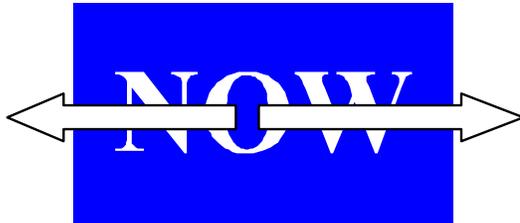


Issue 145—February 2010

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Harding Meetings—81 Greville St.

Next Meeting—date to be advised

(02) 9419 7394 or

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Editor's Note,

One of our long-time readers, Berry Dunston, (see below) is the Convenor of the Australia Tibet Council of Tasmania. Berry agreed to provide us with the summary of the recent visit which follows this note. We also have a contribution from Colin Drake outlining the background to his recent book and a personal note from an old friend Bob Penny on the practical applications of Headlessness.

The mailing list has been updated. The revision process revealed that quite a lot of addresses were dead and that some deliveries were blocked by spam filters. I asked Pete Sumner about this and he pointed me to a page of the ClearSight website 'Email Hints' which offers suggestions about this problem and actions which help ensure the mail gets through.

<http://www.peterspearls.com.au/email-tips.htm>

The new arrangement is that the NOWletter is posted directly to our Traherne website with past issues archived in PDF format on the 'Capacitie' site as usual. My hope is that a click on the link in the index of the notifying email will take you to the article of choice. This is yet to be seriously tested and I'd appreciate feedback on any failures.

The NOWletter appears between 8 and 12 times every year and is a vehicle for news and views about awakening to what is really going on. The content is based primarily on contributions from readers, either their own writing or examples of what moves or interests them. Subscription is free.

Index of articles and back numbers from 1993 at:

<http://www.capacitie.org/now/archive.htm>

Thoughts on His Holiness the Dalai Lama's 2009 Tour of Australia

from Berry Dunston

His Holiness the Dalai Lama toured 'down under' again in December 2009. On this tour he visited Sydney, Melbourne and Hobart and flew across to New Zealand from Melbourne as well.

As usual, he participated in a huge number of events each day. These included several days of teachings in Sydney, the World Council of Religions and an Australia Tibet Council Breakfast in Melbourne, a University of Tasmania presentation in Hobart as well as a public talk at each of his destinations.



He also gave many individual and small group audiences - for example with representatives of the Chinese Australian Community, with Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns, with members of the Tibetan community living in exile, and with the media.

Whilst at the teachings in Sydney I noted that on recent tours, the Dalai Lama has selected a text written by one of the early Indian masters, particularly texts from the Nalanda tradition. Given he could easily select any of the later texts written after Buddhism moved into Tibet from India, I assume his actions are deliberate and that he is making a conscious choice to select these early Indian texts rather than any of the huge selection of later texts from the Tibetan schools of Buddhism.

I do not claim any knowledge of why the Dalai Lama does what he does! I simply bring what little I know to an analysis of the things I notice. As a psychotherapist, I have learnt EVERY behaviour has meaning and patterns will eventually form if you continue noticing the behaviours. I do not know the Dalai Lama well enough to check my suppositions with him, however, I do know him well enough to know he is skilful and that he acts with intention.

I am intrigued by the whole Chinese situation being played out between the Han Chinese and the people of Tibetan regions, now within the People's Republic of China (PRC). The historical underpinnings of this relationship are complex and I often wonder what may act upon the situation to bring about a more productive dialogue between them. Over recent years, I have noticed the Dalai Lama's actions and I do see patterns emerging.

One pattern is a demystifying of Tibetan Buddhism and another is an emphasising of those things which are common to all the Tibetan Buddhist schools, while also deemphasising those practices which are not shared by all traditions. My sense is his selection is sending an important message. A message, which can perhaps best be understood when put into the context of criticisms made by early translators of Tibetan Buddhist texts. It needs to be remembered that many early translators of Tibetan texts were either Christian missionaries or followers of the Theravadan traditions of Buddhism, however, some were Western scholars of Mahayana Buddhism. Some of these saw Tibetan Buddhism as being so corrupt they labeled it as "Lamaism" not Buddhism.

This term Lamaism has stuck and has come to be seen as describing a feudal monastic system, full of magical practices involving demons and devil worship. One description of Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism can be found in L.A Waddell's "The Buddhism of Tibet". Waddell described it as being - *at its worst "Primitive Lamaism" and "a priestly mixture of Sivaite mysticism, magic and Indo-Tibetan demonolatry, overlaid by a thin varnish of Mahayana Buddhism"* (p.30).Footnote 1.

The PRC government officials have used such descriptions to represent their invasion of Tibet as having 'saved the Tibetan people from Lamaism'. The PRC also use them to call into question the validity of *all* Tibetan Buddhist practices and the value of this ancient tradition, which lies at the heart of Tibetan culture for Tibetan peoples.

Why would Tibetan people, now living in Australia, follow this tradition if it were of no value to them? Why would Tibetan people, now living in China, put themselves at such great risk - of imprisonment, torture and loss of life - for the sake of keeping their traditions alive or keeping a photograph of the Dalai Lama within their own homes, if it was empty of value for them?

I know many Tibetans, now living in exile, who see Tibetan Buddhism as central to their Tibetan identity and to their freely chosen manner of expressing their humanity, wherever they may now live. They continue to demonstrate great respect for the Dalai Lama.

By using derogatory terms such as 'Lamaism' to describe Tibetan Buddhism, and 'Splittist' to describe the Dalai Lama, the PRC Government seems to believe they can wipe away the whole of Tibet's Buddhist history, including its varied teachings and practices and the monastic traditions which grew up around it over centuries. They seem to believe they can in this way rid themselves of needing to deal honourably and inclusively with the cultural values and human rights of the Tibetans and the importance to them of their language and culture.

It is interesting to note, and the PRC mouthpieces fail to include it in their characterisation of Tibetan history, that in the same publication mentioned above, Warddell also said of Tibetan Buddhism, "*At its best it is a noble part of the Mahayana - or a separate School within it - controlled by men of the highest caliber*". (p.30). Footnote 2.

To come back to the Dalai Lama's selection of Indian texts which predate the move of Buddhism into Tibet, as the texts from which he teaches and offers his own commentary. He seems to be saying with his selection - there are foundational texts in which all Mahayana Buddhism traditions and therefore, all Tibetan Buddhist schools, are rooted. In doing so, he is both emphasising and anchoring all Tibetan Buddhist schools in their original unifying source and is also saying, *not all Tibetan Buddhism is Lamaism*.

From my own reading of the history I would say - yes, there were some expressions of Tibetan Buddhism which deserved the label Lamaism. Yes, there are political factions within Tibetan groups who use the label "Tibetan Buddhism" and yet are not recognised by the Dalai Lama as such. In fact the Dalai Lama has very recently declared one such practice, called Shogun, not to be a part of Tibetan Buddhism and has specifically asked those who do Shogun practices not to attend his teachings.

The hunger for power plays a role within and between many groups formed by human beings. It can also be found in and between some Buddhist groups. Commentators have suggested that Chinese money and the PRC support for some Buddhist groups over and above some others, has recently exacerbated these divisions and may have been deliberately used as a strategy to generate a public conflict between these groups and the Dalai Lama, so bringing his ability to speak on behalf of all Tibetans, into disrepute. It is a cynical suggestion but...

I imagine, the Dalai Lama could be choosing these early texts very purposefully to emphasize the unifying roots of the various schools and to not provide any encouragement to those who would generate partisan divisions or who seek to undermine Tibet's call for an autonomous region to be established within China.

I imagine there is also a hope that by strengthening the fundamental claim of Tibetan Buddhism to be a valid expression of Tibetan culture, it will be seen as not being something from which the Tibetan people need to be "rescued" or "modernized". By people all around the world freely choosing to attend teachings and participating in some form of engagement with the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhism - such as mindfulness - it will clearly be seen that this label of "Lamaism" is not sufficient cause for people around the world to justify the invasion of Tibetan territories by the Chinese, nor to justify the continuing actions of the PRC in diluting the population of Tibet with Han Chinese or undermine Tibetan culture by refusing to teach Tibetan language in the schools within Tibet, or to deny people the freedom to practice Buddhism - often using the most brutal methods.

He seems to present himself as a rather bumbling person, who is not to be feared and is no threat to anyone. If I am anywhere near the mark in my imaginings about the purposefulness of the Dalai Lama's actions - I see a master craftsman! I believe many more people than we realize are listening to the Dalai Lama and they know when they hear him that what he says and how he behaves is about being REAL and being kind. Wisdom and compassion.

While the voices of the many who connect with this, consciously or unconsciously, may not be heard (largely because our 'sound bite focused' media let us down so badly,) it does not mean the general public do not hear or connect and it does not mean they do not think beyond the sound bites. It does not mean they are not acting on that broader, wider, deeper knowing they are touched by when they hear His Holiness speak. Many may be acting on it every day and longing to hear more of it, longing to have such realness, wisdom and compassion inform their government's policies and have their leaders act on it courageously.

I choose to live in hope and find it comforting to remind myself of the many tipping points which have marked major shifts in history. I know these have usually not been about 'everyone' shifting to a new way of perceiving or to a new paradigm at the same time. They seem to be about a 'critical mass' having made the shift and then others coming along, eventually, in that direction until the new paradigm becomes taken for granted.

Increasingly I notice the way His Holiness the Dalai Lama is making his message more and more simple, clear, humane and himself more warmly, humorously 'ordinary'. This was very evident in his December 2009 tour in Australia. He said "*I am nothing special*". He made the statement, *some people seem to think Dalai Lama has special healing powers*, and then said, *I would not have needed a trip to hospital to have an operation if I had special healing powers*, and laughed heartily.

In Sydney his message was clear, *I am not special, I am just an ordinary human being, as the Buddha was when he set out on his journey, as are you*. This message from him is so empowering and it is also challenging. He is saying, *You too can do what the Buddha has done - so - let's get on with it!*

This apparent choice, to emphasize our shared humanity, was evident again in his answer to a question "What is a day in the life of a Dalai Lama?" which came from a member of the audience at the Entertainment Centre in Sydney. His Holiness answered with a description of a normal day for him. *Starts at 4am with meditation, little bit food, some study and some other work I may have to attend to, maybe some biscuits later and some more meditation and study - Oh, yes - there is also some heavy work in the bathroom in the morning*. What could be better designed to demystify and to make himself a small target, no threat at all, to anyone!

As the Australia Tibet Council Convenor for Tasmania, I had the privilege of greeting His Holiness at Hobart airport as he arrived on December 8th. My role was simply one of welcoming him and thanking him for coming to Tasmania as the Australia Tibet Council was a sponsor of the Tour.

In Tasmania, there had been some problems aired in the media before His Holiness's visit to Hobart. Briefly, the University of Tasmania had included with their original invitation to come to Hobart, an offer to award His Holiness an Honorary Doctorate. When the significant number of International students from China who are UTas students heard of this offer, they

campaigned against such an award being given. Their campaign apparently including a threat to withdraw University of Tasmania as a preferred institution for Chinese students in future. This would obviously have impacted very negatively on the University's budget and put them in a difficult position. One which generated calls for the University to stand up to the Chinese in this matter. Yet the University did withdraw their offer and there followed a lot of very negative publicity for the University.

On the day His Holiness visited Tasmania, he was taken from the airport to the University for a formal ceremony where he was presented not with a Doctorate but with two full scholarships for Tibetan students to study at the University. Paradoxically, the Chinese international students (and whoever stands behind them in such campaigns) had created a situation where His Holiness gained something, which I feel sure he would value much more highly than yet another Hon. Doctorate, of which he already has many from prestigious universities around the world! He would now take home with him to Dharamsala, India, the opportunity for young Tibetans to study in Tasmania and to develop friendly relations between Tibetan and other students, including Chinese.

So, while it started with some anxiety in the air, December 8th in Hobart turned out to be a wonderfully happy day!

At the Public Talk later that day in Hobart, there were a number of questions asked and His Holiness gave quite long answers to some, talking about the role of parents with children, the role of individuals to the environment and the need for people to not have too many children and be kind to the Earth – become monks and nuns, he said, laughing and pointing to the rows of members of the Sangha, sitting at the front.

Then someone asked His Holiness "What do you think the fact that the Mayan calendar ends at 2010 means?" he asked his translator to repeat the question for him and they looked earnestly together at the piece of paper on which this question was written and discussed it for a minute, His Holiness then looked up at the audience, looked around at the thousands of expectant faces around him in the Derwent Entertainment Centre, shrugged his shoulders and said, "I don't know" - actually it sounded more like an Aussie "I dunno". Everyone laughed with His Holiness and the feeling was one of surprised wonder and warmth at his capacity to simply be so real and both vulnerable and courageous in his realness.

He could easily have made some extended academic comment about different calendars in use around the world, including the Tibetan one, and the meaning of differences across cultures - this man is very learned - yet he chose to give this REAL and honest response.

It seems to me, whether it is conscious and intentional or not, his realness and his congruence, his ordinary humanity *makes it okay to not know* and to not have all the answers. The impact of his message for me - *being real is okay*. A powerful learning for us all - especially for politicians and, if they have the heart to 'get it', for people who demand of politicians that *they know, they know now, and they are not allowed to not know!*

Indications many people are 'listening'

There is a lot of material I find heartening on the web recently. Comments regarding Google's position in China and many other indicators that people are listening and standing up for what they believe is right. I feel certain there is a significant and rising ground swell of awareness, interest and knowing out there about the Chinese Government's power-play tactics.

It is easy for us humans to get lost in catastrophic thinking, to retreat into the frightened 'child' voice we all have inside us and try to disconnect and distract ourselves in one way or another from feeling fear and pain. Yet in my role as a psychotherapist, I know when we do connect with that anxious child part of our self, then shifts can occur. It seems to take so little and yet such connections can generate astounding shifts and changes in our understanding and our actions.

Nourishing connections take different forms, speak with many different voices and may at times, apparently, be in conflict with each other on details - and yet that's okay. It evolves

and revolves, grows and suddenly changes come, when there is a critical mass of people who are connecting with how things could be.

I take huge comfort from remembering those days, in 2003, when people knew war on Iraq was imminent. Millions around the world demonstrated against war. Globally, we came out and we said a collective "No! War is not the way! War solves nothing!" For the first time in history this was a *global* response. It didn't stop the war happening. Yet – we all do know now of the negative impacts of that war and we know the presence of Weapons of Mass Destruction, on which it was declared, was false. This, surely, will only strengthen both the determination and the voice of the people in future.

Recently, on television news, USA service men and women were interviewed when going into Haiti to help the earthquake victims. The faces of these young people in military uniforms were radiant as they said enthusiastically, 'it is so good to be part of an army going in to help - not going into combat'. That seems hopeful to me!

I remember the tipping point which was the Berlin wall coming down and how just before it did come down, it still looked like such an intractable problem. So many were taken by surprise! So I continue to hope and I firmly believe in the strength of networks and love the idea that global networks, even if virtual, are still connections between people like great cobwebs reaching out around the world. I take comfort in the knowledge that a cobweb is made up of strands that are almost invisible, yet form some of the strongest connections between two points you can find.

I see NOWletter as being one such cobweb connecting many interesting points.

Collectively all the cobwebs will eventually connect up enough of us to arrive at a critical mass. I look forward with excitement to seeing what happens when the next tipping point comes!

Berry Dunston

1. Waddell, L.A., 1895 *The Buddhism of Tibet*, W.H.Allen & Co., Limited, UK
2. Waddell, L.A., 1895 *The Buddhism of Tibet*, W.H.Allen & Co., Limited, UK

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Letter from Robert Penny

Dear Alan and Margot, Thank's again for your ongoing production of your Nowletter. I'm an occasional reader of it, and I'm yet to contribute much by way of significant contributions worthy of inclusion. One day I shall do so. I'm a slow-coach.

My active interest over the years, ever since 1991, when I read first read Douglas Harding's books 'On Having No Head' and 'Head off Stress' (HOS) – notably HOS up to and including Chapter 2 'The Basis' -- my active interest since then has been to more and more study and understand and enjoy and live what Douglas Harding's on about. Over the past 19 years, I've done this steadily, but with numerous gaps in proceedings; gaps of my regular holidays from it, and gaps from life crowding it out.

What I can say now is this: CHAPTER 2, HOS, landed me at the goal immediately, and with plenty of work to do, and my instinct right from the start has been to closely study more and more of Harding's work. In Harding's essays and books, and in my working out of what I've learnt from them, it's been great to have more deeply-meaningful work than I've been able to handle; work that I deeply love; work that I still can't wait to get back to; work that steadily has me ready to run the race of my life; work that I find endlessly interesting and fascinating and true and beautiful and good and loving; and work that has more twists and turns in it than a snake pit.

Through my careful study of Harding's essays and books, I've found resolution to my life's problems; not resolution once and for all, but resolution anew, anew, anew, only in the moment, and only through the living of it. In recent months, I've had two of the most extreme and difficult problems of my life to cope with. Namely, my housing which I needed to change and did change, and immediately following this, the sudden accidental death of my 29 year old son David on the 12th of January. Through all of this, Harding's Headless Way, or Science of the 1st Person, once again proved, and is continuing to prove, an infallible resource.

I encourage you in your plan to keep producing the Nowletter albeit with fewer issues and a changed format. Please maintain my subscription. Love and best wishes,

Robert.

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Spiritual Experience from Colin Drake

This chapter details and analyses the author's realizations and experiences on a seven-day silent retreat in 1996. This book is based on these realizations and experiences plus those that have occurred during the following twelve years of meditation and contemplation.

The spiritual experiences I would like to discuss are my own, which occurred in late 1996 whilst on a seven-day silent retreat. These occurred after thirty years of spiritual search and practice, the last ten of which were as a devotee of the great Hindu saint of the late nineteenth century, Sri Ramakrishna. This entailed two to three hours of daily meditation, *japa* (mantra repetition) during daily activities, reading every word said by or written about him, including daily readings of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, and chanting. I then encountered a disciple of Sri Ramana Maharshi, Gangaji, who said 'Stop! Be still, you are already That'. The message being that the effort and search were masking that which is always present; all that was required was to 'stop' and see what is always here. After many years of struggle and effort this news came like a breath of fresh air and I glimpsed the essence, that undeniable ever-present reality. I immediately enrolled on the upcoming retreat and the following experiences (quoted from a letter I was writing to my sister at the time) occurred on the evening of the third day:

So this is the next day and something pretty amazing occurred yesterday afternoon/evening. I decided to sit and try out this new method whilst waiting for Satsang, to get a spot near the front you need to get there 90 minutes early. I managed to still my mind fairly quickly (I guess my meditation practice helped there) to where the only thought was 'Who am I?' At this point there was no reply. I found myself looking into nothingness where 'I' did not exist! The feeling was that inward feeling which you get in meditation plus one of peace and joy although these were not put into words as they tend to be in my meditation.

Shortly afterwards Satsang began and I did not have the opportunity to go any deeper. When satsang finished, about 6.30, it was dusk and I decided to go for a walk before dinner. I felt pretty normal as I walked past the buildings, cars and campsites, but then as I turned left and headed out towards the magnificent mountain views/ranges, something amazing happened. I suddenly felt the divine presence all around, the magnificence of the divine *Lila* (or play) of God was almost overwhelming. Then I looked up at the sky and was completely blown away by the gently swirling mass of blacks, greys, blues, gold and white with the full moon, like a gigantic iridescent pearl, giving intermittent *darshan* to all below! I felt completely intoxicated and found myself staggering like a drunkard as I surveyed the amazing scene all around. They say that the *Nitya* (the ground, the centre, or the cosmic consciousness) is indescribable, but I can tell you the *Lila* (or divine manifestation) is also that. Words may try, but they pall into insignificance compared to that divine splendour. The stark beauty of the mountain range and bluffs covered in rainforest, the gently rolling fields and valleys swathed, as it were, in dark green velvet, the trees almost shimmering in consciousness, and above all that sky, the kaleidoscope of divine colour forever rearranging itself into ever more glorious patterns. I now know what Ramakrishna meant when he said that to get the 'full

weight' of Brahman you have to accept both the *Lila* and the *Nitya*. That divine intoxication lasted all evening and a trace of it still remains. I had intended to do some further self-enquiry before I went to bed, but the 'Who am I' seemed pointless and insignificant compared to That.

The next day I was driven out of bed at 3.15 by the chorus of my roommates (ten middle aged men) snoring, and after a shower I went down to the yoga room, where finding a thick mat and a blanket I settled down to some serious yoga. I just lay in divine communion ever aware of the divine within and without. If the previous evening was intoxication, this was bliss, with an ecstatic throbbing of the heart and whole body, which was bathed in delight. This lasted for a couple of hours until the 'physical exercise' crew started to arrive. I then returned to that divine walk and I was continually aware of the divine (in the form of 'Mother') all around. Singing in the sublime dawn chorus blowing gently on my face, displaying her beauty as tree and bush, scudding across the sky tinged silver and gold by the sun, lowing in the fields ... everywhere was only 'She'! I felt I knew how St Francis of Assisi felt.

The best way to describe the feeling that accompanies all of this is as being deeply in love with a beloved who is always present, both within and without. It was even accompanied by some of the physical symptoms I experienced the first time I fell deeply in love, a deep throbbing of the heart, queasiness of the stomach and an overall glow and sense of well-being.

At this point if you, the reader, were somewhat sceptical I would not be surprised. Before this retreat I could not have dreamed that such experiences would occur. However, luckily for me, not only do I have the 'knowing' and the change that they produced, which are of course the most important, but also I have the memory plus a written and electronic record, on cassette and videotape, of myself reporting these experiences to Gangaji in front of 300 people.

These are, in essence, two different types of experience, the first acting as a catalyst for the following. The first was an immediate experience of the mystical type. In this all 'otherness' disappeared, in fact 'I' as the ego vanished leaving 'nothingness' or 'emptiness'. Describing this is very difficult for although there was nothing (no things, shapes or forms) there, and thus it could be described as 'empty', it felt 'full' of consciousness, peace and joy.

The experiences that followed were mediated by the beauty of nature and had elements of the mystical and enthusiasm whilst engendering a feeling of ecstasy! I felt charged with divine power but also I felt one with everything. I could only describe everything external as 'Mother' whilst I was the observer and enjoyer of this.

I will now consider the elements of these experiences, continuing with the labelling of them as the *first* and the *following*:

The Believer

Having followed a Hindu path for many years and being fully acquainted with the Upanishads, I was fully convinced that 'I am That'. This belief accorded with the *first* experience. However, I had also been a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna whose spiritual experience was very broad but who, in later years, became an ecstatic devotee of Kali, the divine Mother. The belief here is that everything in manifestation (the *Lila*) is a manifestation of Kali (Mother) whilst the awareness, or witness to, all of this is Siva (the *Nitya*). This accounted for the interpretation of the *following* experiences. In saying this I must point out that Kali and Siva are aspects of the one reality, 'That' (Brahman). Kali being the aspect of creation, preservation and destruction (consciousness in motion), whilst Siva denotes the awareness or witnessing aspect (consciousness at rest).

Characteristics

These experiences did have all of the various characteristics associated with spiritual experiences:

Ineffability. As I have already said, the *first* was an experience of ‘nothingness’ and ‘emptiness’ but was also full of ‘everythingness’ and ‘fullness’. The *following* were of the whole of manifestation being full of God-presence or ‘Mother’. These descriptions may seem flaky and paradoxical, but the point is that no description can do justice to them. To know what I am talking about one has to have had the experiences in question. It’s like trying to describe the taste of chocolate to someone who hasn’t tasted it, or a beautiful sunset to someone who has always been blind.

Knowing. These experiences have produced a profound ‘knowing’ which has lasted ever since. The *first*, a knowing that I am not the mind/body or ego. In fact in essence I am ‘no thing’ and yet at one with the totality which includes everything. The *following*, that ‘All is That’ and that in essence there is no separation between anything in manifestation. This could also be described in the terms of ‘all is consciousness’.

Transience. The *first* only lasted about ten minutes. However, it is readily glimpsed again, for whenever I ask ‘Who am I?’ I can find nothing, or no thing. The *following* produced an intoxication which slowly faded over the next year. Moments of this reappear when I am in nature with a still mind, i.e. totally relaxed and at peace.

Passivity. In the *first* I felt if ‘I’, as a separate entity, did not exist and thus had no will of my own. In the *following* I felt as if I was in the presence of a divine power, but also infused with and part of that divine presence. There was no will of my own, just a flowing with and enjoyment of the experience.

Timelessness. In the *first*, time totally vanished, did not exist. In this state time is absolutely meaningless. In the *following*, time seemed to have slowed as there was such beauty crammed into each moment. But time, itself, was of no consequence in that there was nothing to do or achieve.

Effects of the experiences

As previously stated, they produced a ‘knowing’ which has never left. This has left a feeling of being totally ‘at home’ in the universe, an ‘ease of being with nothing to achieve, search for or get.’ This has had a profound effect on my life, banishing all existential anxiety and creating the desire to point as many people as possible to the utter simplicity of freedom. To this end I have written an article entitled ‘Simply Free to Be’ which I am going to publish as a booklet. In fact one of my aims in studying religion and philosophy is to broaden my knowledge base so that I can turn the article into a book which will appeal to a wide audience from different religious and philosophical viewpoints.

Authentication

I reported the first two experiences to Gangaji in Satsang in front of 300 people, the following day. She authenticated them by her delight in the listening and her affirmation that there was nothing left for me to do. The experiences themselves tally with many of those occurring in *The Gospel of Ramakrishna*. They are also authenticated (although no such authentication is necessary) by conforming to the elements and characteristics previously described.

This brings me to the ways that beliefs and symbols of particular traditions are evident in these experiences. The *first* experience is a classic example from the Vedantic (or Upanishadic) tradition. In this the *atman* (individual) merges into Brahman (the totality). Note also how it is also very reminiscent of the Buddhist idea of *anatta* or no self. In fact both traditions point to the same reality, in different ways, that there is no separate individual self but that we are all part of the ‘Totality of Being’.

The *following* experiences come out of the tradition of Kali, or Mother, worship. In this the Mother is the creator, preserver, destroyer and the essence of all manifestation. The classic symbol is of her standing on Siva, who is inert, just aware of and witnessing her creation. As previously said, both Siva and Kali are aspects of the totality, Brahman. Thus both traditions have the same basis but emphasise different aspects, one the *Nitya* (internal) and the other the *Lila* (external).

Colin Drake

This was written in 2000, and underpins my book 'Beyond the Separate Self': which is based on this experience and those that have occurred, and the insights gained, during the following years of meditation/contemplation. This book is available as a download from www.nonduality.com

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Advaita matters

When faced with the complexities and apparent contradictions of Advaita teachings, both ancient and modern, I have started to seek guidance from Dennis Waite's website at www.advaita.org. It offers what I regard as serious, easily digestible no-nonsense explanations and interpretations over the full range of non-dual perspectives as revealed by the Advaita Vedanta tradition. A recent series on Science and the Nature of Absolute reality prompted me to write and find out how NOWletter readers can access the articles because I'd had a bit of trouble finding my way back to the articles of interest to me. Paula Marvelly who I think is the co-author with Dennis Waite told me "*Ordinarily, people are requested to sign up for the journal via the home page. In approximately six months or so, we shall be launching a brand new website, but for now, that is the way we tend to do things!*" Well worth registering for their newsletter in my opinion. See www.advaita.org.uk Note the addition of 'uk' to the address otherwise you'll get the USA site which, at first glance, seems more devotee oriented.

Alan Mann

Wu Wei

As life emerges from the Naught
One sees what Nothing's doing
And looks at the Inscrutable
In process of unscrewing.

Jim Clatfelter

Meetings

Academy of the Word Seminar Programme Dr Alex Reichel (02) 9310 4504 – 2nd & 4th Tuesdays– Polding Centre, Level UB, 133 Liverpool St., SYDNEY. 00 - The New Phone Number is (02) 9268 0635. Second Tuesday 6.15pm - *Healing & Well-being* - Fourth Tuesday 6pm - *State of the World*

Blavatsky Lodge of The Theosophical Society Level 2, 484 Kent St., Sydney (near Town Hall Station) Talks Programme Every Wednesday at 2.30pm and 7pm – Printed programme available 02 9267 6955 and at – www.TSsydney.org.au Email: contact@TSsydney.org.au

LookforYourself (Harding) Meetings - Approximately bi-monthly, by email notification of date and programme. See upcoming dates at top of page 1.

Krishnamurti DVD Screenings followed by Dialogue – First Friday of the Month at 6.30pm for a 7pm screening at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts 280 Pitt Street, near corner of Bathurst St and close to Town Hall in the City. (contact Terry O'Brien 0431605374). Also on the first Saturday at 2pm at Blavatsky Lodge, address above (for details - contact Stephen McDonald 0417283951). Melbourne. 1st Sunday, 2 to 5pm, Room MR B311 Level 3, CAE Bldg. 253 Flinders Lane, Joan Deerson (03) 93862237

Andrew Cohen Discussion groups – Sydney 1st Tuesday in the month-3rd Tuesday in the month - Andrew Cohen teachings. Enquiries: Graeme Burn 0416 177 012 or Christopher Liddle 0406 755 758 Eckhart Tolle Group – Enquiries: Marion Northcott 9967 8067