



Sanatana Mitra

APRIL 2010



RUDRASHIVANANDA.COM

Upcoming Events

Apr. 24/25th - Kriya Yoga 1
Union City, CA

May 1st - Chakra Healing 1
Union City, CA

May 8th-9th - Kriya Yoga 1
Ireland

May 10th - Chakra Healing 2
Ireland

May 22nd/23rd - Kriya Yoga 2
Union City, CA

Spiritual Art

I've always been attracted to the various ways that the great saints and sages have tried to express their higher consciousness to us, from spiritual poetry to philosophical writings or in music and also in art.

Poetic imagery is a great medium of expression but is limited by language – I may not understand the language used by the sage and translations lose much of the potency of the original. It seems that art forms can overcome these language barriers.

Art is a means of expressing our nature and identity, of our creativity, of our pains and pleasures, of our knowledge and ignorance and of our fears and desires. When an artist taps into her higher consciousness, she can help others understand different aspects of reality which are not susceptible to ordinary consciousness. Art has to find resonance within the perceiver to be meaningful. Sometimes, the artist herself may not be consciously aware of the deeper dimensions of her own work and how it will speak to those who ad-

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Spiritual Awakening

A sign of spiritual awakening is the dissatisfaction with popular modes of dealing with the meaning of life and the role of humanity in the universe.

The seeker after higher consciousness examines the acceptable ways presented by society to understand the essence of our existence only to find them wanting is some respect or other. This leads to despair until the path is shown that gladdens the heart and illumines the mind.

There have been and still are three traditional ways in the West that sought to understand reality – the paths of religion, philosophy and science. Those of us who try to hide from the mysteries of life and focus on the forgetfulness of desires and “living our lives,” try not to think about these paths except in passing or disinterest. Others have tried

some variations of these three paths. Some of us merely flirt with them while others commit themselves to one or the other. However, each one way has its benefits and limitations.

Religion starts with the vision of some great soul who tries to communicate his enlightenment to others in their culture but soon becomes a narrowing and exclusive institution run by unenlightened souls who substitute dogma for spiritual experience. Instead of loving all of humanity, religion becomes sectarian and compartmentalized, with its leaders justifying all manners of atrocities by twisting the words of its founder and inventing some new dogma. The genuine seeker who can find so much good and commonality between the words of the great Masters

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Problems with a Materialistic Philosophy

It is sad that the prevalent philosophy among the majority of humanity is one of materialism in some form or the other. Even among those who profess spirituality, there is in reality a desire for some subtle form of material gratification. There is actually a profound danger in the material view of the meaning of life that is quickly causing a degeneration of the value of an individual to society.

What do I mean by a materialistic philosophy?

It is easy to understand the traditional material philosophy which reasonably maintains that all that exists is apprehended by the five senses and their in-

strumental extensions – it is all matter and there is no proof for anything that is non-material. It finds support in science and in fact science now assumes that the universe is only matter and no longer even tries to look on any alternative view except to suppress it with orthodoxy. We are also familiar with political systems based on material philosophy such as communism and how they have affected human freedom and creativity.

What may not be so apparent is the religious materialism that underlies much of the major religious institutions in the world. Even though they

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Spiritual Awakening

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who have given rise to these religions are mystified and horrified by the actual state of their institutions.

Through philosophy, great souls endeavor to understand through their minds the great secrets of human existence in this vast universe. In the past these seekers after the truth have tried to provide answers to others and satisfy their thirst for meaning in life. They engaged in sincere inquiry and honest debate. Although the great philosophers have not been able to formulate one single model of reality that can satisfy everyone, their attempts have yielded all manners of mental heights. Unfortunately, in the last one hundred years, philosophy has become institutionalized and compartmentalized as well, becoming more and more academic, divorced from the concerns of both religion and science. It has become arid, yielding profuse numbers of lackluster academic papers rather than the fruit of a life-long pursuit of truth. It has become a hobby, a university discipline, or a trivial pursuit having little relevance to how one lives one's life.

The material benefits of science have been quite evident from the technological tools and toys that have made life easier, more comfortable and enjoyable. Science has greatly enhanced our understanding of the physical body as well as the physical aspects of our universe, from sub-atomic particles to black holes. However, it cannot provide any answers for those who wish to understand the spiritual life because science has restricted itself to what can be detected by the five senses or instruments which are the extensions of these senses. Before science will consider the spiritual world, it demands that we provide detectable and measurable proof of its existence. Unfortunately, all of science's instruments and tools

have been designed for the material world and are not suited for anything non-material. This is like footballers in a football field trying to tell swimmers to demonstrate their skills in the field. Science can only satisfy those who wish to believe that there is nothing beyond this lifetime and the material world.

Is there another solution for the sincere seeker? We need to consider the way of the East, especially the Masters of India who have always insisted on an integrated path. Only a way that combines the principles of religious devotion to one's higher Self or Divine nature as the goal with scientific methods of experiencing these higher states of consciousness and the appropriate philosophy to support the mental needs of inquiry is satisfying for us.

True Yoga is such an integration of the higher aspects of religion, philosophy and scientific methodology. Without devotion, yoga becomes mechanical and mentally dry. Without philosophy, the mind will wander and doubt such that the practice cannot be sustained over long periods. Without methodical and proven techniques, one merely engages in wishful thinking or emotional hallucinations.

When a seeker rejects a non-integrated path, it is the beginning of discriminative wisdom and an awakening to higher consciousness.

Spiritual Art

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mire it.

Throughout history, human beings have strived to express their understanding and aspirations in works of art. Only those which were cast in durable forms have survived to our times – those in stone, clay or bone, or the frescoes on walls. Last year, I was fascinated with the great stone images and wall paintings when I visited the Ellora and Ajanta caves in India – they had spiritual art from the 3rd century to the 9th century, from gigantic stone temple art or huge stone Buddhas to delicate and beautiful paintings. A few months ago, I visited the British Museum again and there was an exhibit of spiritual art from India, Tibet, Nepal, Cambodia and Thailand in one of the halls. Aside from the sublime and awesome visual impact, I was struck by the evident investment of humanity's time, effort and resources in even this small selection of works. Sometimes an artist would spend years to create a particular work – whether the peaceful and sublime form of a Buddha or the whirling movement of a dancing Shiva or the lovingness of Jesus.

In the past, a master artist would only spend her time and effort on some worthwhile project because of limited resources and in almost all cases, their subjects were primarily spiritual or religious, or both. Only in the last couple

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Babaji University Update

It is with great joy that I can report that SatGuru Yogiraj Siddhanath has agreed to be the spiritual patron of the university. He will be the spiritual dynamo and anchoring the divine energy of Babaji for the sake of all students.

Unfortunately, I must also report that opening of the university has been de-

layed due to bank financing difficulties, but we expect such material hurdles to be overcome so that we can start classes in 2010.

Problems with a Materialistic Philosophy

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are based on the philosophy that there is more to humanity than the physical body and that life extends beyond death in some form or other, in practice they emphasize material success and elevate the rich and powerful beyond the holy. Religious institutions are based on materialism even though their *raison-d'être* is the spiritual welfare of its members. Many crimes against humanity have been perpetrated by these religious institutions through directly instigating wars and mass persecutions or indirectly by propaganda programming of its members.

Most insidious is the often neglected spiritual materialism which poisons the efforts of many sincere spiritual seekers. This is very common in India as well where spiritual techniques have been subordinated for the gratification of material needs, whether possessions, wealth, relationships, job advancement or better health. This is not to say that one cannot be spiritual and can still satisfy material needs, it is the danger of spending spiritual energy and efforts to acquire material gains that is to be avoided. I shall go more in depth on this subject in the future. It is easy to consider a prime example – the perversion of yoga postures and the very name of yoga for the purpose of fitness and figure in “yoga studios” throughout the world. Don’t get me wrong, I have nothing against exercising and keeping fit and admire the teachers who help in this manner, but what I object to is the hijacking of yoga postures solely for this purpose and forgetting about the true purpose of these postures as a base for yoga meditation.

Actually I’m only mentioning these other types of materialism because it would be unfair for you to think that the problem is only with scientific materialism. We need to uncover the

undermining of individual freedom that is being caused by the scientific philosophy because it is this that has more open as well as hidden and subconscious influence these days than religious or spiritual materialism.

Let us consider what popular science is understood to tell us – human beings are just the result of a series of accidental and random joining of proteins evolving over a period of time through natural selection on an insignificant dust-ball in a non-remarkable solar-system within a mediocre galaxy, one among countless billions of them. Everything concerning a human being can be understood by knowing about the material interaction of some form or other – no non-material mind or soul exists. When an individual human dies, that is the total end of that individual’s existence – there is nothing beyond death.

Since the general population has a great faith in the conclusions of science in terms of physics and cosmos, biology and medicine, chemistry, engineering and even the pseudo-science of psychology – we are so in awe of the technology that has produced so much improvement in the wellbeing and lifestyle of humanity that we would accept what science is saying about the metaphysical subjects such as soul and re-incarnation that it has not made any serious attempt to penetrate or understand better.

Serious thinkers who accept scientific materialism have grappled with the dilemma of motivating humanity towards a set of non-spiritually induced ethical behavior. How do you get people to behave well towards each other if there are no consequences in the after-life or in a future life? Focus is then on the betterment of humanity – in scientific materialism, the individual is in-

significant, only the perpetuation and betterment of humanity is important. This means that the individual should be sacrificed for the well-being of the many. This kind of thinking is being used to justify all sorts of laws and regulations which take away individual dignity and freedom.

In scientific materialism there is no necessity for individual evolution, no transcending of individual limitations, no Self-realization or liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Such efforts would be meaningless. There is no respect for the individual apart from his or her contribution to humanity. True spirituality actually looks at things from the opposite side – humanity exists for the sake of the individual – this is because every person is potentially divine and can attain to higher consciousness. For spirituality, every individual is precious as each one is a receptacle of the spirit – each body is the temple of the divine, capable of evolving to unimaginable heights beyond the dreams of science, philosophy or religion.

It is important in this time to re-affirm the importance of the individual, not to the detriment of everyone, but with a balance of fundamental rights and not let fear-mongers justify the throttling of freedom in a country that has prided itself on being the country of the free. We respect the province of science but it should also know its limits and not be used to justify a materialistic philosophy. It is important to realize that science has not proven the non-existence of a spiritual reality but merely limited itself to the material world and can neither affirm nor deny the spiritual. There is no conflict between real science and real spirituality just as there is no conflict between physics and biology as long as each recognizes its scope and limitations.

Spiritual Art

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of hundred years has there started a trend towards self-expression and so we might be led into thinking that there is a movement away from spiritual art. Indeed, from about fifty years ago, there has been a movement towards commercial art – works that have mass appeal and merely have superficial meaning if any – not much better than bill-boards! This trend towards commercial art is understandable, after all, the artist needs to live and has to pay bills and if she tries to express something deeper, it might not sell.

There are artists who claim to be in a category called spiritual art. However, they may primarily be commercial also, just another way to sell themselves. After all, an artist should understand that she is expressing the spirit in every piece of work, whether it is in representation form or an abstract piece. There should ideally be no such thing as non-spiritual art.

There is much to be said for the use of abstract art to express spiritual real-

ity. Immediately, we are struck by the use of colors, curves and lines and geometry. Our pre-conceptions are challenged – there are no comfortable and recognizable forms for us to stick to and we must connect in a deeper and formerly unknown zone.

Those who have kept to representational forms have also discovered new ways of challenging our pre-conceptions by capturing and combining forms in new ways, from the grotesque to the sublime, from beauty to the disgusting, from courage to fear, from religious to irreligious – all knocking us from our comfort zone so that we can re-examine ourselves and make new connections. This is a very important part of spirituality.

It strikes me that sometimes when I look at some modern works of art, I wonder if the artist is aware of the intrinsic impact of colors in his work. Even if we forget about the subject matter and the form of the artwork, the very colors used can have a strong effect on the viewer. It is because the energy centers within our subtle body – the whirling lotuses or wheels of pranic energy

called chakras are affected by different color vibrations. These chakras are responsible for our health as well as the opening to higher consciousness – they are responsible for our health because they control the life-force sent to our organs and cells and they help in our spiritual evolution because they enable the raising of our higher consciousness energy called kundalini. Certain color combinations inhibit the proper functioning of the chakras while others can enhance them. This is part of the reason for the attraction of certain pieces of art. However, just as some people are attracted to horror movies, some people are attracted to art whose colors are detrimental to their well-being or spiritual progress.

I hope that artists will be more attuned to the use of colors in their work and be responsible to ensure the health and spiritual impact of these colors. I hope that artists will connect with their deeper and higher selves and express themselves to give us spiritual works of wonder and joy and help us to understand hidden aspects of reality.