesus Christ is the ultimate reality.

Appendix A

Some Alternatives to Yoga

Alternative physical exercises

I don't advocate the practice of yoga, but a daily exercise routine is still important. Please devise one suitable for yourself, with the assistance of a health professional. Keep in mind that an exercise regime should not have spiritual connotations, connection to martial arts or elevate oneself above the outside authority of God.

I believe that Pilates and the Alexander technique are safe because they meet the cautions mentioned above. However, be aware that sometimes yoga is grafted on to Pilates. One to avoid would be the Feldenkrais technique. The inventor of the technique was an exponent of judo and defines his system as 'the melding of the physical, psychological and martial arts', and aims to 'remove any outside authority from your inner life.'

For your interest, an abbreviated outline of my personal routine is as follows:

- lymphasizer (small round trampoline) 5 minutes
- daily walking (30 minutes for a sedentary person)
- 10 minutes of stretching exercises as follows:

a) standing

1. involving arm stretching and slow swinging
2. torso bending forward to sides and to floor
3. squatting with both arms stretched forward at all times

b) lying on back

1. arm and leg stretching
2. upper leg on abdomen
3. leg to opposite side
4. leg lift over head to floor

c) lying on front

1. raise right arm and left leg upward simultaneously, then left

arm, right leg.

2. with hands level with shoulders, raise head and shoulders while keeping hips on floor

d) sitting on floor

1. rowing
2. forward bend while legs crossed
3. head to each knee in turn with legs crossed

e) kneel on floor with straight back. Bring other leg forward so that foot is ahead of the knee. Then lean forward and hold for 10 secs. for full groin stretch. Same other leg.

f) Stand approx. 30 cm. before an open doorway, placing hands and forearms on door frame, upper arms parallel with floor. Place feet one ahead of the other. Push forward using back foot, hold for 10 secs. This opens the chest to counter hunching.

Alternative breathing exercises

For breathing exercises the Buteyko method, invented by a Russian doctor, is a safe alternative to yoga breathing. As argued already, yoga has inherent spiritual dangers; Buteyko breathing is a scientific technique that is totally devoid of any spiritual component, yet has the same physical benefits. It is not only helpful to those who suffer from asthma, hypertension and angina, but also for migraines and even cancer. Oxygenation of the cells, achieved through the Buteyko breathing method, is a powerful tool for fighting cancer. The Buteyko method needs to be learned from a Buteyko teacher, after which a person can practice it on their own at home. The Alexander technique also incorporates breathing, which is in combination with the physical movements and postures, and may be helpful.

Appendix B

Scripture Keys for Meditation

Asking God to supply your needs:

If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer. (Matthew 21:22)

And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. (John 14:13-14)

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. (Matthew 7:7-8)

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given you. (John 15:7)

Nothing is impossible with God. (Luke 1:37)

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. (1 John 5:15)

Life's Problems:

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake. (Psalm 46:1-3)

For I the Lord, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, "Do not fear; I will help you." (Isaiah 41:13)

Cast all your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall. (Psalm 55:22)

The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; He delivers them from all their troubles. (Psalm 34:17)

Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7)

Disappointments:

The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. (Psalm 34:18)

As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you. (Isaiah 66:13a)

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds. (Psalm 147:3)

Come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)

Healing:

Praise the Lord O my soul, and forget not all His benefits – who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases. (Psalm 103:2-3)

He (Jesus) was pierced for our transgression, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)

Guidance:

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. (Psalm 32:8)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and He will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid...for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you or forsake you. (Deuteronomy 31:6)

Protection:

The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and He delivers them. (Psalm 34:7)

The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1)

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, For you are with me; your rod and staff comfort me. (Psalm 23:1-4)

Guilt:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8,9)

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10)

You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you. (Psalm 86:5)

Praise the Lord O my soul and forget not all His benefits – who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases. (Psalm 103:2-3)

Forgiving others:

“Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven.” (Matthew 18:21-22)

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. (Romans 12:14)

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. (Mark 11:25-26)

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

God's love:

I have loved you with an everlasting love. I have drawn you with loving-kindness. (Jeremiah 31:3)

How great is the love the father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! (1 John 3:1)

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

We love Him because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. (Luke 12:6-7)

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35,37,38)

God's greatness:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

God made the earth by His power; He founded the world by His wisdom and stretched out the heavens by His understanding. (Jeremiah 10:12)

He determines the number of stars and calls them each by name. Great is our Lord and mighty in power. (Psalm 147:4-5)

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! When I consider your heavens, the works of your fingers, the moon and stars which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him? (Psalm 8:1,3)

My own hands laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens. (Isaiah 48:13)

How great are your works O Lord. (Psalm 92:5)

The Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. (Deuteronomy 10:17)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What's the definition of a cult?

A cult is a closed group of people in total submission to an authoritarian leader who supposedly is the exclusive source of secret spiritual knowledge. The leader is accountable to no one. Fear is used to maintain control and exact physical and/or monetary advantage from the followers.

2. Why "throw the baby out with the bath water" and reject yoga just because of a bad leader?

Whether the leader is of good or bad character doesn't change the reality that yoga places the 'self' above the true God.

3. Don't you think some Christian leaders are just as bad?

It is true that some Christian leaders display poor character. Irrespective of the character of the leader, we must judge the message, not just the messenger; we must judge yoga, not just the guru. A true seeker will seek truth beyond yoga. Yoga by definition precludes submission to God. At least Christian leaders can come under God's submission again.

4. Isn't eastern meditation a good therapy for stress?

Meditation is very popular today and there are even studies to indicate that brain waves might be altered, therefore bringing relaxation. However, considering the spiritual dangers involved in switching off the mind, it is far better to use Biblical meditation and experience even better physical relief as we leave our burdens in the hands of the true living God.

5. What's wrong with doing yoga just for exercise?

Yoga does not separate the physical from the spiritual, whether it is subtly or overtly expressed. One cannot ignore unintended spiritual influences from a genuine yoga instructor. Just because a beginner may start with purely physical exercises doesn't preclude moving unknowingly into the spiritual.

6. If yoga can cure someone from asthma, isn't yoga to be recommended?

It is far better to choose a practice devoid of spiritual connotations, such as Buteyko breathing or even swimming. While yoga may have some positive health benefits, the negatives outweigh the positives. A major negative is yoga's power to capture the student's mind, blinding him to the possibility of being corrected and seeing more truth.

7. Aren't all religions really worshipping the same God?

As the attributes of the many gods differ so markedly, likewise the basic beliefs (e.g. salvation and heaven just to name two), the religions cannot possibly be worshipping the same God. Islam teaches that those who call Jesus the Son of God will not go to heaven; Christianity teaches it is essential for the believer to proclaim the opposite. This is not a trivial difference; without Jesus Christ being God's Son there is no Christianity.

8. Can't I do yoga using the name of Christ and be safe?

Meditating on the person of Jesus, while the heart and mind are actively seeking Him, will bring us closer to God. At the same time we can hand over our stress and worries to Him. However this is not yoga. Yoga and Christian meditation can't be mixed. The use of the name of Christ as a mantra involves numbing the mind and does not involve actively seeking Jesus, the person.

9. Can't yoga make me a better Christian, seeing that it advocates doing good?

Many people think that being a Christian is being a good person and

the addition of the moral teachings of yoga will make them an even better person. In truth, being a Christian is more than just being a good person. It is accepting forgiveness for our sin and acknowledging that without Jesus Christ we are nothing. Yoga on the other hand teaches that through being good we can receive spiritual enlightenment, to the point of even becoming god (the god within). The two are therefore opposing. Christians do good works because they love Jesus and want to obey Him. Yoga followers do good works because they are trying to be the very best they can be, without the need for a personal Saviour.

10. Does Satan really exist, or is Satan just a term used for everything that's evil in the world?

The Bible makes it clear that there are powers of darkness and light. Satan and his followers, called demons, are actual spiritual beings that have power. However powers of darkness can never defeat the powers of light: God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and also God's angels.

11. Can evil spirits control a human life?

It is possible for evil spirits to manifest in a person's life. Examples of this are seen in those who practice Kundalini yoga. Not being under the protection of Jesus Christ makes a person vulnerable, especially if that person invites fellowship with such spirits through participation in evil practices.