

## Selected Summaries (SMMR-Conference, Cologne 2004)

### **Patanjali's Wisdom of Yoga for Modern People**

*Acharya Sukadev Volker Bretz*

In this Workshop Sukadev Volker Bretz gives an overview on the Patanjali's "Yoga Sutras" with lots of interpretations and practical examples. By many examples, anecdotes and stories we can see and experience how this ancient wisdom can be understood and applied for modern people in the 21st century. Patanjali's "Yoga Sutras" are the main classical scriptures of Raja Yoga, the Yoga way dealing with thought power and control, strengthening and regulated one's will and the integral development of the whole human personality. It is a fundamental treatise on the state and the function of the human mind. At the same time the work offers a variety of practical exercises, techniques and hints enabling you to really live your own life, to develop to a maximum degree your personal abilities and talents as well as finally to overcome even these values on your way to inner freedom and self-realisation. Although more than 2000 years old the Yoga Sutras are still absolutely valid and up-to-date. On the contrary, they are a masterpiece of psychology and psychotherapy. And as they are dealing with general human experiences and ways how the human mind is working the techniques and methods they describe lead to the same experiences and knowledge, independent of time, culture, religion, spiritual traditional and social environment. [sukadev@yoga-vidya.de]

### **Self-realization and sensitivity – Sufism as a contemporary form of spirituality**

*Brigitte Dorst*

Sufism is not only the mysticism of Islam but an independent spiritual path of experience which is free from temporal, spatial, or ideological limitations. It is a path of SELF-realization teaching human beings and preparing them for higher stages of consciousness - through the energies of love, of heart. This means getting involved in a process of transformation linked with attitudes and values which are traditionally considered female. The training works with different means and techniques according to the cultural and social conditions and necessities of a certain time.

### **Psychoanalysis and Meditation**

*Anton Draehne*

The experience of suffering motivates people to seek therapy. Suffering causes the feeling of rejection. Due to the regressive desire to be united, we either try to regain maternal care and protection (German: „Geborgenheit“), while at the same time being full of anxiety, when we feel cut off from the nurturing impulses. Alternatively, we are fixed on fatherly authority, which can activate many talents and skills in us, but which makes us dependent on blame,

praise and punishment. Some people try to rid themselves of suffering by reversing their desire to regress into the opposite and encompassing everything in their life by anger and burning passion or, in some cases, destruction. In the therapeutic collaboration, the aim is to strengthen the searching self or to make it aware of the manifold nuances of being. In the analytical context, this happens by working with the unconsciousness. In the Buddhist context our human suffering is of three kinds:

1. We suffer because of the circumstances we experience, like pain, anger, and coldness.
2. We suffer, because everything we own and experience has no absolute self, like things, feelings, and thoughts.
3. We suffer, because everything changes constantly and does not remain constant, like our bodies, and our hopes and desires.

Following the healing path of the Buddhist meditative practice, we try to experience the truth of suffering with loving mindfulness, to identify the specific suffering and to recognize the way, which puts an end to the causes of suffering.

With the accompanying therapy, the careful analysis of the client's way through life may possibly be united with the Buddhist way of meditation and lead to a "happy dwelling on the circumstances the way they are". [DraehneAnton@aol.com]

## **A Psychophysiological Perspective on Mindfulness of Breathing**

*Paul Grossman*

Psychological and physiological processes are intimately linked in mindfulness practice. This presentation will examine and attempt to integrate several aspects of the psychophysiology of mindfulness with specific reference to mindful awareness of breathing: Why the breath provides a unique and facilitative object of awareness, what we know about physiological correlates of mindfulness, and how personal experience of mindful states may complement 'scientific objectivist' knowledge of mind-body relations. Relevant psychophysiological findings will be reviewed within this framework, and I will report our own cardio-respiratory research on mindful awareness of breathing. [BreathingSpace@t-online.de]

## **Humour as a part of everyday spirituality**

*Leo Gürtler*

Humour in the field of educational psychology is a field rarely researched in contrast to clinical psychology and psychotherapy. Additionally, spirituality plays seldom a part of that research context. A study about teachers' subjective theories (sensu Groeben and Scheele 1977) on humour will be presented. Besides the range of definitions, humour will be explored in its potential to be used within teaching processes as well as how to develop personal humour. Subjective theories are also reconstructed in a graphical way. The results of the analysis of content demonstrate that humour can be understood as a kind of everyday spirituality which targets to cope with the demands and incongruities of life. Classical expressions of humour like laughing or making wits lose their obvious importance against deeper aspects of the inner experience of humour. The expressed concepts about the development of humour support that perspective. Especially there, self-experiences and personal growth are critical factors to keep equanimity and a positive motivated kind of humour in face of difficult situations. The view that humour is also rooted in spiritual experiences seems to be an extension of current theories

of humour. Most concepts in the field of educational psychology focus solely on performance and less on social interaction and self-experience. But the study focuses not on spiritual peak experiences, but more on humour in (professional) everyday life. The path to humour seems to depend on the development of insight. This leads to the discussion of the relationship of spirituality and teaching. How can humour play an important role in the teaching of spirituality? A trial is undertaken by presenting the first outcomes of a study about humour incidences in the teaching of ten day vipassana meditation seminars. [leo.guertler@uni-tuebingen.de]

### **Spiritual Experience and Identity. The Benedictine Monk and Christian Sannyasi Henri Le Saux /Swami Abhishiktananda's Experience of the SELF through the Encounter of Hinduism and Christianity**

*Christian Hackbarth-Johnson*

Henri Le Saux/Swami Abhishiktananda (1910-1973) was one of the most important pioneer-figures in Hindu-Christian Dialogue. The confrontation with the Indian spiritual experience, especially in the form of the famous saint Sri Ramana Maharshi, whom he met, transformed the Breton missionary and Benedictine in the course of 25 years of intense struggling with the questions of the relationship between the Hindu experience of the Self and the Christian experience of the Trinity a witness of a transcultural and transreligious mystical experience of the Self. In this paper I will pursue the identity conflicts which arose on the psychosocial, theological-ideological and spiritual levels, the different phases of provisional solutions to the final existential solution in the form of his "great experience" at the end of his life. By means of analysing the interplay of the three levels of identity mentioned above as it can be seen in the life of this exemplary bridgemaker between religions and cultures I will draw some preliminary conclusions concerning conditions of the possibility for the spiritual experience of Self in general. [lucyjohanson@t-online.de]

### **Hatha-Yoga: Autonomic balance, absorption and health**

*Hannes Hempel*

Positive effects of the practice of hatha-yoga have been frequently reported in research literature, however, knowledge of the involved physiological mechanisms is comparatively sparse. One hypothesis assumes that yoga practice enhances the autonomic balance, which would explain its effects on several disorders believed to be caused by an imbalance. A study is presented that investigated whether hatha-yoga training leads to an increase in baroreflex sensitivity. This measure is an important parameter of cardiovascular regulation and is closely connected with vagal tone and autonomic homeostasis. In addition, it positively correlates with "absorption", a personality trait describing the tendency to experience altered states of consciousness, which are an aim of meditative yoga practice. After ten weeks of training (Iyengar yoga), baroreflex sensitivity increased significantly and absorption increased slightly, too. Health status was assessed with a symptom scale and showed significant improvements in nearly all subscales. It is discussed in which way the health-related and psychological changes could result from the observed physiological changes. [Hannes.Hempel@psychol.uni-giessen.de]

## **Meditative absorption: Disposition, training, physiological mechanisms**

*Ulrich Ott*

Some forms of meditation require intensive attention focusing to an object, with the aim of inducing a state of mental absorption (samadhi). If this succeeds, the meditator completely identifies with the object, whereas the environment is ignored. The ability of experiencing states of this kind is called "absorption" and can be measured with the Tellegen Absorption Scale. The degree of this personality trait varies considerably, which is in part determined genetically but also due to differences in training. The presentation describes a series of studies conducted at the University of Giessen dealing with the physiological bases of the absorption capacity. It has been shown that the cardiovascular system of persons scoring high on absorption is more responsive. In addition, they show a better performance in computer tests that require to ignore distracting stimuli, which points to a higher efficiency of a specific attention network in the brain. Current and planned studies are presented that apply functional magnetic resonance imaging to identify brain regions that are activated during deep absorption compared to the ones activated by superficial observation. [ott@bion.de]

## **Meditative Awareness in Behaviour Therapy: Towards a transpersonal change?**

*Harald Piron*

After the cognitive revolution in behaviour therapy some approaches were developed, that use consciousness as potential for behaviour modification. In the initial stage of cognitive behaviour therapy consciousness was reduced to cognition (thinking, interpretation, judgement, belief system). Later, approaches such as self-management by Kanfer, DBT by Linehan or emotional-imaginative reframing by Zarbock use awareness as special resource. Consequently the very essential dimension of awareness should get added and set above to the four dimensions of behaviour analysis (cognition, emotions, physiology and visible behaviour). Awareness developed through meditation becomes clear and alert. It can be experienced in its purest state as unconditioned consciousness, empty from identifications. Normally, consciousness is reduced and cloudy because of educated and self-created identifications. Conditioned by different identifications, cognitive patterns and emotional habits that are very persistent and unhealthy, causing many emotional and behavioural problems. The healing power of meditation is supported by many empirical studies. The speaker will demonstrate examples of the effectiveness of meditative practice in the setting of behaviour therapy with neurotic patients. Finally, the factor of meditative awareness shall become integrated within a holistic model of contemporary behaviour therapy. [piron@netcologne.de]

## **Buddhism: A Path for Women?**

*Agnes Pollner*

„Women's tendency to be more emotional is not a hindrance to practice. They can go more quickly and deeper into practice than men, because their minds are more subtle. This might be difficult for men to understand, because they are men.“ (Dipa Ma, Indian teacher of Buddhist meditation, 20th century)

I speak from the background of Buddhist meditation practice. It aims at realizing the heart-mind, that is beyond description and conceptualisation: the open space of awareness, that is vaster than grasping at the constricted concept of an I. Buddhist teaching is a system of education that facilitates this experience and leads the practitioner to realization. Ultimately, this realization lies beyond male and female, but the path towards it leads through our bodies, social and cultural conditionings and the psyches carved out by our gender. The traditional teachings found their way into the west out of cultures in which women are rarely considered to be the subject of the practice. Women who wish to practice in one of these traditions find a system that has been defined over hundreds of years by men for men. They are confronted with disparaging statements about female bodies and minds and their various realities as they are actually experienced are never taken into consideration. Out of this, from the perspective of women many questions arise. I would like to elaborate on two central points.

- 1) One of the main issues of Buddhist practice is training in compassion and love. Traditional instruction emphasizes the transformation of aggression aimed at the external world, but for a lot of women the question is much more vital: what does it really mean: „when women love too much“?
- 2) Ideals and vision open up the ability to discover what lies beyond the concept of a narrow I: „ In order to become, it is necessary to have as one’s horizon a species or a (sexually differentiated) being...Becoming implies the fulfilment of the whole range of what we can be...“(L. Irigaray) Where can women find this horizon within their own gender?

[AgnesPollner@web.de]

## **The True Self is the Non-Self. A Buddhist Perspective**

*Yesche Udo Regel*

The Teachings of the Buddha are known for their emphasis of the Non-Self. In the absolute sense this refers to the open space of consciousness, where accordingly no individual Self can be found. Buddhist meditators aim at the experience of this open dimension of the mind in deep meditation, where all concepts of a self would be transcended. In the relative sense Non-Self means the reality of inter-connectedness with all phenomena. Accordingly there would be no concrete Self at the core of a person. A person is nothing but patterns of thoughts, concepts, emotions and last not least the body in its parts, of which nothing would contain the Self. According to the Buddhist teachings the insight into the non-self-nature leads to liberation and healing from all suffering. Surprisingly the masters who are supposed to have attained such insight, like the Dalai Lama, appear to be impressively strong and healthy persons. The speaker investigates into the question on how the teachings of Non-Self can be applied for the development of mental health. He also throws a glance into the mis-concept of a wrong understanding of the term Non-Self. The title „ The True Self is the Non-Self“ refers to a quotation by the Vietnamese Zen-master Thich Nhat Hanh. [yesche@t-online.de]

## **Meditation: Experiences, Problems, Limits**

*Wulfing von Rohr*

Today the fashionable term „Meditation“ is used for many activities, even opposing ones. It therefore seems necessary to differentiate and offer a pertinent definition. I make a distinction between meditation on the one hand, and on the other hand activities such as visualization,

projection, trance, meditative activities, but also intellectual or intuitive insights. Here meditation will be understood along the proposal of Swami Vivekananda and the Yoga-Sutras of Patanjali as “one-pointed concentration without any specific object, which is kept up for longer than 2 minutes.” Suchlike meditation yields many various experiences, e.g. slowing down of breathing, relaxation, feelings of floating, forgetting the body, letting go of thoughts and emotions, dissolution of limits and borders, wanderings of the consciousness. Some people experience in meditation problematic states though, such as sexual rushes, feeling dizzy, anxieties etc., which later on may lead to confusion or escapism. Meditation allows to strive for earthly goals like experiencing harmony, sensing wholeness, relaxation, activating joy of life and life energy, and also to promote healing processes. The purpose of meditation may also be more transpersonal, e.g. the experience of non-physical levels of consciousness, the realization of soul-consciousness or of the “atman as `I am that” or the participation in cosmic awareness. Certain meditation techniques which do not use any object are especially useful for this purpose. The methods within the various cultures and religions are often the same or at least very similar to each other, as the respective mystics testify. Enthusiasm and/or bonding with a meditation teacher may at times be helpful for personal progress – but personal freedom is and remains a relevant foundation for any sensible meditation path. Meditation is often quite helpful – but it will never be able to solve all problems and to release the human being from his or her responsibility for his or her own life. [wulfing@12move.de]

## **The Brahman-atman-complex – cosmic and individual consciousness in Religion und Philosophy of India**

*Roderich Wahsner*

In common with all seven main Schools of Indian Philosophy Saamkhya- and Yoga-philosophy, from a very long time ago up to now they rely on the Vedas as their authentic source and especially on the last parts of these scriptures, the Upanishads. Therefore all Schools of Indian philosophy share the same basic understanding of the Vedic seers, that Brahman and atman, cosmic and individual consciousness or cosmic and individual soul are one and the same. That means that even God and man are not separated but closely linked with each other. My contribution aims to explain this in more detail by quoting some passages from the following ancient scriptures: (1) The Ishopanishad is of course one of the most important Upanishads, according its name it deals with Isha, like Brahma one of the countless names of God in the Indian Tradition; (2) the Katha-Upanishad is one of the most ancient Upanishads at all, and (3) Ishvaracrishna’s Saamkhya Karika, a basic psycho-philosophical scripture, being the theoretical basis of Saamkhya- and Yoga-philosophy. The two Upanishads attempt to explain God, by stating what he or she is and is not. In statements that are contradictory these scriptures try to give a glimpse of understanding this reality which by logical reasoning is impossible to explain. Yogic and philosophical commentators state that these truths only can be experienced in the deep silence of meditation, when intuition starts to be over. Other scriptures of Indian Philosophy by explaining, what is meant by “atman”, do this with almost the same contradictory statements used to explain Isha or Brahma. The Sanskrit word atman means soul as well as man. It might be worth mentioning that the English word „man” and the German word “Mensch” as well as the unpersonal German word “man” (meaning somebody) are derived from the root of the Sanskrit word atman. Finally it is shown, that the qualities attributed to Isha or Brahman and to Atman are almost fully identical with what Saamkhya- and Yoga-philosophy from their dualistic point of view on reality being composed by Prakriti und

Purusha (matter and consciousness) attribute to Purusha, a term, that more correctly might be translated as “pure consciousness“ This leads to the result, that consciousness is the common quality shared by God and man. Man therefore might be taken as part of the all pervading cosmic consciousness thrown into individual existence for some time and turning back again into its origin with the end of its lifespan in order to be reborn again and again. A common analogy used to explain this is the drop of water falling into the ocean and returning to heaven, forming a cloud with other drops of water and again returning in one way or the other to the waters of the ocean. [wahsner@uni-bremen.de]

### **Measuring Mindfulness – The Freiburg Mindfulness Questionnaire: Construction, Validation, Short Version**

*Harald Walach (1,3), Nina Buchheld (2), Valentin Buttenmüller (3), Norman Kleinknecht (3), Stefan Schmidt (1)*

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Mindfulness is a central concept of Buddhist psychology. By the increasingly wide use of „Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction“ (MBSR) it also became a novel concept in scientific research. We constructed a German language questionnaire measure, with an English translation. This instrument is valid and reliable and useful for further research and possibly diagnostics. We have conducted three studies:

1. Construction of the scale in 115 participants of mindfulness retreats who filled in the questionnaire both before and after the retreat.
2. Validation of the scale in 232 subjects from different backgrounds.
3. Psychometric development of a robust, theory independent short form of 14 Items.

After screening the literature and interviewing experts, and a subsequent first analysis, we developed a 30-Item scale with a reliability of  $\alpha = .93$  that was able to reflect the changes induced by a mindfulness retreat and had sufficiently good psychometric properties. The validation study in a population of subjects without experience in meditation ( $n = 86$ ), in a population with psychological problems ( $n = 117$ ) and another group of retreat participants ( $n = 85$ ) showed that some items of the original version of the questionnaire were open to misunderstandings by persons without formal mindfulness training or meditation experience. Cross-validation yielded significantly positive correlations ( $r = .29, =.55$ ) with measures of private self-consciousness and significantly negative correlations ( $r = -.29$  to  $-.33$ ) with measures of dissociation. Mindfulness is significantly negatively correlated ( $r = -.4$ ) with the global measure of psychological distress GSI of the SCL 90, and correlates at  $r = .28$  positively with experience in meditation. The scale is able to differentiate between persons with high and low meditation experience and practice, and is sensitive to change induced by a retreat. A 14-item short version is reliable ( $\alpha = .87$ ), has acceptable psychometric properties and can be considered to be a robust measure of mindfulness comparatively independent of theoretical knowledge of subjects. Contrary to existing instruments it captures most central components of the mindfulness construct and is not contingent on theoretical knowledge. Analysis of dimensionality shows that there is one general factor which can not easily be further differenti-

ated. Our scale seems to be a useful instrument for further research in mindfulness and diagnostics. [harald.walach@uniklinik-freiburg.de]

### **Buddha As a Physician – Meditation As a Cure. Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction / MBSR according to Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn**

*Angelika Wild*

In 1979 Jon Kabat-Zinn founded what has become the Stress-Reduction Clinic at the large hospital of Massachusetts University in Worcester. Holding a doctorate for molecular biology he was deeply convinced that Buddhist meditations on mindfulness could make an important contribution to the recovery from illnesses. He applied the precious essence of the oldest forms of Buddhist meditations, i.e. the so called Vipassana (an ancient Indian word meaning “liberating insight” or “intuitive knowledge”) and developed an 8-week program. MBSR has since been applied successfully in about 300 clinics and health-centres throughout the United States. Numerous scientific studies document in an impressive way that even a short program of meditation shows provable effects on the brain and the immune-system. Many participants not only noticed the reduction of their physical and mental symptoms but also experienced a positive change in their mental attitudes and their behaviour. There is a growing interest in MBSR in Germany where it is now applied with success. The speaker concerns herself with the question how the classical 8-week-program of MBSR could be integrated as an efficient remedy in the prevention of illness and how it could enrich the care that a doctor or a therapist could offer to his patient. [yesche@t-online.de]

### **Inner Peace for a Better World – Vipassana meditation as taught by S.N. Goenka**

*Thomas Willburger*

The technique of Vipassana is a simple, practical way to achieve real peace of mind and to lead a happy, useful life. Vipassana means “to see things as they really are” and the technique is a logical process of mental purification through self-observation. Through the impartial observation of reality within ourselves we gain insight into the causes of our agitation or dissatisfaction. Out of ignorance we keep reacting in a way which is harmful to ourselves and to others. But when wisdom arises and one comes out of the habit of blind reaction one is capable of real action. Although Vipassana was practiced and taught by the Buddha, it contains nothing of a sectarian or religious nature, and can be accepted and applied by people of any background. Today, Vipassana can be learned in ten-day residential courses, as conducted by Mr. S.N. Goenka. By observing sensations throughout the body such as heat, pressure, lightness, pain, itching, etc. students experience the changing nature of these sensations and develop a balanced mind by learning not to react to them. They experience the universal truth of impermanence, suffering and egolessness. This truth realization by direct experience is the process of purification, which dissolves mental impurities such as anxiety, hatred, greed, tension, etc. Vipassana is increasingly recognized and used as a means for improving human welfare. Experiments with courses for school children, drug addicts, prisoners, and executives all underscore the point that societal changes must start with the individual; the individual is the key. [willburger@gmx.de]