

# Center for Sacred Sciences

(503) 345-0102

**Mailing Address:**  
1430 Willamette #164  
Eugene, OR 97401-4049

**Sunday Meditation:**  
11:00 a.m.  
1486 East 25th (upstairs)

## 1990 Fall Schedule

### Sunday:

8:30am 2-hour sitting/walking meditation (second and fourth Sundays of the month).

11:00am Meditation and Talk.

On the first Sunday of the month includes potluck and video.

### Monday:

No public schedule.

### Tuesday:

11:30am to 6:30pm. The Library is open to the public.

5:15pm Beginning Meditation.\*

### Wednesday:

8:00pm Practitioner group.\*\*

### Thursday:

7:30pm "The Wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita" Oct. 4 - Nov. 15

### Friday and Saturday:

No public schedule.

Special Christmas Day Service: Tuesday December 25, 11:00am

### CSS Closed

Tuesday Sept. 18: Library closed.

Monday Nov. 19 - Sunday Nov. 25: Thanksgiving

Sunday Oct. 7: Meditation retreat.

Monday Dec. 17 - Tuesday Jan. 1: Holidays.

\* Please make arrangements with Joel before beginning this group.

\*\* Interview with Joel required before beginning this group.

## THE CENTER FOR SACRED SCIENCES

FALL 1990

### THE NEWSLETTER

You will notice that the Center has expanded its newsletter. This issue has two articles, and we are accepting short submissions on spiritual experiences, poetry, and aspects of spirituality for future issues. Enclose your submission with a stamped self-addressed envelope if you want your material returned. Our mailing address is: The Center for Sacred Sciences 1430 Willamette St. #164, Eugene OR 97401-4049.

### OCTOBER IS LIBRARY MONTH

Your Center's library has over 800 books, 100 audio tapes, and 25 videos--serving you Tuesday 11:30am-6:00pm, and Sundays after meditation. We also have some meditation supplies available for purchase.

### BOOK DRIVE '90 BEGINS!

We are now collecting books on any subject to be sold to raise money for new book purchases. Fall is a great time to sort out your bookshelves and get rid of those books you no longer use (call 345-0102 if you need pick-up arrangements). This year's themes are Hinduism and Eastern Orthodoxy. If you would like to suggest a book or video, there is a suggestion box in the library. The library also always welcomes bookends, bookcases, cash donations, volunteers to help out, and books that would be appropriate for our collection.

### BOOK DRIVE '89 WAS A SUCCESS!

From the sales of used books and cash donations the Center purchased new books on last year's themes of Jewish Mysticism and Taoism. Three books from the '88 book drive on women's spirituality just arrived via India and the Bodhi Tree: Songs of Meera (the poetry of Indian Saint Mirabai); Mother As Seen by Her Devotees; and, Anandamayee Ma: As I Have Known Her (about the life and teachings of the contemporary Indian Saint).

*Melody Carr, editor*

*Jennifer Knight, library director*

# THE CENTER FOR SACRED SCIENCES

Presents:

A SEVEN WEEK STUDY GROUP

starting

Thursday October 4th

## THE WISDOM OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA

"He reaches success when he worships with his own work the One from whom all being emanate and who stretched forth the world. "

--XVIII.46



One of the world's greatest spiritual classics, the Bhagavad Gita recommends a Way of converting everyday circumstances, encountered at home, on the job, and in society, into opportunities for spiritual practice. In this seven week study group we will examine how to apply them today.

**Time:** Thursdays, 7:00 pm (starting October 4th)

**Place:** The Center for Sacred Sciences

**Cost:** Requested donation: \$30.00 for the course

1486 E 25th St. Apt. #B (upstairs)

(\$5.00 per evening)

Eugene, OR 97403

**For more INFORMATION call: (503) 345-0102**

## The Function of Virtue

by Joel

Contrary to the shallow secular doctrines of our day, moral judgments are neither arbitrary nor subjective. They are founded on the universal intuition of an Absolute, Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent Consciousness which, though It Graciously Authors all forms of distinction, Itself Transcends any distinction, including and especially, the primordial distinction between subject and object, I and other, self and world. In other words, the Moral Law, in whatever local dress it appears, everywhere reflects a reality that is ultimately Selfless, as evidenced by the fact that all the virtues--Love, Honesty, Courage, Generosity, Humility, Patience, etc.--have as their common denominator the principle of SELFLESSNESS; whereas, all the vices--hatred, deceit, cowardice, greed, arrogance, impetuosity, etc.--are spawned by a delusion of Selfhood or SELFISHNESS.

In its 'objective' derivation, then, the Moral Law (like scientific laws) has an implied explanatory function. What it explains is the opposition between virtue and vice in the field of human action as a manifestation of the opposition between Reality and Delusion in states of human perception. Specifically, selfless actions are deemed virtuous because, being based on reality, they are realistic. Conversely, selfish actions are condemned as vicious because they are motivated by delusion and, hence, unrealistic.

But the Moral Law (unlike scientific laws) also serves an explicitly normative function insofar as it judges actions in accordance with their contents and consequences. Thus, actions motivated solely by a desire for self-enhancement or self-defense are judged morally 'wrong' or 'evil' because, in the absence of any substantial 'self' to be enhanced or defended, they lack any real or valuable content. And just because

they lack any real or valuable content (a 'self') the consequences of such actions must inevitably be frustration, disappointment, failure, and defeat.

Virtuous or selfless actions, on the other hand, are judged to be morally 'right' and 'good' for the opposite reason. Being pure and transparent expressions of that Cosmic Playfulness which informs but does not veil Absolute Consciousness, their content is absolutely real, hence, possesses absolute value. Or put another way, the sole content of selfless actions is that Timeless Performance of a Perfectly Self-Fulfilling Grace which is predicated on nothing else save the Naked Bliss of Being. As such, selfless actions are intrinsically free of any expectations and, therefore, of any consequences. Virtue, in truth, is its own reward because it has in view only its own Divine Delight.

Accordingly, the whole problem of Good and Evil boils down to the difference between suffering and happiness--whether you spend your life in shadowy self-imprisonment, gnawing the woeful bread of death; or as That Consciousness which Eternally Satisfies Itself in every form of Its existence, from the subatomic giggle of a solitary electron to the mad whirling rapture of the whole Milky Way. The quintessential question to which the Moral Law points, then, is: **HOW CAN ONE ATTAIN THIS CONSCIOUSNESS?**

Strictly speaking, of course, one cannot; for, how can you attain THAT which, in reality, you already are? All that is truly required (or possible) is that you shake off the delusion that things are otherwise--particularly and primarily the habitual experience of your 'self' as some real and substantial entity distinguishable from a real and substantial 'world.' This can be accomplished through cultivating a series of direct (non-conceptual) insights, not into the nature of Consciousness (which at all times is obvious), but into the nature of the delusion

## The Function of Virtue (continued)

which obscures it.

The first step is to vividly and clearly identify whatever it is you believe your 'self' to be. Most people identify themselves with a shifting complex of phenomena, including bodily sensations, emotional feelings, thought-imagery, and a sense of self-will. Lucid and prolonged observation, however, will convince you that all these phenomena are merely impermanent forms or objects arising in Consciousness and, therefore, cannot be the I, self, or subject to Consciousness (the one who observes these objects come and go). It is by relinquishing identification with these various, impermanent phenomena that the mind is gradually purified of attachments, the heart illumined by insight, and the Way is opened for that Supreme Insight or Gnostic Realization that I, the imagined subject to Consciousness, am none other than Consciousness Itself.

This brings us to the third and highest function of the Moral Law which is to be of spiritual service to those seekers dedicated to Realizing their own identity with this Consciousness. By enjoining specific practices of virtue (in the form of vows and precepts) the Moral Law provides an indispensable methodology for the destruction of delusion. Indeed, most of the world's Great Schools of Mysticism have regarded practices of virtue as the very cornerstone of the Whole Spiritual Quest, for without practices of virtue, other kinds of spiritual practices are unlikely to produce any lasting fruit.

This is because other kinds of spiritual practice (meditation, devotional rituals, study of scriptures, etc.) usually require some measure of isolation from the experiences of everyday life. Consequently, insights gained during these practices, no matter how profound, are often overshadowed or forgotten when the practitioner returns to his or her normal routine--a routine characterized by endless and entangled projects of self-enhancement and self-defense. Vows and precepts, however, are designed

precisely to address and 'spiritualize' the experiences of everyday life--and this by bringing to bear upon even the most mundane events the four guiding principles of all spiritual practices: attention, commitment, detachment, and surrender.

To understand how this works, let us consider a precept common to virtually every spiritual tradition: DO NOT LIE FOR SELFISH REASONS. One begins by making a solemn vow or commitment to observe this precept at all times and in every detail. If the vow is firmly and sincerely made, you will discover that the precept automatically comes to mind in any situation in which you are tempted to lie, or find yourself already in the act of lying. In this way, the precept serves to focus attention on a particular project of self-enhancement or self-defense as it actually unfolds.

With attention focused it then becomes possible to ascertain what exactly is prompting the lie? For example, you might catch yourself fabricating or exaggerating some story out of a selfish desire to gain admiration or respect? Or perhaps you are covering up some mistake for fear of being thought incompetent? Having thus identified the lie as being motivated by some selfish desire or fear, you next attend to the feeling-sensation of the desire itself (not any thoughts generated about it). Observe directly how this feeling-sensation arises, intensifies, and passes away. Then, by detaching from the desire or fear you can realize vividly and clearly that this feeling-sensation is merely an object arising in Consciousness. Thus knowing that you cannot be this desire or fear, surrender all identification with it and ask yourself: if I am not this feeling-sensation, who then am I?

In asking this question it is important not to accept any intellectual answers your mind may offer. What you are after is not any concept about your Identity but a direct Realization of It. Therefore, simply abide in the formless space of the question. Intuit it as an Unqualified Pre-

## The Function of Virtue (continued)

sence, Pure Selfless Awareness, or Consciousness Itself.

To be effective, of course, virtues require repeated disciplined practice. Nevertheless, something of their great spiritual power may be gleaned from this one example. By interrupting the habit of delusion at the point of its origin--that is, at the very moment in which selfish action begins--practices of virtue serve to convert even our deluded activities into endless opportunities for insight.

When this happens, you reach a turning point. The Spiritual Path ceases to be something you merely think about, or dream of, or practice only during periods of seclusion. Instead, the Spi-

ritual Path becomes something you actually live, moment-to-moment, day-to-day, amid all the circumstances of an ordinary life. Outwardly, nothing need change. But inwardly the knots of delusion begin to loosen and unravel so that the ancient and implacable habit of suffering becomes increasingly punctuated by bursts of real spontaneity and bewildering joy, until finally, through the Grace of the Real, the last shreds of selfhood drop completely away and you Stand Naked of all paths and circumstances, boundaries, and distinctions, as you TRULY ARE, have been, and always will be, world without end, Amen.

August 1990

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### The Man Watching

I can tell by the way the trees beat, after  
so many dull days, on my worried windowpanes  
that a storm is coming,  
and I can hear the far-off fields say things  
I can't bear without a friend,  
I can't love without a sister.

The storm, the shifter of shapes, drives on  
across the woods and across time,  
and the world looks as if it had no age:  
the landscape, like a line in the psalm book,  
is seriousness and weight and eternity.

What we choose to fight is so tiny!  
What fights with us is so great!  
If only we let ourselves be dominated  
as things do by some immense storm,  
we would become strong too, and not need  
names.

When we win it's with small things,  
and the triumph itself makes us small.  
What is extraordinary and eternal  
does not want to be bent by us.  
I mean the Angel who appeared  
to the wrestlers of the Old Testament:  
when the wrestlers' sinews  
grew long like metal strings  
he felt them under his fingers  
like chords of deep music.

Whoever was beaten by this Angel  
(who often simply declined the fight)  
went away proud and strengthened  
and great from that harsh hand,  
that kneaded him as if to change his shape.  
Winning does not tempt that man.  
This is how he grows: by being defeated,  
decisively,  
by constantly greater beings.

Rainer Maria Rilke  
translated by Robert Bly

## ON RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS

### Franklin Merrell-Wolff

When the seeker has broken away from the world of purely external interests and has first realized that there is a domain of occult knowledge which will make clear the baffling mysteries of life and also open doors to new powers, he often feels a sense of annoyance when he meets on every side emphasis upon principles of conduct in human relationships. Jesus gave the Golden Rule and emphasized the love of man for man, and man for God. Buddha in his exoteric preaching gave very little more than a code of conduct, though for his arhats he reserved a profound metaphysical teaching.

Krishna gave to Arjuna the philosophy of Dharma or the faithful performance of duty. On every side in all the finer literature of this field this self-same knowledge is struck. To one with a strong intellectual desire for knowledge this often arouses a feeling of strong impatience, and perhaps a thought like this arises: "O, yes, ethical principles are all very well, but what I want is the sturdier food of knowledge and power." All too often it is not realized that back of the moral teachings of the Great Ones there lies the most profound Wisdom.

The suffering and yearning of the human soul always in the last analysis grows out of the heresy of separateness: The idea that I am a creature apart from my fellows. Now the vault in which lies hidden the resolution of all mysteries is closed by a door with a compound lock, each part of which is a secret combination known only to one individual living form. All parts of the lock must be turned before the door will open, hence no one alone can force this door. He must unite with his fellows and by uniting their garnered wisdom to his own, turn all the combinations which guard the secret within. Thus separate selfish action can never penetrate to the hidden arcana. That knowledge which is more than personal is revealed alone to those who have

become more than self.

Thus the practice of brotherhood is not an idle one, but indeed the most basic key of all which opens to the Mysteries. It opens the heart, and only the opened heart can receive. Also it makes a blessing of a knowledge which otherwise would be a curse.

All groups are replicas of the whole, and those who come together for the deeper study should especially practice among themselves that which ultimately must hold among all men when the "Great Day Be With Us" has come. Thus each student should be happy in each other's joy, and feel sorrow in the other's sorrow; to feel attainment and failure in a brother's attainment and failure. This will bring Peace and prepare the soil for the sowing of the seeds of Wisdom, which the Master is ever ready to spread, and ultimately it will make of each a safe custodian for what otherwise would be dangerous knowledge.

However, the student should guard against a misplaced service. It is not true service to take from a brother the experience which is so necessary for the unfolding of his soul-knowledge. Yet the helping hand at the moment when the burden may be overpowering often serves to keep a brother from sinking down in despair. It is never wise to try to perform another's duty, nor is anyone wise enough to determine what another's duty may be. Each must find his duty for himself and have the courage to follow his own perception whatever others may think. The point is not that one seeks to perform another's task, but rather that he finds himself acting in another's acts and thus comprehends all in his most intimate sympathy.

Om Santi!

*Dr. Wolff was Joel's teacher. Joel lived with him on his ranch in Lone Pine while writing Naked Through the Gate. A philosopher-mystic, Dr. Wolfe wrote Pathways Through to Space and Philosophy of Consciousness Without An Object.*