

## *JOURNEY TO THE HIMALAYAS*

### *MEETING MY GURU*

*By Leah Lucas*

#### *INTRODUCTION*

*This morning I got up early to meditate. It is Sunday December 28, 2008, just a few days after Christmas. I am in my third floor studio. I look out of the window-facing west and see an enormous rainbow. I am so surprised. I look back through the window to the east and see the rising sun break golden through ominous dark clouds. I had not realized it was raining and rising sun simultaneously. The pink, violet, yellow, green prism of light arcing in the distant sky evokes an awareness of synchronicity. I think to myself, this colourful image of light did not exist a moment ago. It is only because for a few minutes the sun behind me shone brightly, the raindrops began to fall and just then, I looked out the window. As the darkening clouds obliterated the rays of the sun, the rainbow gradually faded then disappeared altogether. The falling rain refracted through the light of the sun at just the perfect moment produced an image visible to my eye. Had I still been sleeping in bed I would have missed the display. I would not even have known it existed. If I did not have a mind to interpret the scene, it would mean nothing to me. So, it was my mind that organized the information, yet it was my inner spirit that soared in wonder.*

*I pondered further the miracle of creation. Eye, mind, rainbow, light, elements configuring for one brief moment of glorious expression. The planet turns, the sun's angle shifts, the clouds grow darker, now rain comes harder, a raging wind arises, and rainbow disappears. I am part of this relative, changing field. Beautiful as is the rainbow, no point in grasping for it. The vision cannot be*

*captured, it cannot be held in my hands. It may only be appreciated and call me into a deeper apprehension of the transient, temporal, material world.*

*That does not detract from the mysterious, miraculous nature of physical phenomena. What it draws me into is a fusion of subject and object. I, the seer, see what appears, disappears, then appears yet again in another visible form. Earth, air, fire, water and space are the foundational elements of all that exists in our physical universe. The human being apprehends phenomena through the five senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. Our senses interpenetrate exquisitely with the five universal elements. Yet, out there is always changing. Nothing is actually stable or solid. Our physical bodies too, are changing. The ultimate change is death. Then there is no body to reflect a mind or experience the senses. I am always pondering the temporality of my physical existence. There must be something eternal to enter into. The intelligence that holds a continual awareness throughout the passage of time must originate from some unseen, undiscovered place. I realize this is not a physical place, rather an immaterial spiritual dimension. I am forever seeking access to that invisible space. This is a story about my experiences in my search for the unknown. Swami Shyam, my Indian Guru told me, “you were never born and you do not die”. He is referring to that immortal Self. But what does this mean and how do I recognize this truth? My story has no beginning and no end. It is an ongoing journey. This evening is a moment in time we spend together and a sharing of some fragments of my journey. It will not be a linear story, because my writing of this piece was in itself a meditation on timelessness. So please open your mind to whatever arises as you listen, for each one of you is on your own journey and I think of it as travelling a path to your own true eternal home.*

## RETURNING HOME

*Upon my return visit from India in November 2008, I stayed in London, England with my best friend Helen, who I have known since I was seven years old. When I look into Helen's face, I see the little girl that I loved so deeply forty-six years ago. Her vibration is exactly the same as what my body remembers in childhood. The feeling of friendship, love and passion between us is as powerful in the present as it was all those years ago in a distant past.*

*I had occasion on that visit to take the train from London to Leatherhead, the small English village in the Surrey Hills where I grew up. As I walked out of the train station into the familiar town of my early years I perceived a dual consciousness informing my awareness. I knew myself to be the grown-up Leah who lives in Toronto, Canada with a husband, home and profession. Yet I was also the little girl walking through the station park onto the road leading to her childhood home. I walked to my house and looked out from the terrace into the far-off green hills. I walked through the moss-covered laneway, down the hill to the River Mole that winds through the fields and farms of the valley. I walked up through the elegant mansion park, stopped in at the library, then up the lane to Poplar Road School. Around the corner I visited the ancient English Church surrounded by ivy-covered gravestones and green gardens. The flint wall surrounding the graveyard held the same stone I ran my hands over as a six-year old child. My gaze penetrated the cool flint as I held my hand over its smooth surface. How can this be? I thought. Here I am, like a visitor from space dropped back down into a remembered moment of time. It is an adult hand that I see. Yet my dual awareness looks out with the eyes of a child who loves the everlasting permanence of such a stable, solid*

*rock. Suddenly I am filled with the memory of a dream that arose in my mind two years ago.*

*In the dream I am driving an old grey car. It is large but rather broken down. I am in a stream of traffic about to drive up a hill. The left signal light is not working. I get out of the car, examining it and trying to fix it. I wondered how could I drive with it broken? It would be dangerous to not be able to signal my direction to other drivers. Then the car disappears. I go to seek it out. I follow a steep hill into a deep depression in the ground. There, under a massive weight of earth I discover the car has been totally crushed and annihilated. It is destroyed. The form of the car no longer exists, it is crushed metal. An invisible presence gives me a tiny sewing needle with a feather attached through its eye. This sliver of metal is the only thing left of the crushed car. The feather is beautiful and delicate. I feel an intense weight of sorrow pressing down on my chest. I weep from my innermost core. I remember that some movie reels of my life are also crushed and ruined as they were inside the car. My sorrow seems unendurable. I awaken in tears, amazed to recognize that I am weeping for my own death. The car is my crushed, broken body, my annihilated ego along with all my psychic and material attachments. The needle intertwined with the feather is a symbol of spiritual unfoldment, my ego's transcendence to another dimension of reality. The broken down signal light of the car reveals a broken down ego, no longer able to indicate the true direction. I have to give up control, release any conscious knowing of where I am going. Of my own power, I can do nothing. The driving of the conscious mind has to surrender and follow a path that presents itself from a deep inner place. The depths of the depression in the earth signify this. I am dying while I am living. I have to let go of the insistent ego clutches of the mind in order to be born into a much larger life that contains full awareness of death. The pain of this transformation is excruciating, yet I seem to be able to bear it.*

*Looking hard and long at my hand resting on the cool flint stones of this ancient English wall I ponder the transformation of my child being into adult self. Then and now, now and then, memory and present moment, back and forth I go. Who is this “I” that travels in time? The “I” remembers well skipping to Poplar Road School, running fingers along these stones, remembers the touch, the feel, the inner being of being six years old. Now I am back beside the wall. I am still I. “I’ am I. The physical body has changed in every single cell. But who is this inner Me that remembers everything and still feels the heartbeat of wondrous excitement from that little girl?*

*It was a gift of Grace to find myself back in Leatherhead that chilly November morning. Earlier in the month when I first arrived at the Kullu Ashram in India and sat next to my Guru I said, “It was Grace that brought me here”. “Grace has never left you.” He replied. Leatherhead frequently figures in my dreams. I suppose everyone dreams of their childhood home. The psyche seeks to always find its way back there. I believe the inner self is attempting to guide us back into the life of the unborn, the undying state. It guides us into a power beyond cognition. Somehow through image, metaphor, emotion, we are taken to dimensions of unseen force. The power of such a force flows from my unconscious to reveal itself within the world of the dream. Not long after I was given the gift of the feather in the needle, another gift was bestowed upon me.*

*In this dream, I find myself back in Leatherhead on the terrace of my home. A gigantic wave comes and covers the terrace entirely. I hold onto the railing, which keeps me inside so that I am not dragged out to sea. Another huge wave comes but I manage to hang on and not get carried away by its wild energy. The water remains at a very high level but I continue to stay within the railings. I know I need to get to higher, safer ground. I look up and see a huge castle on the hill. Now I am above the water and on the castle grounds. I am*

*amazed to discover they contain all that I require for survival. There is a cloth to cover me like a skirt, a shawl for my arms and back to keep me warm. There is food to eat and a place to sleep. I experience a wonderful happy feeling knowing that everything I need is provided for. It is all very simple but good.*

*Reflecting upon the various dream images I see the wave as power, energy, emotion. It arises from some unknown realm that I am witness to and part of. Staying within the railing, the ego contains me, holds me and tries to keep me safe. The ego knows for the self to be carried out to sea would mean its dissolution. Survival, transformation requires getting to a higher ground, a mental shift. The castle upon the hill indicates a bigger sense of self, one that contains all, provides all, and is creative and free from fear. This is new territory.*

*We as human beings are so terribly vulnerable to endless unseen forces that we are unable to control. I have always been a very frightened, anxious person. Anxiety has haunted me all my life, it weighs on my heart with a deep sense of dread. In my efforts to gain relief from such anxious suffering I sought psychotherapy. I have been deeply committed to my therapy since I was nineteen years old. Being emotionally engaged with my therapist year after year, from one anxious moment to the next eventually freed me from fear. I do believe the ongoing compassionate encounter with one less afraid than I, succeeded in transforming my own nervous system into a much calmer state. This developing sense of inner peace prepared me for my next psychic adventure – meditation.*

## MEDITATION

*I can honestly say that meditation saved me from myself. What I mean is that even after more than thirty years of intensive depth therapy, I still had no control over my own mind. Constitutionally wired for irrational perfectionism and obsessive-compulsive tendencies, my mind was driving me crazy with its endless observations, demands and ruminations. I truly could not escape myself. I believe the process of psychotherapy instilled the strength within me to finally take charge. It may be compared to a training ground for explorations into cosmic consciousness.*

*My very first encounter with meditation was in 1973 when my boyfriend took me to The Sivananda Yoga Ashram in the Val Morin Mountains north of Montreal. In the enormous cathedral like meditation hall, along with two hundred yogis-in-training the resident Swami led us into meditation. Quite rapidly after closing my eyes I found myself on the ceiling of the huge hall. My consciousness flew right up there and observed the scene below. I found that fascinating and decided I was going to like this meditation practice. Regarding the incident from a more grounded perspective, I suspect I slipped into dissociation rather than the refined spiritual state I had imagined. Nevertheless, I took to the Yogic Philosophy and have been researching it ever since. I was too distracted to be able to sit still with my eyes closed for any length of time. I attempted to get serious again about my meditation practice ten years later. But unfortunately I was distracted yet again. My husband and I were in the process of purchasing our first house. Every time I closed my eyes to focus within, my mind relentlessly compared mortgage rates, monthly payments, annuity schedules and home inspection reports. Concentration on the Divine was utterly hopeless. I had far too much stress and anxiety dealing*

*with the physical world of home ownership to evolve any kind of spiritual discipline.*

*Eventually the moment of reckoning arrived. It was only four years ago that I finally seemed ready to be able to apply myself in a disciplined way. I began to meditate morning and night for thirty minutes, which gradually grew into an hour each sitting. The technique was simple. I focused on my breath and the pulsation I began to sense between my clasped fingers. My mantra was “I Am My Breath”. I inhaled “I Am” then exhaled “My Breath”. When thoughts took me away, the mantra ‘I am my breath’ brought me back like a bird in flight returning to the nest. As thoughts settle into quietude, I become breath alone. My consciousness is no longer engaged with the senses or the outer world. It simply experiences the breath, the vibration of the body beyond the dense vibration of the physical self. The meditation was so effective in reigning in my mind, calming my nervous system and opening up a channel to a deeper peace that it rapidly became a mainstay of my existence. In fact, it is now a necessity of my daily life and I can’t imagine how I managed to survive without it.*

#### *TURIYA*

*Then one bright sunny day on June 9, 2008 I received a most curious e-mail. It was from someone named Turiya in India. Turiya turned out to be my very old friend Elaine who I knew when we were fourteen years old in grade nine at Lawrence Park Collegiate. We lost track of one another for the next three decades. Turiya/Elaine was meditating one day when she saw my name Leah Lucas shine bright in her awareness. She felt compelled to seek me out. Turiya searched for me on the Internet. When she googled my name, my 2003 CTP Alumni Presentation paper popped up on the first page. Turiya wrote to me*

*and said, “I found your article, “Is Intuition The Unconscious God?” very interesting and was intrigued with your exploration of therapy from a spiritual point of view. It would be great to converse with you. I am writing this e-mail from Kullu, a small town in the Himalayas, where I’ve lived for the past twenty odd years studying meditation and the “truth” with a Guru. I managed to get a couple of university degrees in religion, but I have been busy studying the inner side, and was so surprised to hear how parts of your own story sounded so similar to mine.”*

*I believe this was the most exciting e-mail I had ever received. To think that a good friend of mine who I knew as a fourteen-year-old teenager was living my fantasy of studying with her Guru in the Himalayas totally captured my imagination. I could think of nothing else. Of course, I immediately wrote back and what followed was an intense, inspired correspondence culminating in my journey to India last November.*

*The reunion with Turiya was profound for both of us. We re-discovered our teenage selves in one another’s eyes. Looking into each other’s faces, the past thirty-eight years melted away and once again we co-mingled in the same spirit of friendship we shared as adolescents. We both plunged into an encounter with timelessness as we lived together in India, studying the ‘inner side’ and meditating with her spiritual teacher. Swami Shyam gave her the Sanskrit name Turiya which means the enlightened state. Sanskrit is an ancient language said to manifest directly from The Divine Creative Intelligence into the minds of realized sages and Indian Yogis, giving rise to the Hindu language. There are four levels of consciousness, the waking state, the deep sleeping state, the dreaming state and the fourth state, Turiya that transcends the first three states. Turiya may only be reached through meditation and spiritual practice. It is the refined state of awareness I*

*described experiencing in meditation when the consciousness becomes one with the breath. This state of transformation of the intellect is traditionally called Samadhi. This Sanskrit word translates as Superconsciousness, The Brahm, The Transcendent, The Unknown. “Dhi” means ‘intellect’ or ‘vehicle of understanding’ and “Sam” means no movement or even. Samadhi means the intellect is not deluded by the functioning of the senses/mind that record their impressions in terms of a separate subject experiencing a separate object. In Samadhi the vehicle of understanding remains undivided, resting in its original nature of oneness. This oneness is the basis before, during and after the function of division on the level of the mind and senses. In meditation the mind does not stop functioning. Rather, the mind becomes open to and aligned with its Source. The intellect changes when one practices taking the attention from the gross level of perception towards the most refined level of knowing/being that is knowingness alone, undivided, and pure. The meditator becomes able to perceive those changes or subtle transformations of the intellect that ultimately result in the transformation into pure oneness, known as Kaivalya. There are six states of Samadhi relating to the various levels of refinement of the mind a meditator develops through spiritual discipline. In the state of perfect Samadhi, the waves of the mind are satisfied and do not arise. This is when a person has direct awareness of the One Reality. There is no sense of division or duality, self and object transform into Pure Energy known by the word ‘That’. It is a direct encounter of ‘Pure Being’, ‘Pure Energy’, which cannot actually be described because its very nature is beyond intellect. It is like the mind trying to know the nature of its own mind. It can’t be done. Your own eyeball cannot see the eye for it is the vehicle of seeing, it cannot see itself. This fourth dimension named Turiya is a metaphysical, unseen consciousness that each human being holds the potential to achieve.*

## SWAMI SHYAM

*In the same year that I was embarking upon my psychological and emotional education in a Therafield's housegroup, my friend Turiya was beginning her lifelong spiritual education. In the year 1976 at the age of twenty-one she met her teacher, Swami Shyam in Montreal, Canada. The name Shyam means that space seen with the eyes closed; blue-black space that opens during meditation. Swami Shyam is now eighty-seven years old and began meditation in his ninth year. He grew up in a small village called Chandini in Central India in a prosperous family who invited their Guru to live in their home. As a lively little boy, Shyam did not always appreciate the discipline and rigour of spiritual study, yet his mystical, reflective temperament flourished with the teachings. The East Indian culture holds a rich tradition of spiritual philosophy dating back thousands of years. School children are taught Sanskrit, The Bhagavad-Gita and The Upanishads. These Hindu Scriptures consist of a collection of four Vedas. Veda means 'know' collected wisdom. Veda often refers to the most ancient part of these collections, Vedanta. Vedanta is understood as Veda, meaning wisdom and anta means 'end', "the end of the Vedas" which is the Upanishads, both because they follow and because they consummate the rest of the Vedic material. Upanishad means 'sitting down near'. It is a mystical text given by illumined seers attached to the end of the Vedas. Shankara founded this system of philosophy based on the Upanishads. He was a great 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. mystic who rescued the Upanishads from centuries of neglect. He built on them the lofty philosophical system called Vedanta, and established the monastic traditions that have since kept Hindu mysticism alive. The underlying premise holds that Brahman alone is ultimately real. Separateness and change are only apparent distinctions superimposed on this ultimate unity. Brahman means grow, expand: that which expands, bursts into growth. Braham is the Supreme Godhead beyond*

*all distinctions or forms, ultimate Reality, originally 'sacred utterance', the true ground of all Being, the absolute substance of the universe.*

*At the age of forty-six Shyam left his government job in Chandigarh and accepted an invitation to teach meditation for a few months in Canada. Through a series of unforeseen incidents he found himself alone in a hotel room in downtown Vancouver. He went down the hallway to take a shower in the not-so-ensuite bathroom. When he returned wearing only a towel around his waist, he discovered his belongings had been stolen. All his possessions, money and clothing had disappeared. Not knowing what else to do, he sat cross-legged upon the bed and proceeded to meditate. He thought if there were any true value to meditation for one's actual physical life, this would be the test.*

#### *AN AWAKENING*

*The following is a description of Shyam's experience written in a book entitled 'GENESIS DAWN' by Robert W. Eaton, one of Swami Shyam's first western students. "Never, unless God wills you to be somewhere, you cannot be there. You are here because of that Almighty Power, the Creative Intelligence, which is the centre of all creation. If we are all tagged together, when it rotates we all fall at one point; when it says "This way", then we all move away. It is the cosmic wheel that is moving at a gigantic speed, we call it God's speed because man's speed cannot do it. There is such a great speed coming from that wheel, from that light, from that pure dynamism where no form is. It is an inferno, a raging infinite fire of energy. Nothing, not even for a fraction of a second is stable, or still, or normal. The entire universe is nothing but infinite energy, a vast, shifting ocean of fire, and its real nature is consciousness."*

*“There it moves and all the world, all the planets move together and remain ever in balance. They fall at proper place, at a proper destination; and no mistake ever occurs. When I saw, during that meditation the centre and everything falling at its own place, the whole universe, multiple universes, all in a tiny real atom of light, where all this universe which we see with these eyes can fit in and yet it will still be bigger; when that eye was open, I realized, ‘O my God, where was I up to this time?’ I had been resisting all along. The ego is the resistor. The ego says, ‘I am doing it’, and that ego never, never surrenders. But when it got immersed in that vision and saw that this tiny little mind or ego is nothing but the Lord Himself, who is the Creator of all, and everything is ME everywhere doing it all, I opened my eyes. I surrendered to the Almighty not knowing who HE was at the time. I could not see with these eyes, but I knew exactly what the SELF is because I saw with the inner eye.”*

*“Unless you can get your inner eye opened, you will never see the Self. You will never be convinced unless it becomes your direct experience. So that is the channel and how it opened in me. I say the Grace of God was showered on me. The Lord Himself picked me up. I did not realize Him. He realized me. After that I was on the road...and I am still on the road.”<sup>1</sup>*

*While in that meditative state, Shyam saw the room in the hotel where the thief had hidden his stolen belongings. He called the police, insisting they search the room. They looked unbelievably at this brown-skinned Indian fellow clad only in a towel wondering how he could possibly know where his possessions were. But they did unlock the door, and yes, there they were. He recovered his clothing, but no money and no passport. It took the Indian government, with its complex bureaucracy a full year to re-issue Swami Shyam a new passport. But it was during that one year spent teaching meditation in*

*Vancouver, Ottawa and Montreal that Swami Shyam met his first western students who continue studying with him to this day. The community has grown to 150 full time aspirants studying with their Guru at The International Meditation Institute in The Kullu Valley, known as the Valley of the Gods in the Himalayas of northern India.*

*The word Guru means ‘remover of darkness’. My friend Turiya writes to me how “Being in the company of one’s Guru quickens the process of ripening the mind by removing doubts and clarifying your own inner knowledge by his living example and experience. The source of all knowledge is pure knowingness, beyond intellect; it is an actual state of consciousness called the “answered state”. It is a matter of time and ripening. The human mind and its waking state of knowledge is the outcome of the Being the way curd is the outcome of milk. Just to tell the curd that it is really milk doesn’t change the curd into milk; the curd has to go the full route of transformation into light. When it is light, it realizes itself as the originality of even the milk. Then light knows that from itself comes milk and all its modifications like curd, butter, etc.”*

*My friend Turiya’s words inspire a great excitement within me for I intuitively sense this ongoing route of transformation into light as the purpose of my existence. To me the light represents a dawning recognition of who I actually am. And I cannot know this with my intellect alone. Something else has to awaken or be born, created anew out of this present ground. What never ceases to astonish me is how I experience the ever-creative power of the universe operating through and within me on a most personal, intimate level. Mysterious, inexplicable forces inhabit themselves through the garment of dreams, actions, opportunities and unexpected situations. It was astounding to*

*me when I re-discovered in my journal the following dream recorded on November 10, 2006, two years before arriving in the Himalayas.*

#### *A PARALLEL UNIVERSE*

*I dream I am all packed and ready to go on a journey. I am on a mountain path strewn with rocks. There are deep valleys and lakes in the distance below. I see a small path clearly and know I can follow it. I come to a wooden structure. A woman is living there. I go inside. I go up to the highest level of the structure where I can see the view. Suddenly a big wind comes. The entire universe seems to disappear into energy. I am unafraid and very excited. I feel secure sensing that my structure will support me. I know I will survive and not collapse or be in danger. I am very happy because I think I am about to be shown the power sustaining the universe and the force of creation.*

*So, in truth, my ego did not die. The strength of my meditation sustained me and evolved a far deeper capacity for concentrating the mind's attention. Only later did I realize how my own psyche was preparing me to handle forces vaster than my conscious mind could ever comprehend. Finding myself flying from Delhi north to the Himalayas seemed to be an external manifestation of the internal process engaging me. When I first glimpsed the snow-capped mountain peaks, my heart leaped in recognition. But what was I recognizing? The beautiful, lofty inaccessible peaks spoke to dimensions of awareness requiring sustained effort to reach. As the small propeller plane flew into the deep valley I sensed I was entering into a parallel universe.*

*Surrounded by mountains with a glacial river rushing below, the Kullu Ashram evokes a mystical sense of unseen natural forces. An ashram is a refuge, a contained safe place where students live with their Guru in order to*

*explore the nature of mind. Swami Shyam calls his ashram an experiment in evolving human consciousness. He is famous throughout India as a widely recognized illumined sage, guests come from all over the country and abroad to visit and converse with him. But he has dedicated his life to working with a small group of devotees to maturing their nervous systems so they may evolve a capacity for Higher Awareness. One morning in Satsang I heard Swamiji say to us, "I come here everyday to remove your ignorance and tell you that you are pure, free, forever. You were not born and you never die. Yes, this body dies but the Self in you is immortal. You learn this, then you go away and forget. So I am back here the next day to tell you again. But I don't mind. As Guru, this is my job, and I have been telling you this for forty years."*

*Satsang means 'discourse on truth' and satsangee is the one who partakes in satsang, who places their attention on the subtle aspects of life and truth. Swamiji arrives every morning on "the roof", as the communal space is called, at 11:00 and works with the group until 1:00p.m. And often longer. There are also smaller meetings over breakfast or tea where conversation and questions continue to focus upon the highest reality of oneself, to unfold awareness of one's true existence. Satsang is rather like a 'happening', in that you never quite know where it will go; it is a very free environment. Swamiji will invite someone to come up to the stage and talk to him, ask questions, then have them invite other people up to speak. There are singing, meditating and conferences, welcome and farewell speeches to the frequent guests, lots of jokes and laughter along with intensely serious in-depth teachings. Swamiji has a way of including everyone and we are all involved all of the time. He has long-standing personal relationships with each one of his devotees; the community is deeply emotional and rich in family feeling.*

*When I first met Swamiji I felt an instant wave of love and connection. He welcomed me warmly and emanates loving-kindness. When I looked into his twinkling brown eyes and smiling face I felt I was home, home with his presence and at home with myself in his company. Swamiji tells me, “ There would be no guru without Leah. I am here because Leah needs me. And I need Leah to be the guru. You and I are one. I cannot talk to an empty chair. When your inner eye is opened, the knowing of who you are will arise and show itself to you. You are ignorant, meaning your individual ego cannot know the Reality of Oneness. The functioning of the ego is to effectively manage the human being’s existence in the physical world. The human body is the most perfect vehicle for transforming your consciousness. You cannot kill the ego or get rid of thoughts. It is the nature of mind to arise thoughts as the ocean arises waves. My task as Guru is to remove the ignorance which covers knowledge of the self’s true identity.”*

*Life in Kullu is a pressure cooker of intensity focused on meditation and absorbing the Guru’s teachings and energetic presence. In his book Mastermind, dictated to longtime student Daniel Chernin, he describes what happens in meditation: “There is a nerve in the body that is known as the central canal or central nerve. It passes through the spinal column and reaches the head, there it touches the brain. The knowledge appears in the brain through the opening of that nerve. When that nerve is opened, the wisdom of the spirit reveals itself. That person who has been meditating directly experiences it. But he cannot communicate it to any unripe mind because the unripe mind cannot grasp it.”*

*“Attaining the Samadhi state of consciousness is not only a transformation of the mind but a transformation of the whole body and nervous system. The human being is liberated from birth and death and fear because the*

*consciousness is securely grounded in the Oneness that is beyond yet underlies all manifest existence. The most refined Samadhi state is named Kaivalya, seedless Samadhi. This means total freedom. It is when the mind is able to remain stable in its own true nature. This state of consciousness can be held even after death of the body. Because of its true stability there is no need to incarnate into a physical body again. The mind is free of all attachments and desires.”2.*

*The word Kaivalya means ‘isolation’ as it is the state of absolute freedom from conditioned existence. It is a total release from the fetters of ignorance. In this state, one realizes that there is only one consciousness, one reality that alone is. Consciousness, self and the world of perceived forms are one reality that has three names, consciousness, world and me. Kaivalya is also known as the dawn of the morning star, the unification of Self with God, which is the ultimate object of all created beings. Man is liberated from the need to reincarnate into matter. It is the meaning behind Jesus’ statement, “We need go out no more”*

*At this level of spiritual evolution the being has complete freedom while existing in a physical body. He knows his mortal existence to be Maya, an aspect of God’s illusory power through which the universe manifests. The body at this rate of vibration is absolutely real. But the enlightened mind knows that the sense of duality or separateness is an illusion. Reality itself cannot be divided or measured. Maya is a key idea in the philosophical system of Vedanta, used to explain how the phenomenal world can be identical with Brahman. The awareness sees no difference between being in the world as a human body or death, dissolution of the body. The mind is opened to the eternal, it is deathless, immortal. The mantra Swami Shyam was inspired to repeat in meditation is Amaram Hum, Madhurham Hum.*

*The translations of these Sanskrit words are I am immortal, I am blissful. Amar means immortal, eternal, deathless. Madhur means blissful, sweet like honey. Meditation on Eternal am I, Blissful am I, Amaram Hum, Madhurham Hum holds the mind to its real and true origin. When there is no longer conditioned identification with a body that is born, there can be no identification with a body that dies. Consciousness comes to awareness of itself in the human vehicle. It churns and struggles and restlessly strives to know its origin, its true home.*

*After my second lengthy interaction with Swamiji in satsang not long after arriving in Kullu I had an unusual and powerful encounter with timelessness. That night I awoke at two o'clock in the morning feeling ripples of energy coursing through my body like waves from an incoming tide. Compelled to sit up and meditate, I found myself gripped in a powerful, focused concentration until four thirty in the morning. The two and a half hours passed in what I imagined was only twenty minutes. It is difficult to describe where I went but it was an absolute consciousness of the one present moment, pure awareness, unwavering, strong and deep like the bottom of the ocean, yet warm, blissful, opening out to infinity. It was direct apprehension of Pure Existence that held me. I was nowhere yet I was everywhere. This dimension is my true home, deeply peaceful yet throbbing with energy and power. It is a place I wished to remain in and never leave or feel separated from. I went back to sleep at four- thirty and had the following dream: I dream I am in England going up the steps to my childhood home in Leatherhead. Then I am by the river that I used to play in. I urgently want to cross the river. I see the distant shore. I step into the water. I realize it is too deep. Ripples from the sea begin to create waves in the water; I sense a strong tide emerging. The current is very powerful. It is too dangerous for me to cross the river alone. I turn away and walk towards*

*a tavern where groups of people are gathered. I think perhaps someone will have a boat and they may ferry me across the river.*

*The following morning I go to Turiya's house for our ritual coffee and breakfast. I relate to her my experience of meditation and the dream it led me into. She immediately went to her bookshelf and brought a book of poetry to the table. My heart swelled with emotion and my eyes involuntarily filled with tears as she read me the following poem written by Swamiji.*

*"The soul who heard the voice of her beloved one, The Lord, from a far distance in the other side of the river – the river being a symbol of the world – says: "O Lord, you have been calling me from that side, I am on this side of the river, your voice has compelled me to rush and meet you immediately, but my weakness is that I have not learned how to swim across the river. I do not know how to swim or how to walk on water."*

*"The moment I heard your voice, it affected the thoughts or, buds of my mind, just as the king of seasons – spring – speaks to the buds and they open. My feet helplessly moved toward you, and my mind thought that these will be the most blissful golden moments of sweet meeting with the Lord. Up to this time, I have passed through innumerable incarnations because I did not hear your voice thus far. But now, after hearing your voice how shall I live my life?"*

*"O Lord, why do you call me from that side of the river? Please understand my helplessness that I do not know how to swim, and you are calling me. If you call again and again I will really jump in the river. Don't you know that the life current is very fast and the whirlpools are rising terribly? O dear*

*one, you come to this side of the river and teach me to swim first and then call me from there.”*

*“This night is pitch dark and the river is too deep. The clouds are roaring terribly, showering torrential rain, and the thunder and lightening are flashing. The storm is raging furiously, and there is no boat, nor any boatman or guide. Therefore, Lord, you have to come as a boatman if you want to meet me alive. You must know that it is better to cherish death than to remain without meeting you and be in acute separation.”*

*“Then the current and the river stopped flowing, the clouds cleared, and the moon shed its light. Then Krishna, who was the one under consideration, became a wooden boat in the middle of the river. A voice came from the bottom of the boat: “Dear Radha, you remained stuck and insistent, and did not wait for me to come or for my second call. Just by listening to my first call you became so mad. And now you are sure to be drowned in this manner. If there is any sense left in your head, hang on to this boat”.3.*

*It truly was Grace that brought me to Kullu and Swamiji speaks a truth when he says, “Grace has never left you.” He also said to me, “You want to know God, I want to sing the praises of The Lord. You do not know how to speak of God, but we can keep on talking.” So I did continue to talk with my Guru about God, The Divine Creative Intelligence, the subtle body, the five senses, the nature of fire and vision and many other things. His power altered the atomic structure of my being. My meditation continues to deepen. Amaram Hum, Madhuram Hum is my mantra.*

*I believe each and every one of us deep in our secret soul longs to return home. For myself, Leatherhead and the river of my childhood cannot be a place on the planet. It is a metaphysical location that arises in my dreams, meditations, and conscious mind. It holds out a blueprint, a compass point directing my attention into an invisible, life- filled dimension.*

*Together, we vulnerable human beings tread this confusing, constant path. I thank-you for accompanying me on this fragmentary aspect of my journey and like my wise Himalayan Guru would say, " I am still on the road."*

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## NOTES

1. *From Genesis Dawn, I Meet Myself* by Robert.W. Eaton
2. *Mastermind* by Swami Shyam pg. 100
3. *From a mystical poem* by Swami Shyam, Kullu, India 1980

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