

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

The Process of Religious Meditation:  
A Transpersonal Analysis

BY

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

CALGARY, ALBERTA

NOVEMBER, 1989

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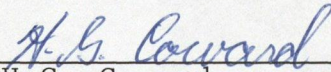
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ISBN 0-315-61687-3

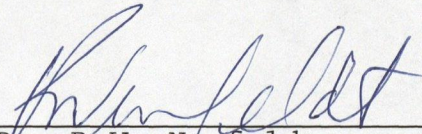
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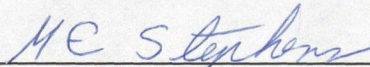
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## ABSTRACT

The present thesis is an attempt to analyze the process of religious meditation from the transpersonal perspective of Washburn's dynamic-dialectical paradigm. Religious meditation is shown to be of two distinct types, concentrative and receptive. In order to better portray each of these forms of meditation, examples from both Eastern and Western religious traditions are employed. In Chapter One, the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali are taken to be descriptive of concentrative meditation, while in Chapter Two the techniques of the Ojibwa shaman are understood as being exemplary of receptive meditation. Both of these religious systems are used as illustrations throughout the remainder of the thesis. In Chapter Three religious meditation is shown to be a technique which, when practiced consistently over a period of time, serves to suspend the usual, socialized processes of the person's mental ego. This is accomplished primarily through eliminating the structure of internal dialogue, which is the base from which all other activities of the mental ego are formed. Thus the internal dialogue is completely restrained, thereby demobilizing all mental egoic activity. Chapter Four shows how the practice of religious meditation enables the person to access all previously repressed materials of the unconscious, and allows them to flow di-

rectly into consciousness. Upon activation of the final layer of unconscious materials, religious meditation is also able to secure release of the power of the Dynamic Ground, that noumenal energy which is responsible for all life in the phenomenal plane. When this event occurs, the power of the Dynamic Ground is experienced fully in the realm of consciousness, and, with continued practice of religious meditation, the person is able to enter into a state of fulfilled humanness as recognized by his/her religious culture. It is concluded in the present thesis that Washburn's dynamic-dialectical paradigm is a valid instrument with which to study religious meditation as a process. In noting this, suggestions for further study are made with respect to the paradigm.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the guidance and support of my supervisor, Dr. Harold Coward, whose suggestions were more than helpful in the writing of this thesis. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Dr. R.W. Neufeldt and Dr. M.E. Stephens for their kind consent to serve on my thesis committee.

to Al Hrabosky, "The Mad Hungarian"

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## INTRODUCTION

With The Ego and the Dynamic Ground Michael Washburn has insightfully analyzed the developmental process of the mental ego within the life of an individual. Using what he terms the dynamic-dialectical paradigm of transpersonal theory, Washburn has described the various stages which occur in the person as he/she matures. The most fundamental concept introduced by Washburn, and the basis for his entire thesis, was that of the "Dynamic Ground". Washburn describes the Dynamic Ground as "the seat of the physico-dynamic pole of the psyche and the source of psychic energy . . . . it is a sine qua non of any kind of psychic functioning or conscious life".<sup>1</sup> Dynamic Ground, then, refers to the noumenal energy which pervades the phenomenal world and acts as a catalyst for such existence. If contact did not exist with the power which emanates from this source (variously described by the religious systems of the world as God, Allah, Brahman, Śūnya, etc.) living entities would cease to be. In this respect, the Dynamic Ground ultimately becomes the essence of life, and the motivator for all religious experience.

At the moment of birth, humans emerge from the womb completely envelopped by the power of the Dynamic Ground.<sup>2</sup> There is no conception of self or individuality. All sights and sounds emanating from the world are perceived as being extensions of the infant. Everything is experi-

enced as a unit. There is no sense of being a separate entity, existing apart from the environment. In short, the infant is entirely unaware of its own existence. It has no cognizance of itself or of a world distinct from itself.<sup>3</sup> As Washburn notes, the infant "is, properly speaking, devoid of cognition. Cognition requires, however minimally, a synthetic unity of consciousness, i.e., a grasping or holding together . . . of the experience".<sup>4</sup> This unity of consciousness is the mental ego, a construct which both initiates and underlies all mental functioning. It is only with the development of the mental ego that a child is able to discern a differentiation between him-/herself and the environment. Until this distinction begins to appear, the infant is both helpless and vulnerable, depending completely upon others to sustain its existence. Before the development of the mental ego, for example, the infant is unable to conceptualize that it requires food in order to survive. Any and all experiences which the infant may have are not bound together by any unifying force. Previous to the onset of the mental ego, the infant is merely an experiential being.

The neonate's awareness . . . is but a stream of unpossessed and uncoordinated experiences. Like a mirror, the consciousness of the newborn unselectively registers everything that comes within its range.<sup>5</sup>

Without the mental ego to coordinate experiences, there can be no meaning for the infant. The experience of hunger will simply be an experience. It will not have any significance, and the infant will need to be fed by another person. Likewise, a potentially dangerous situation will not affect the child in any way because the seriousness cannot be intellectualized. Thus, it is the mental ego which gives a sense of meaning to the manifold experiences of the human being, and until the mental ego is sufficiently developed, the individual must rely upon the intervention of others in order to survive.

The development of the mental ego begins to take place most dramatically during the second year of life. In Piagetian terminology, this would coincide with the transition from the sensorimotor period to the onset of preoperational thought.<sup>6</sup> During such time, the infant emerges from a state of apparent random sensorimotor activity to a being which has at least partial control of its environment.<sup>7</sup>

This cognitive development, which is tied directly to the growth of the mental ego, is reflected in the infant's biological development as well. At birth, the human brain is approximately twenty percent of its adult weight, but by age two it has increased to about eighty percent, indicating that almost all of the neurons have connected to form fully-functioning networks.<sup>8</sup> This

would suggest that in the very early stages of life the mental ego, as organizer of experience, is not developed simply because of the infant's physical limitations. As neuronal activity strengthens, the mental ego comes into existence and the infant gradually acquires the ability to perceive him-/herself as separate from the environment.

As this internal representation becomes more acute in the infant, the onset of language takes place. It is this ability which perhaps has the most dramatic effect on the developing mental ego. Travers asserts that all languages enable the individual to conceptualize abstract structures because they use highly specific principles of organization.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the child, upon inheriting his/her linguistic abilities from society, begins to organize his/her world according to those principles. As language builds in the child, so too does his/her conceptualization of the world and the self. Differentiation between the individual and the environment becomes more distinct. Everything the child experiences begins to be cognized in relation to how it affects him/her. As this process continues, the idea of self becomes more established, and ultimately the self-concept is born. As a result, the child comes to view the world in an I-Thou dichotomy.

It is at this point that the mental ego begins to step outside of its original boundaries. It not only or-

ganizes cognitions in order to ensure the survival of the individual (which was its raison d'être), it now, as a self-concept, reacts to those cognitions. The mental ego qua self-concept begins to see itself as being substantial -- a complete, autonomous entity. Thus, what started as a construct intended to aid the organism now begins to control that same organism. Actions are performed not only in service of the survival of the organism, but also (and more importantly) in service of the survival of the self, and all that the self has come to be.

Because the mental ego now understands itself to be a substantial entity, it sees the need to maintain its own survival. This is accomplished primarily by destroying all which it perceives as a potential threat to its existence; and the most eminent threat to the existence of the emerging mental ego is the power of the Dynamic Ground. As such an all-encompassing force, the power of the Dynamic Ground is regarded as interfering with the activity of the mental ego, which considers itself to be distinct from bodily life.

Fearing for its life, the mental ego attempts to distance itself as much as possible from the power of the Dynamic Ground. This is accomplished by constructing a myriad of defense mechanisms which enable the mental ego to effectively repress to the unconscious realm anything



which it deems to be threatening. As a result of such action, a state of differentiation develops whereby the power of the Dynamic Ground, being relegated to the unconscious, becomes clouded by the activity of the mental ego. Because the power of the Dynamic Ground is no longer directly felt, the mental ego assumes that it is itself the catalyst of life. The person, then, enters a period of existence which is dominated completely by the mental ego. As Washburn states, this domination of the mental ego becomes firmly established by the end of adolescence, at which point, "it continues in more or less stable fashion until the end of life".<sup>10</sup>

For some individuals, however, mental egoic domination is not the final outcome of the life process. Instead, it is merely a necessary stage which leads to higher development. This higher development is reached when the mental ego becomes re-rooted in the power of the Dynamic Ground. As Washburn contends, it is only with this "re-Grounding" that the individual is able to become fully open to all aspects of existence. It is only at this point, then, that the person is said to experience a state of fulfilled humanness.

In order for this higher development to take place, one must therefore first be able to re-access the power of the Dynamic Ground. This can only come about, however, through contact with those repressed, unconscious

materials found deep within one's own psyche. Perhaps the best means for achieving this contact is the practice of meditation. While other approaches, such as hypnosis, psychotherapy, and the use of hallucinogens and dreams may lead the person to the unconscious, they do not have the direct or long-lasting, fully-encompassing effects which meditation provides. For example, hallucinogens may allow an individual to directly experience the unconscious, but the encounter usually lasts only as long as the drug remains in the bloodstream. Upon a return to normal consciousness, the mental ego once again assumes control, and the profundity of the experience fades with time. The impact of the unconscious will cease to be a motivating factor. In this sense, hallucinogens may open some doors, but they cannot be the answer to establishing sustained contact with the unconscious. Psychotherapy presents the individual with a different problem. While its effects are usually quite long-lasting, its methodologies, in terms of addressing the unconscious, tend to be superficial and sporadic.<sup>11</sup> Techniques such as dream analysis and free association, while they may allow one to more fully recognize and appreciate the processes of the unconscious, take place completely in the realm of the conscious mind. As such, direct contact with the unconscious is rarely, if ever, established.

Contrary to these other approaches, contact with the

unconscious through meditative practice is both direct and permanent. The reason for this, as Washburn states, is that "meditation dissolves the barriers that separate the conscious and unconscious systems and establishes a real connection between the two".<sup>12</sup> This dissolution of barriers and subsequent connection is established by gradually and permanently suspending the defense mechanisms of the mental ego. Once this suspension occurs, the person is able to gain some direct access to the processes of the unconscious, and subsequently to the power of the Dynamic Ground. Thus Washburn concludes that "of all the approaches to the unconscious, it is meditation that pursues the straightest and truest course".<sup>13</sup>

Despite this great importance which Washburn places on the practice of meditation, his writing on the subject lacks the depth of analysis with which he has covered other areas of his theory. His treatment of the meditative process is in fact one of the weakest points of his research. His discussion of Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras (which he uses as a primary example of meditative practice) is uncharacteristically superficial. This is especially the case with his treatment of the state of samā-dhi. In addition, and perhaps because of this, only cursory mention is given to the role which meditation plays in the final stages leading to fulfilled humanness.

This obvious lack in Washburn's otherwise powerful

theory quite clearly reflects a more cutting and wider-reaching problem. Although much research has been devoted to the religious practice of meditation (especially within the last twenty years) very little is really understood about the process from a psychological standpoint. Much has been written about the physiological correlates of meditative practice, for example, but these data become virtually meaningless in the absence of a substantial theory which can be used as a basis for study. Until such a theory is produced, results from subsequent studies will remain quaint at best.

It appears that with The Ego and the Dynamic Ground Washburn has constructed a framework from which meaningful analysis of the religious meditative process can proceed. The present thesis, then, is such an attempt. Using Washburn's dynamic-dialectical paradigm, a much more critical transpersonal analysis of the phenomenon of religious meditation will be conducted. In performing the research, material will be drawn from specific examples of both Eastern and Western religious traditions.

Meditation itself has been recognized as being of two types, concentrative and receptive.<sup>14</sup> Concentrative meditation is understood to be a focusing of consciousness upon a single object or entity to the exclusion of all else, while receptive meditation is a quieting of the mind whereby the person becomes open to experience all

sensations (both internally and externally) which form impressions upon consciousness. In order to better illustrate each of these types, the first two chapters are descriptive in nature. Chapter One will outline the techniques of Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras, indicating how they are recognized as being an example of concentrative meditation. Similarly, the techniques of the Ojibwa shaman, as representative of receptive meditation, will be outlined in Chapter Two. Each will be examined in terms of the culture's respective world-view, indicating how their systems lead the adherent to a state of fulfilled humanness as recognized by that particular society.

Throughout the remainder of the thesis, both of these examples will be understood to be indicative of the religious meditative process, and will be analyzed in terms of the dynamic-dialectical paradigm. Thus Chapter Three will discuss religious meditation as a practice which disengages the mental ego's attention from external involvements. As such, religious meditation will be shown to facilitate the suspension of the mental ego's defense mechanisms. In exploring the reasons for this facilitation, consideration will be given to techniques (such as stopping the internal dialogue) which serve to upset the mental ego's world-view. Chapter Four will then illustrate how religious meditation provides the means for accessing the previously repressed elements of the un-

conscious. This will include a discussion of the psychological states which accompany unconscious activation, as well as the concomitant disruption of the ordinary mental processes. Finally, religious meditation will be analyzed with regard to its role in the complete submergence of the mental ego into the unconscious, and the subsequent state in which the power of the Dynamic Ground is gradually allowed to flow freely into consciousness.

Notes to Introduction

1 M. Washburn (1988) The Ego and the Dynamic Ground, Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 110.

2 Washburn, p. 41.

3 Washburn, p. 41.

4 Washburn, p. 44.

5 Washburn, p. 42.

6 J. Piaget (1952) The Origins of Intelligence in Children, New York: International Universities Press, p. 157.

7 J. Flavell (1977) Cognitive Development, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, p. 14.

8 J. Travers (1982) The Growing Child, Glenview, Ill: Scott, Foresman and Co., p. 138.

9 Travers, p. 273.

10 Washburn, p. 5.

11 Washburn, p. 140.

12 Washburn, p. 141.

13 Washburn, p. 140.

14 See, for example, R. Ornstein (1971) On the Psychology of Meditation, New York: Viking, p. 131.



## CHAPTER ONE

### Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras: an Example of Concentrative Meditation

Concentrative meditation, as outlined by other researchers,<sup>1</sup> becomes established when the individual frees him-/herself from all thought-processes which usually occur in the mind and subsequently focuses the whole of consciousness upon a specific object or idea to the exclusion of all else. As such, the practice of concentrative meditation allows the person to experience the phenomenal world without any of the usual interferences. Perhaps the best example of concentrative meditation can be found in the Yoga Sūtras of the Hindu religion.

Compiled around 200 C.E. by Patañjali, the Yoga Sūtras reflect major refinements in both theory and practice over the yoga expounded by the Upaniṣads.<sup>2</sup> As a result, they are recognized as being the first work to give classical form to yoga as an independent system,<sup>3</sup> and later came to be a basis for one of the six established darśana (philosophical systems) of Hinduism.<sup>4</sup>

Patañjali was heavily influenced by the already established dualistic philosophy of Sāṅkhya metaphysics, and this subsequently became the cornerstone of the philosophy contained in the Yoga Sūtras.<sup>5</sup> According to Sāṅkhya thought, the whole of reality is comprised of two

eternal and basic unmanifest principles, puruṣa and prākṛti. Puruṣa can be conceptualized as pure spirit.

There are said to be an infinite number of puruṣa in the universe, corresponding to every living entity. Each puruṣa is therefore distinct from every other one. Prākṛti, on the other hand, corresponds to material nature.

It is as a result of the movement of prākṛti (which is said to be set in motion at the beginning of each cosmic cycle), that all forms of material nature, both subtle and gross, come into existence. Thus, all objects have their root in the principle of prākṛti. And as Coward points out, it is the subtle aspects of prākṛti which "are the actual continuing underlying powers out of which all psycho-physical reality constantly emerges".<sup>6</sup>

Figure 1 illustrates the various psycho-physical manifestations which arise due to the motion of mulaprākṛti (root prākṛti). As shown, the first of these is buddhi (intellectual or discriminating consciousness). Next arises ahaṁkāra, which gives each living being a sense of individuality or personality. It is this principle of ahaṁkāra which is said to be the subtle cause of the various elements found within the more gross levels of existence.<sup>7</sup> Included here is manas, which coordinates the sensations received by the mind, and then relays these contacts to buddhi. Manas, then, does not itself make contact with the external objects. It is the five

senses which do this.

According to the Sāṅkhya and Yoga systems, the whole sensation/perception process occurs when each of the five senses comes into contact with objects, and imparts information accordingly. The visual sense, for example, will, at any given time, perceive a particular pattern of light waves. Similarly, the auditory sense will perceive a particular pattern of sound waves. All of this information which comes from the senses is then coordinated by manas, and subsequently relayed to buddhi, which makes intellectual decisions based on the information it receives. Thus, it is buddhi which, upon receiving sensory input from manas, will draw the conclusion, for example, that the person is looking at a lamp. Until the information reaches buddhi it is merely input waiting to be analyzed.

Underlying this process of information-gathering is the principle of ahaṁkāra. As mentioned, it is because of this principle that the person perceives him-/herself as an individual, making independent decisions. But this, according to Patañjali, is a false perception because all of the aforementioned principles and processes are contained within the realm prākṛti and have their existence from this source. The sense of I-ness which each person carries cannot stand on its own because it is, like everything else within prākṛti, merely a manifestation of the

three guṇa. Much as a rope is made up of the intertwin-  
ing of three strands, so prākṛti consists of the inter-  
play of the three guṇa.<sup>8</sup> These are sattva (the nature of  
intellectual intelligence), rajas (the nature of movement,  
or disturbing energy) and tamas (the nature of inertia).  
Each of these, to varying degrees, is found in any thought  
or material substance. What distinguishes one entity  
from any other is the particular guṇa which is dominant  
therein, as well as the extent to which the other two gu-  
ṇa are subordinate. It is as a result of this constant  
interplay of the three guṇa that everything within the  
realm of prākṛti is mistakenly understood by the mind-  
stuff (citta) to exist as entities in-themselves. But  
the mind too exists in the realm of prākṛti. Even though,  
because of the principle of ahaṁkāra, it prefers to un-  
derstand itself as an individual objective observer, the  
mind has as its chief quality sattva and, as such, exists  
as intellectual intelligence. As Vāchaspati Miśra states  
in his gloss of Sūtra I.2.,

the mind, on account of [sattva] being its rul-  
ing factor, desires to dwell upon reality. But  
because the reality is veiled by Inertia (ta-  
mas) it mistakes the attainments of attenuation  
(Anima) for the reality and desires to dwell  
and dwells upon them for a moment. Being pushed  
away, however, by Energy (rajas) . . . it finds  
only a liking for them.<sup>9</sup>

The mind, then, as organizer and interpreter of ma-  
terial existence, mistakes its own interpretations for ob-

jective reality, and chooses to focus its attention on these as a basis for action. As such, citta attaches itself to the objects it experiences through the senses, and fluctuates in accordance to the fluctuations of the objects. These mental fluctuations are referred to in the Yoga Sūtras as citta vṛtti.<sup>10</sup>

Contrary to this, puruṣa, the other eternal substance which exists alongside prākṛti, does not fluctuate. Because puruṣa stands outside the realm of prākṛti it is not affected by the interplay of the guṇa. Puruṣa exists only in-itself, as a pure, unmanifest principle. It does, however, appear to fluctuate. The reason for this apparent fluctuation is the fact that puruṣa is situated near the mind, and therefore reflects the fluctuations of the mind even though it itself remains unaffected. In order to better portray this sense of reflection the Yoga Sūtras commonly employ the analogy of a crystal.<sup>11</sup> Just as a transparent crystal assumes the colour of whatever object is placed beside it (even though its own transparency remains unchanged), so puruṣa, having the objects of the mind shown to it (with the subsequent mental fluctuations), reflects these same fluctuations while itself remaining pure. Thus, because the mind is so closely situated to puruṣa, it is assumed that the cognitions/fluctuations of citta are actually the cognitions of puruṣa. But puruṣa does not wander from object

to object as citta does. Instead, the objects are shown to it via citta, and it merely reflects these fluctuations. Puruṣa, unlike citta, does not identify with the objects.

It is these fluctuations of the mind (citta vṛtti) which become the root of the problem for Patañjali. As long as the fluctuations exist, the pureness of puruṣa will always appear clouded and therefore will never be experienced in all of its brilliance. The fluctuations of the mind inhibit the individual from experiencing the fullness of puruṣa. Puruṣa must therefore become fully isolated from the effects of the three guṇa if the mind is to know it as it exists in-itself. Accomplished only through a complete restraint of the mental fluctuations (a process known as citta vṛtti nirodha), this is essentially the goal of the Yoga Sūtras. Given this goal, one can see clear parallels with Washburn's statements concerning the demobilization of mental egoic structures, which he considers to be of primary importance in any successful application of meditative practice.

Beginning with Sūtra II.29., Patañjali outlines what are the eight limbs (astāṅga) of yoga. These are the means for achieving the state of citta vṛtti nirodha. The first two, yama (restraint) and niyama (observance), are known as the moral preparation. Because they instill in the adherent the proper mental attitude,

these two must be mastered before the individual can begin the actual meditation procedures. Each contains five ethical principles which "may be described as the imperatives of the authentic Self".<sup>12</sup> Yama includes such things as ahiṃsā (nonviolence), not injuring or killing, physically or mentally, any living being; satya (truthfulness), affirming truth in thought, speech and deed; asteya (non-stealing), abstaining from theft; brahmacharya (self-discipline), disciplining oneself in terms of impulses and desires; and aparigraha (non-greed), not being greedy or accepting unnecessary gifts. Niyama, on the other hand, includes śāucha (purity), observing purity both physically and mentally; santosha (contentment), cultivating the spirit of contentment, not wishing for unnecessary gains; tapas (purificatory action), training the body to endure extreme circumstances, as exemplified in the pairs of opposites, such as heat and cold, hunger and thirst; svādhyāya (study of scriptures), devotional study and contemplation of books containing spiritual wisdom, as well as chanting the sacred syllable aum; and īśvara pranidhāna (love of īśvara), constant remembrance of īśvara as the motivation of all action and thought. These, then, are the ten principles which, when mastered, foster within the individual a proper attitude toward life, and are therefore known as the moral preparations to higher practice.



The next three techniques in the yogic process, āsa-  
na (posture), prāṇāyāma (regulation of breath) and prat-  
yāhāra (control of the sense organs), are collectively  
 known as the external disciplines. They have as their  
 goal the restraint of the various activities of the bo-  
 dy.<sup>13</sup> Āsana is described in Sūtra II.46-48. The purpose  
 of the practice is to bring more control over the move-  
 ments of one's body. Control/steadiness of the body is  
 seen as a precursor to control/steadiness of the mind.  
 As one gains more control over the movements of the body,  
 various postures are able to be maintained for long peri-  
 ods of time. The body is no longer restless, but becomes  
 calm and steady. It is this calm and steadiness of the  
 body which must be maintained before the adherent can ev-  
 er begin to steady the mind. With regard to which pos-  
 ture is used to gain this steadiness, the Yoga Sūtras  
 make it clear that there is no one correct posture. Any  
 posture will suffice, as long as it is not difficult for  
 the person to maintain and it facilitates steadiness.  
 Thus, the choice is left up to the individual. The cor-  
 rect posture, according to the Yoga Sūtras, is simply one  
 which in time can be performed effortlessly by the adher-  
 ent. This sense of effortlessness, when accomplished, is  
 what allows the person to overcome the pairs of opposites  
 which exist in prākṛti. The body, now calm, no longer  
 fluctuates according to the fluctuations of prākṛti.

Prāṇāyāma is described in Sūtra II.49. as a pause after each inspiratory and expiratory movement of breath. The reason for the advocacy of such practice is that "breathing is closely connected with the fluctuation of mental states".<sup>14</sup> As the mind fluctuates, so too will one's breathing. In states of emotional excitement, for example, the breathing becomes very rapid and irregular. The whole process seems to occur beyond the control of the individual. But just as the modern-day sprinter is taught that deep, steady breathing is the key to concentration and mental preparation, so the adherent of yoga is instructed to pause after each inhalation and exhalation in order to facilitate one-pointedness of mind. Control of the breathing process, then, like control of the body, is recognized as an important precursor in the individual's ability to calm the various fluctuations of the mind. Prāṇāyāma itself can be divided into four stages. The first two, internal and external restraints, occur when the individual retains his/her breath preceding an inspiration or expiration, respectively. The third stage takes place when the adherent is able to produce both internal and external restraints in a single effort. With such ability, air is neither allowed to enter nor exit the body. Thus it is said that when this effort becomes accomplished, the person is able to retain the breath for long periods of time. After extended

practice of this total breath restraint, the fourth stage of prāṇāyāma appears. This is also a state of total breath control, but while the previous three stages are performed knowingly and deliberately by the adherent, the final stage is recognized as being involuntary and occurring spontaneously. Because of this spontaneous element of the fourth stage of prāṇāyāma, the individual is able to remain still for several hours at a time, during which the process of breathing slows down considerably. Through such practice, then, prāṇāyāma is said to remove any mental disturbances which are caused by the physical body.<sup>15</sup> It is in this sense that prāṇāyāma is understood to prepare the person for mental control.

Pratyāhāra, as Sūtra II.54. explains, is a control of the senses whereby they no longer fluctuate with the objects of the external environment. In such a state, without the disturbances of these objects, the senses are allowed to directly follow whatever state of mind is experienced by the individual. If the mind remains active and fluctuating, the senses will do likewise. But when the mind is restrained and calm (as in later stages of yoga), then the senses also become restrained. According to the Yoga Sūtras, this is the highest form of control.<sup>16</sup> Coward reiterates this sense of importance attached to the practice of pratyāhāra when he states that it

leads to the very threshold of discovery of the inner world. The senses, open windows through which the outer world continuously infiltrates consciousness, are neutralized and sensory activity is brought to a standstill; the mind is insulated against all outside interference, and it closes itself into its own autonomous sphere.<sup>17</sup>

Pratyāhāra, then, because it detaches the sense organs from their objects, serves to isolate the mind of the individual from the external environment so that attention can be directed inward.

Having accomplished both the moral preparations (in order to instill a proper attitude toward life) and control of the external modes of existence (the body and sense organs), the attention of the adherent can now be concentrated directly on an attempt to control the internal (mental) processes. The means for this control is addressed by the Yoga Sūtras with the final three limbs of yoga. These include dhāraṇā (concentration), dhyāna (meditation) and samādhi (trance). As the internal disciplines which have as their ultimate goal the restraint of all fluctuations of the mind, they are collectively known as saṁyama.

Dhāraṇā, as described in Sūtra III.1., is the practice of concentrating the mind upon a particular object. Similar to the prescription for āsana, the Yoga Sūtras do not outline any one object which becomes correct for concentration. The choice is again left up to the individual.

The only stipulation is that the object chosen must be one which will facilitate a quieting of the mind. Having outlined this, one suggestion which the Yoga Sūtras do subsequently make is that control of the mind can be facilitated if the object of concentration is the Īśvara. Described in Sūtra I.23-26., the Īśvara is not necessarily understood to be God, but rather is a model puruṣa -- one which has always been in the state for which the adherent is striving. As such, it is said that for the person who displays an adoration for the Īśvara, using it as the chosen object, nearness to the Īśvara is acquired. This nearness allows the adherent to more directly experience the attainment of concentration, as well as the latter stages of mental discipline. It must be reiterated, however, that while the Yoga Sūtras outline the Īśvara as the object of concentration, they do not view this as the only path. Recognizing each person to be different, one is instructed, in the end, to "meditate according to one's predilection".<sup>18</sup> Thus, it does not ultimately matter which object one chooses in his/her concentrative practice. As long as the mind is able to identify with some object of concentration, then a state of calmness and steadiness will be achieved. In such a state, the individual becomes more attuned to the object, feeling its presence more so than in usual waking consciousness. The reason for this increased sensitivity is the progressive

quieting of the mind which accompanies concentration. As fluctuations carry less and less influence over the concentrating mind, the individual is more able to see the object of concentration as it exists in its own essence. Perception of the object becomes less clouded by the preconceptions associated with the various mental fluctuations. Concentration, then, allows the individual to more fully experience the object as it really is. In time, this ability to concentrate carries over to other objects of existence as well. As Vyasa states in his commentary to the Yoga Sūtras, "having reached stability there [in whatever object the person chooses] the mind-stuff reaches the stable state elsewhere".<sup>19</sup>

As the practice of dhāraṇā continues and intensifies, it develops into dhyāna, which is said simply to be a state of prolonged concentration.<sup>20</sup> Here the mind is able to focus upon the object of concentration to the exclusion of all else. This state of dhyāna is allowed to come about when, due to continuous periods of dhāraṇā, the mind stabilizes and is able to maintain concentration uninterruptedly, without any distraction from the mental fluctuations usually associated with other objects. Such a state can be considered analogous to the mental state of an individual who is experiencing a feeling of ecstasy, such as not infrequently occurs with intense and concentrated listening to music. During such periods, the

music is all that exists for the person. Each note is heard in its fullness and richness, and other sights and sounds which exist in the external environment cease to be distractions. Just as the person here is said to be carried away by the experience, their mind listening only to the music, so a person in the state of dhyāna has his/her mind attuned only to the object of meditation. Sensations of other objects cannot reach the consciousness of the individual as easily because his/her mind is concentrating completely upon the object of meditation.

As this concentration becomes even more intense and one-pointed, the final stage of yoga as outlined by the Yoga Sūtras is achieved. This is known as samādhi, and occurs in two forms, samprajñata samādhi (object samādhi) and asamprajñata samādhi (objectless samādhi). Samprajñata samādhi, which itself is broken down into four progressive stages, occurs when the object of concentration assumes possession of the entire mind. In such a state, the mind becomes devoid of cognitions of any other thing. In this sense, there occurs in the mind of the adherent a direct knowledge of the object of concentration. The object is eventually allowed to present itself to the mind in its own essence. When samprajñata samādhi comes to fruition there remains no essential difference between subject and object. The previous distinction becomes eliminated and there is said to be consciousness of only



the object of meditation.

Examining more closely the specific stages of samprajñata samādhi as outlined by the Yoga Sūtras, the lowest and most impure stage is savitarka (indistinct perception). It is called indistinct because the mind in such a state does not recognize the absolute differences between the word describing an object (śabda), the idea or conceptual meaning (artha) of that object, and the direct perception (jñāna) of the object itself. Thus the three of these become mixed-up (saṅkirna) by the mind of the adherent. Because the verbal and inferential cognitions carry past ideas and memories, they will give the person preconceived notions about all that he/she experiences, and the mind itself will become a contributing factor in any knowledge which is gained. Thus, the verbal and inferential cognitions will influence the individual's experience of any object. As long as the person remains at this level of lower perception, there will always be confusion concerning the three categories. Words, ideas and direct perceptions of the intended object will appear to overlap, each signifying the same thing.

The second stage of samprajñata samādhi is nirvitar-ka (distinct), or higher perception. It is at this stage that the mind is said to become free from the memories associated with both verbal and inferential cognitions of an object. When these cognitions are dispelled, then the

object is allowed to appear to the mind in its own distinct nature, and no confusion arises.<sup>21</sup> Such a mind "gives up its own nature of conscious cognition; . . . it only shows out the nature of the object, and has, as it were, transformed into the object itself".<sup>22</sup> It is this perception which is called distinct and is recognized as higher perception. The mind here reflects only the object, and does not add any mental associations to the perception. It is therefore a direct perception (jñāna). With this accomplishment, verbal and inferential cognitions are understood to be inferior because they inhibit the objects of the world from appearing fully before the mind. Thus it is said that "the knowledge obtained by a Yogi through nirvitarka . . . is not confused by any other cognition".<sup>23</sup>

While the first two levels of samprajñata samādhi deal with objects of the gross level of existence, the latter two stages, savichārā and nirvichārā correspond to objects on the subtle plane. Although more advanced than the previous two stages, the mind in the state of savichārā is still said to be confined by the limitations of consciousness within both space and time. Because consciousness is limited here, cognitions of objects are therefore dependent upon cognition of the qualities of the objects. As such, these cognitions can never become completely independent.

The mind in the state of nirvichāra, however, is not so limited. Here the mind is able to completely identify with the object itself, and becomes, essentially, void of its own nature.<sup>24</sup> The mind modifies itself into the very object of meditation, and therefore knows the object more directly than it ever could previously. In such a state, the limitations of time and space become transcended. "The object may be in a box, behind a wall or hundreds of miles off, the mind faithfully reproduces it . . . . It no longer depends upon the senses for its knowledge, but has become the all-sense itself".<sup>25</sup> This is the highest level of samprajñata samādhi.

But this state too eventually becomes transcended by the adherent when he/she enters asamprajñata samādhi. In this final stage of samādhi even the object of consciousness becomes suppressed. The mind no longer needs the support of a separate object of concentration. It is now able to turn back upon its own flow of consciousness as the object itself. When such a state is achieved, all influence of saṁskāra (subliminal impressions) is removed and puruṣa becomes isolated (kāivalya) from even the most subtle of the mental fluctuations of prākṛti.<sup>26</sup> Freed to itself, the mind is now able to become pure sattva, and as such is transparent to puruṣa. As Coward elucidates,

in this state there is only pure knowing consciousness. The lower "filtering organs" of ego (ahaṁkāra), mind and sense organs with

their component rajas or emotion have been dropped off or transcended. There remains only pristine existence of reality itself which is revealed to be nothing other than the pure discriminative consciousness of the true self (puruṣa).<sup>27</sup>

Thus, with asamprajñata samādhi the final goal of yoga has been achieved.

With the above outline, it becomes clear that the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali emphasize the practice of concentrative meditation in order to bring about a state of fulfilled humanness within the person. Using a specific object of meditation, and concentrating only upon that object, it is understood that the person is able to progressively wipe away all influence of mental distractions. It is this elimination of the distractions which subsequently permits the mind to experience reality as it exists in-itself.

Given this goal of the Yoga Sūtras, one can plainly see the similarities between the theory of Washburn and the prescription outlined by Patañjali. Both view religious meditation as a means for effectively quieting and eventually eliminating those distractions which interfere with the direct perception of existence (puruṣa or the Dynamic Ground). For Washburn it is the structures of the mental ego which must be demobilized, while for Patañjali it is the fluctuations of citta which are the target. Thus, just as Patañjali is concerned with citta vṛt-

ti nirodha (a restraint of the mental fluctuations), so Washburn emphasizes a repression of the usual mental processes, including the internal dialogue. One can see clearly, then, direct parallels which exist in the systems outlined by both Patañjali and Washburn, and it is these parallels which will be more closely examined in later chapters.

Notes to Chapter One

<sup>1</sup> R. Ornstein (1971) On the Psychology of Meditation, New York: Viking, p. 131. See also D. Goleman (1977) The Varieties of Meditative Experience, New York: E.P. Dutton, p. 89, and M. Washburn (1978) "Observations Relevant to a Unified Theory of Meditation", Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 10, pp. 45-65.

<sup>2</sup> D. Kinsley (1982) Hinduism, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> T. Hopkins (1971) The Hindu Religious Tradition, Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> The six darśana are nyāya, vāisheshika, sāṅkhya, yoga, mīmāṃsā and vedānta. See K. Bahadur (1977) The Wisdom of Yoga: A Study of Patañjali's Yoga Sūtra, New Delhi: Sterling, p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> H. Coward (1985) Jung and Eastern Thought, Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 145.

<sup>6</sup> Coward, p. 151.

<sup>7</sup> R. Prasāda, trans. (1974) Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras, New York: AMS Press, pp. 78-79.

<sup>8</sup> Coward, p. 32.

<sup>9</sup> Prasāda, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> See Yoga Sūtra I.2., Prasāda, pp. 5-9.

<sup>11</sup> See Yoga Sūtra I.4., Prasāda, pp. 10-12.

<sup>12</sup> H. Chaudhuri (1983) "Yoga Psychology", in C. Tart, ed. Transpersonal Psychologies, New York: Harper and Row, p. 273.

<sup>13</sup> The body, as understood in the Hindu tradition, includes not only the physical body, but such things as the faculties of sense as well.

<sup>14</sup> Coward, p. 150.

<sup>15</sup> Hopkins, p. 68.

- 16 See Yoga Sūtra II.54., Prasāda, pp. 176-177.
- 17 Coward, p. 150.
- 18 See Yoga Sūtra I.39., Prasāda, p. 65.
- 19 J. Woods, trans. (1972) The Yoga-System of Patañjali, Harvard University Press, p. 77.
- 20 See Yoga Sūtra III.2., Prasāda, p. 180.
- 21 Prasāda, p. 70.
- 22 Prasāda, p. 72.
- 23 Prasāda, p. 70.
- 24 Prasāda, p. 76.
- 25 Prasāda, p. v.
- 26 See Yoga Sūtra I.50-51., Prasāda, pp. 79-81. Unlike the explanations of the results of previous stages of yoga, which follow a clear and logical progression, the description of the onset of asamprajñata samādhi, which includes the elimination of all subtle thought-impressions, is not so clear-cut and logical. On the contrary, it seems to make assumptions which require a leap of faith or a transcendence of logic in order to be appreciated fully.
- 27 Coward, p. 139.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Techniques of the Ojibwa Shaman: an Example of Receptive Meditation

Just as the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali illustrate the practice of concentrative meditation, so the methods of the shaman are an example of receptive meditation. The shaman, in acquiring and utilizing his/her specialized abilities, had to continuously display a mental state which fostered an openness to the powers which pervaded the natural world. In Washburn's terms, the shaman had to "maintain the stance of an open and unmoving witness"<sup>1</sup> through which the powers could manifest themselves. If such mental conditioning were not practiced, contact with the noumenal powers could never be established. As such, the shaman's methods can clearly be understood as being receptive in nature.

Shamanism has been described as "vital human contact with a transphenomenal power that is achieved by specialized techniques".<sup>2</sup> In this sense, shamanism "generally expresses a revelatory experience of transcendent reality".<sup>3</sup> The practice of shamanism has been exhibited across cultures, to varying degrees, in virtually every part of the world, from the Siberian Eskimo to the Toltecs of Central America. In Canada, shamanism has been found in, among others, the Ojibwa tribe of the Great



Lakes region. It is this example of the shaman which will be examined in the present thesis. But in order to better understand the methods employed by the Ojibwa shaman, and his/her subsequent role in the community, it first becomes essential to understand the traditional Ojibwa world-view.

The Ojibwa people are said to have first inhabited the Great Lakes area around 1200 C.E., migrating from the eastern parts of North America.<sup>4</sup> Because the Great Lakes region characteristically contained rocky soil and a short growing season, agricultural methods were not the primary means by which the Ojibwa sustained themselves. Instead, these people hunted, fished and gathered food-stuffs in order to survive.<sup>5</sup> As a result of this way of life, almost the whole of the Ojibwa culture revolved around hunting pursuits -- everything from traditional Ojibwa art to the education of children. Indeed, the initial European missionaries who encountered the Ojibwa often "complained that the only thing taught by Ojibwa to their children was hunting technique".<sup>6</sup> This necessary emphasis upon all that surrounded hunting also permeated the traditional Ojibwa religion. The need to obtain game for subsistence was the driving force behind virtually all religious activity.

With this particular orientation to the world, it is not surprising to find, as Vecsey reports, that "tradi-

tional Ojibwa religion did not articulate concern for matters beyond this existence, beyond life".<sup>7</sup> Survival in this life was the ultimate concern of the Ojibwa. To emphasize this overall sense of immediacy which permeated Ojibwa religious thought, M.B. Black reports that one Ojibwa, in conversation with nineteenth century missionaries, summed up the situation quite simply by saying that, "Indians pray for game, Christians pray for soul salvation".<sup>8</sup> Thus, the traditional religion almost exclusively reflected Ojibwa life and its concerns in the here-and-now.

The Ojibwa understood the world to be a flat piece of earth, "like a muskeg floating in a lake".<sup>9</sup> Below this was another flat earth, and above them was "the dome of the sky",<sup>10</sup> upon which a third world was located. Inhabiting all three of these planes were extremely powerful beings known as manito. It was the manito which were considered to be the ultimate sources of existence for the Ojibwa communities. The Ojibwa came into being as a result of the interactions between these beings. Consequently, the productivity of any Ojibwa community was felt to be fundamentally dependent upon their ability to establish and maintain relations with the manito.

There were said to be an untold number of manito living in the universe, with no particular one ruling supreme. And just as there were many different types of

manito, there were also a variety of relationships which could be established between them and the Ojibwa people. Thus, some were regarded with awe, some with affection, and others with dread.<sup>11</sup> Relations between the Ojibwa and the manito covered the whole range of human experience, just as the manito influenced the entire scope of Ojibwa existence. When an event took place in the universe (anything from a limb being fractured to the formation of a storm) the immediate response of the Ojibwa was to ask which manito had caused it. The Ojibwa also envisioned the manito as the suppliers of their daily food. That is, it was the manito who determined the degree to which a hunting expedition was or was not successful. Thus, the Ojibwa lived in a very personal world with regard to the manito.

As Grim describes them, "the manito are special hierophanies in which the individual participates by receiving symbolic communications from the spirit world".<sup>12</sup> Manito, then, were noumenal entities whose presence became manifest through the phenomenal environment. A manito could reveal itself in any form, and the Ojibwa had to be perpetually conscious of this fact if they were to establish relationships with them. Ojibwa sacred places (places where manito were said to reside) could therefore be found virtually anywhere, within any thing. It was these sacred places which could reveal sacred energies,

and the sacred energies could be tapped only if the Ojibwa entered into proper relations with the manito. In this way, the natural world was understood as revealing manito presences which could impart insight and strength to individual Ojibwa members.

The most powerful and important of the manito were Nanabozho, the Four Winds, the Underwater Manito, the Thunderbirds and the Owners (of animals). Each of these manito directly influenced the hunting success of the Ojibwa, and affected the daily activities of every individual.

Nanabozho served as the culture-hero for the Ojibwa people. Through various myths, the Ojibwa were able to establish intimate identification with him. Although he rarely served as an individual's guardian manito, his mythic exploits confirmed the Ojibwa as a hunting society.<sup>13</sup> For example, it was Nanabozho who created the present world as it existed, and it was he who established the right and ability of Ojibwa to hunt. In their own estimation, the Ojibwa would not exist without Nanabozho.<sup>14</sup>

The Four Winds resided in the four cardinal points of the universe. As brothers of Nanabozho, they were responsible for the weather, as well as the change of season. In the Ojibwa creation myth, Nanabozho gained control over his four brothers in order to secure successful

hunting and fishing for the Ojibwa people. Ojibwa life depended directly upon being able to form relations with the Four Winds. For example, the Ojibwa needed

cold North Wind blowing in the late winter to harden the crust of snow so that large game such as deer would be hobbled in their attempts to escape the snowshoe-clad hunters. The animals' legs broke through the hard crust while the snowshoes glided across top. If the North Wind did not act properly, the Ojibwa could starve.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, the actions of the Winds during the summer months played a significant role in the success of fishing by the Ojibwa. It thus became essential for the Ojibwa to maintain proper relations with the Four Winds.

The Underwater Manito was a composite, consisting of two beings, the underwater lion and the horned serpent. As a composite, the Underwater Manito had direct influence over the abundance and availability of all fish, as well as some land animals. Through consorting with its numerous underwater allies, it could control virtually all of this game, withholding it from any of its enemies. The Underwater Manito also possessed other, more treacherous powers. It could cause stormy waters in order to sink canoes and drown humans. In general, then, the Ojibwa understood this manito to be unfriendly. It was not entirely evil, however. For those individuals who accepted it as their guardian, it offered medicinal powers.<sup>16</sup>

In order to counter the influence of the Underwater Manito, Nanabozho created the Thunderbirds. These were enormous birds, said to be of the hawk family, who manifested themselves through thunder and lightning storms. "They threw lightning balls or bolts to the earth to kill the Underwater Manito or its allies; their powers also punished Indians who broke traditions and moral rules".<sup>17</sup> Just as the Underwater Manito influenced the fish and some land animals, so the Thunderbirds controlled the availability of all birds, and could therefore aid the Ojibwa in acquiring these animals for food.

Also of great importance to the Ojibwa were the owners of natural entities, particularly the owners of large animals which the Ojibwa hunted. Although the Underwater Manito controlled water and land animals, and Thunderbirds controlled the birds, each species of animal also had a specific owner which influenced the availability of that animal. The Ojibwa believed that without the direct aid of the owners of the species, individual animals would never be caught. Thus,

if the Owner of an animal was insulted or alienated, the hunter would not be permitted to kill, or even find, any member of that species. If the Owner of an animal favored a hunter, the Indian would have success. As a result, the Ojibwa treated animals they killed with care and respect, performing rituals for the animals, preserving their bones, offering them tobacco, and thanking the Owner for the kill. Owners of animals were crucial to Ojibwa existence.<sup>18</sup>

The two most important owners of animals for the Ojibwa were of the bear and the deer. It was these upon which they depended most for food, and consequently, survival.

In addition to the above manito, many other minor manito played a role in Ojibwa subsistence, and were recognized in the traditional Ojibwa religious system. These included, among others, water beings who stole fish from the Ojibwa, Great Owl, who drove game to hunters, and Windigo, who symbolized winter starvation.<sup>19</sup>

As mentioned, the crucial factor in determining the success or failure of Ojibwa livelihood at any given time was the relations which the people established with the manito. Because of this understanding, every member of the Ojibwa community was expected to enter into a personal relationship with a manito in order to gain insight and strength in relevant matters. The means for establishing this relationship was known as the vision quest.

The vision quest was undertaken by every member of Ojibwa society, male or female. The event itself usually took place with the onset of puberty. In addition to the resultant vision becoming the cornerstone of the individual's subsequent religious life, it was also "socially recognized and made the very cornerstone of their cultural life".<sup>20</sup> The relationship formed between an individual and manito shaped the person's character, and also his/her acceptance into the Ojibwa community as a whole.

Within the traditional Ojibwa thought-system, all persons were expected to obtain their own personal identity and power in life. Both of these became founded almost exclusively upon the vision experienced by the individual, and the resultant relationship with manito. As Vecsey concludes, "only by obtaining such aid [from a manito] did an Ojibwa become a complete person and gain an identity".<sup>21</sup> Landes explains the philosophy behind this attitude when she states that,

in Ojibwa thought, there is no original and absolute "self"; . . . . All those traits of character which we think of as functions of a total personality are regarded by the Ojibwa as . . . items which may be acquired by individuals who are fortunate enough to coerce them from the supernaturals [manito]. Consequently tremendous pressure is exerted upon a young person to pursue the [manito] and move them to fill up his emptiness.<sup>22</sup>

It was thus the duty of the Ojibwa child to gain a personal identity and thereby become a contributing member of the community. It was the vision obtained in the vision quest which was instrumental in this accomplishment.

The vision quest became the first important contact between the would-be shaman and his/her guardian manito. "Indeed, the vision quest has been called democratic shamanism because the same power presences are contacted in dreams and visions as in the shamanic rites".<sup>23</sup> Since the vision quest was the means for the initial establishment of contact between any would-be shaman and the mani-



to, it becomes important to examine the ritual more closely. Such an examination should also serve to illuminate how the techniques employed by the shaman are very similar to Washburn's descriptions of receptive meditation.

The vision quest usually took place either in late fall or early spring.<sup>24</sup> The summer was considered an inauspicious period for the quest because of the abundant activity of Underwater Manito during that time. For several years preceding the quest, the child was prepared mentally by his/her parents or grandparents. The purpose for such preparation was to allow the youth to better recognize and accept any significant vision which he/she might experience.

The vision quest itself was carried out with the child in complete isolation from other members of the community. The typical vision quest lasted up to ten days, although in extreme cases it could last longer if the child had not yet received a vision and wished to remain until contact was made with the manito. The place where the quest took place was carefully selected, either by the parents or grandparents. It had to be an area which was recognized as being a sacred spot, where the manito were known to manifest themselves. As such, the area was one which would facilitate a potentially strong and powerful vision. Once a spot was selected, a space

was cleared for the child which was large enough for him/her to sit or lie down comfortably. When the quest began, the child would remain in the area either until a vision was received or until he/she was convinced that no vision would come. The child could assume whatever position was desired, and could sleep whenever tired, but he/she could not under any circumstances wander from the prepared area until the vision quest was terminated. As Dugan explains, "the place was to be as rugged and lonely as possible, so that a person might sense in isolation the nearness of the Great Mystery".<sup>25</sup> Thus, the location served to force the child to be dependent upon nothing except his/her own resources and the mercy of the manito.

A second characteristic of the Ojibwa vision quest was the discipline of fasting. A small amount of food and water was provided for the child on every fifth day, but other than that he/she was to abstain from both during the length of the quest. The reason for this was that fasting was regarded as a means for helping to distance the person from the everyday endeavors of the community.<sup>26</sup> A disregard for food was an indication of moving oneself away from the world of human worries and closer to the world of the manito. In addition, the physical weakness caused by fasting served to add to the individual's sense of dependence upon the powers of the mani-

to, and therefore created more of a willingness to establish relations with them.

Before undertaking the vision quest, it was understood that a proper attitude had to be fostered by the individual. This was accomplished with a purification ritual which took place in a sweat lodge. During the night preceding the quest, the child would enter a small lodge into which fire-heated stones were brought. These stones would then be splashed with water, and steam would be produced. In this way, the child would undergo the purifying sweat bath. The purpose for such ritual was to intensify the spiritual state of the child.<sup>27</sup> Everything within the lodge, including the stones, was considered sacred. The lodge itself was seen as representing the universe, and it was believed that the spirit of all living things was contained within it.<sup>28</sup> When the child entered the lodge, he/she was considered to be among these living spirits of creation, and in a sacred environment which was set apart only for special and serious endeavors. He/she would then spend the remainder of the night alone, contemplating the task which lay ahead. The individual emerged from this ritual thoroughly purified in body, and humbled in spirit.<sup>29</sup> As Dugan explains, "exterior environment and interior disposition combine to provide the perfect setting for a sacred experience".<sup>30</sup>

The proper interior disposition, or mental attitude,

became very important for ensuring a successful vision. Even if all other conditions were satisfied, the inability to prepare mentally could mean failure. The mental state with which the Ojibwa approached the vision quest can be summed up in one word -- humility.

Having stripped symbolically to the barest essentials in clothing, the person was told that the outer sign meant nothing unless it expressed the same feeling of nakedness within the heart . . . . Emphasis on such feelings of poverty truly wrung from the person a deeply felt cry for help and a desire for the approach of that which was greater than he and could effectively aid him.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout the quest ritual, it was the pity of the manito which the Ojibwa were trying to evoke. It was hoped that in seeing the powerless and pitiable state of the Ojibwa child, the manito would react with compassion by coming to his/her aid and fill up the emptiness which each Ojibwa felt in his/her being.<sup>32</sup> This ontological emptiness was filled by providing the individual with both an identity and personal power. Each of these, it must be remembered, were characteristics which the Ojibwa felt could only be externally acquired. Humans were not born with innate traits and abilities. These had to be given to them by the manito.

In order to help instill feelings of humility within the individual, the child's face was blackened with charcoal before he/she embarked on the vision quest. This served to remind the child that he/she was unimportant in

comparison to the power of the manito. Only those who fully realized this would receive a successful vision.

As a fundamental rule, the Indians perceived a correlation between the character of the person and the quality of the vision received. This conviction served to encourage efforts toward the moral development of the people. Power came to those who merited it, not in the sense that strength drew it, but in the certitude that moral correctness and humility were sure conditions for its approach.<sup>33</sup>

With the moral preparations completed during the child's stay in the sweat lodge, he/she then journeyed to the prearranged sacred spot in order to begin the vision quest. To facilitate reception of a vision, the child was instructed to sit quietly with the mind alert and perpetually ready to experience the manifestation of any manito. If the child was not properly receptive to the manito when it appeared, a significant opportunity could be lost, and the manito might never again reveal its presence to the individual. Thus, a very open and receptive state of consciousness was needed during this entire period of time. There could be no mental intrusions or distractions to interfere with the experience of the manito's presence. The elimination of such distractions meant that the mind was more free to meet with the manito on a one-to-one basis.

This state of mental alertness exhibited during the vision quest is clearly a form of receptive meditation. The mind was attuned completely to all of the sights and

sounds which could impinge upon consciousness. The person was simply an observer here, vigilantly experiencing each sensory impression, and then allowing it to diffuse and dissipate. And when the vision appeared, the same principles held true. The individual did not immediately attempt to understand, control or react to the vision. He/she simply let the vision present itself, all the while remaining alert and receptive to it. Upon its completion, he/she then responded accordingly.

It was the belief of the Ojibwa that the images experienced during a vision quest were seen with inner rather than physical sight.<sup>34</sup> As such, these could not be explained away as activity of the imagination. Instead, they were understood to be actual glimpses of the normally unseen plane in which the manito dwelled. Thus, the reception of a vision was considered to be a revelation about events found within the realm of the manito. The result of one successful vision quest has been recorded by Radin:

When I was twelve I blackened my face and fasted. On the third night a man came and told me he . . . had seen my pitiable condition, that I would never be killed if I went with him. I would live to be an old man, blind before dead, and my body would be as solid as his back. I would have many children and they would be strong as his back. He was the leader of a number of men. I was to return home, and he told me to turn around toward him as I left. I turned and saw he was Turtle. Turtle had blessed me.<sup>35</sup>

The successful visionary returned from the experience emotionally and spiritually transformed. While previously having to rely upon the wisdom and guidance of older human beings, the individual's attention now turned to the manito, and in particular, the guardian manito. It was now the manito who, either directly or indirectly, would guide the person through life in the Ojibwa community. If a positive relationship were maintained, then success in life would be established. To signify and reflect this new and potentially powerful relationship, the individual, among other things, instituted a new name for him-/herself. This also became the primary indication of the person's new-found identity -- an identity extracted from the experience of the vision and contact with the manito. Thus, with a successful vision quest, the individual could now become an integral part of the Ojibwa community, contributing his/her acquired knowledge whenever needed. For the few Ojibwa who were unable to form a direct communication with the manito during a vision quest, they were forced to keep the "borrowed" identity which was given to them at birth by their parents. Having obtained no power, they continued to rely on other human beings for guidance.

While all Ojibwa undertook the vision quest, and almost all experienced a vision, there were some individuals who experienced a particularly powerful vision, and

came away from the encounter with immediate and extraordinary knowledge and power, as could be demonstrated, for example, in the healing arts. One such demonstration has been narrated by Landes. Describing the encounter of one female Ojibwa named Sky Woman, she relates that,

in the fall Sky Woman and her grandmother went to Swampy River. They used to hunt and fish there every fall, and they stayed until the lake froze. While they were there her grandmother got sick, so sick that she thought she would not live . . . . Sky Woman never slept, watching over her grandmother. But one time she fell asleep and dreamed that someone gave her a rattle and other things they use when they doctor, and spoke to her saying, "try this on your grandmother. She might get better". So when she woke she made a little rattle, and started to nananda wiat (cure by sucking). When she finished, the old woman seemed to be brighter. That night she started again on manito kazo (talking supernatural, or invoking supernatural) and cure by sucking . . . . She did not stop until she finished . . . . About four days after, her grandmother got better and was up and around. From this people knew that she was a sucking doctor and she was wanted from one place to another to doctor the sick.<sup>36</sup>

For persons who displayed such power, it became clear that there was a special communication between them and the manito that others could not possess. It was these people who were destined to become the leaders of their communities, and were recognized as being shamans. Thus while all Ojibwa had access to power through visions, the depth of the shaman's encounter with the manito identified him/her as the direct vehicle for that power.

With the Ojibwa, four distinct types of shaman were



generally recognized as existing: 1) tcisaki, or tent-shaking diviner; 2) nanandawi, or tube-sucking shaman; 3) wabeno, or fire diviner; and 4) meda, or family healer. The tcisaki were the most prominent of the Ojibwa shaman. They were known as diviners because of their ability to conjure the manito and elicit information from them. The trance rituals of the tcisaki were performed in conical lodges which shook as each manito entered. As a result, this performance came to be known as the shaking-tent ceremony.

The nanandawi was said to receive his/her curing abilities from the Thunderbird manito, or some manito symbolically related to Thunderbird.<sup>37</sup> Through shamanic trance the nanandawi summoned his/her guardian manito to locate the patient's illness, and the nanandawi subsequently sucked the illness out of the person with the use of small bones.

The wabeno invoked his/her guardian manito (described as a fiery being with radiant horns<sup>38</sup>) through sustained concentration upon burning coals. Once the manito appeared, the wabeno would handle the coals, and then rub his/her heated hands over the patient's body while chanting a vision song. In addition to these curative powers, divination was also practiced by the wabeno with the use of coals.

The meda was simply the shaman of his/her family

unit. Through shamanic trance, the meda would contact the manito in order to ensure such things as successful hunting or longevity of life.

Although the purpose and techniques of the various shamans were distinct, the training which each underwent can be conceptualized as being very similar, in that all adhered to the same basic stages of development. Grim has outlined these developmental stages of shamanic formation as: 1) the call from the spirits; 2) withdrawal from previous activities; and 3) the emergence of the formed shaman.<sup>39</sup>

For the Ojibwa, the first stage, call from the spirits (manito), was encapsulated in the vision quest. If the child had an unusually powerful vision or experience, this was an indication that the manito had selected him/her to be a vehicle for their presence in the world. It was with the second stage, however, that the actual formation of the shaman began to take place. During this time, the individual learned and perfected the various techniques which would be used in his/her unique relationship with the manito.

The beginning stages of shamanic formation were marked by extreme solitude.<sup>40</sup> The prospective shaman isolated him-/herself completely from the community for weeks at a time. No contact with other human beings was maintained. The individual was driven by the sole pur-

pose of establishing contact with the manito. The means for the establishment of this contact were very similar to those employed during the vision quest. As a result, these methods of the shaman can again be classified as receptive meditation.

In most cases the person set out on a journey to a secluded spot where he/she would not be disturbed. During this period, food intake was reduced to mere subsistence levels. For some, the secluded spot was a predetermined sacred place where the manito were known to manifest themselves. For others, the journey would end when a specific place in the earth presented itself as being the residence of the manito. In order to make him-/herself open and receptive to the presence of any manito, it was again essential that the individual foster the proper mental state. Because the manito were so directly tied to the natural world, they could manifest themselves through any number of natural phenomena -- anything from a deformed tree to the call of a raven. As a result, the mind of the shaman had to be alert and receptive at all times. As in the vision quest, the manito could appear at any time, and if the opportunity were missed, the chance could never come again. Subsequent contacts could be developed, but the potentially most powerful ones could be bypassed without the person ever realizing it.

In order to prevent this catastrophe from happening,

the shaman had to be perpetually ready for any manifestation of the manito. The means for establishing this openness were performed through a quieting of the mind and its usual processes. The shaman could not be thinking of other activities or events during this time. These were distractions to the task at hand. The mind had to be emptied of all thoughts so that the person could fully experience the presence of the manito when it made itself known.

It was through contact with the manito that the shaman would, over time, learn the arts of his/her vocation, including such things as curative powers. In addition, the shaman would become acquainted with a means for directly summoning his/her guardian manito whenever a situation required. This ability usually took the form of a manito song, which was simply a song which the manito would teach the shaman while he/she was experiencing a vision. Acquiring a manito song was in fact one of the first signs indicating a positive and powerful relationship between the shaman and guardian manito.

Because the shaman-manito relationship was on such a personal level, every shaman would use his/her own individual style to relate to the manito. As Grim states,

the shaman's communication with the divine is not by means of preestablished ritual prayers or sacrifices. Shamans create their own modes of addressing the manito . . . . Although they often draw on tribal lore or tradition, their methods are more spontaneous.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to, and as a direct consequence of, contact with the manito, periods of shamanic formation were also marked by mental self-conditioning which would enable the shaman not only to communicate with the manito, but also would allow him/her to "resemble the power that he or she evokes".<sup>42</sup> Thus, the shaman, in time, also became a vehicle through which the manito would manifest their very being. Once again, this process was established by the shaman with a quieting of the mind, and a subsequent elimination of all mental distractions. It was this state of repose which would, in turn, allow the shaman to become completely receptive to all aspects of the manito's power.

With such periods of withdrawal as took place during the formation stage, the shaman became able to "develop the enstatic reciprocity needed for communication with the manitou".<sup>43</sup> Once this reciprocity had been firmly established, the individual emerged into the community as a transformed, spiritual personality. With this emergence, the final stage as outlined by Grim was achieved. The shaman's training period complete, he/she would "function in an integrating capacity by healing, divining and guiding. The tribal society, in turn, would benefit from the presence of a religious personality who communicates with the sources of cosmic power".<sup>44</sup>

The shaman, then, with his/her conscious attitude of

continuously maintaining mental alertness and openness  
(in order to contact the manito) provides the researcher  
with an excellent example of receptive meditation.

Notes to Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup> M. Washburn (1988) The Ego and the Dynamic Ground, Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> J. Grim (1983) The Shaman: Patterns of Siberian and Ojibway Healing, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Grim, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> C. Vecsey (1983) Traditional Ojibwa Religion and Its Historical Changes, Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> R. Yarnell (1964) Aboriginal Relationships Between Culture and Plant Life in the Upper Great Lakes Region, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, p. 144.

<sup>6</sup> Vecsey, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Vecsey, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> M. Black (1977) "Ojibwa Power Belief System", in R. Fogelson and R. Adam (eds.) The Anthropology of Power, New York: Academic Press, p. 144.

<sup>9</sup> S. Dewdney (1965) Legends of My People: The Great Ojibwa, New York: McGraw-Hill, p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> Vecsey, p. 72.

<sup>11</sup> Vecsey, p. 72.

<sup>12</sup> Grim, p. 64.

<sup>13</sup> Vecsey, p. 78.

<sup>14</sup> Dewdney, p. 28.

<sup>15</sup> Vecsey, p. 73.

<sup>16</sup> Vecsey, p. 74.

<sup>17</sup> Dewdney, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> Vecsey, p. 76.

<sup>19</sup> Vecsey, p. 77.

20 R. Benedict (1923) The Guardian Spirit Concept in North America, Milwaukee: American Anthropological Association, p. 24.

21 Vecsey, p. 121.

22 R. Landes (1971) The Ojibwa Woman, New York: Academic Press, p. 124.

23 Grim, pp. 64-65.

24 Vecsey, p. 126

25 K. Dugan (1985) The Vision Quest of the Plains Indians, Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, p. 143.

26 R. Benedict (1922) "The Vision in Plains Culture", American Anthropologist, 24, p. 9.

27 Dugan, p. 144.

28 Dugan, p. 145.

29 Benedict, "The Vision in Plains Culture", p. 14.

30 Dugan, p. 146.

31 Dugan, p. 146.

32 The Ojibwa ontological emptiness was also symbolized by the feelings of physical emptiness (hunger) brought about by fasting. When the manito filled up the ontological void, this would subsequently allow the individual to successfully obtain food, and thereby fill up his/her physical void.

33 Dugan, p. 147.

34 Dugan, p. 150.

35 P. Radin (1936) "Ojibwa and Ottawa Puberty Dreams", American Anthropologist, 38, p. 253.

36 Landes, pp. 139-140.

37 Grim, p. 140.

38 Grim, p. 64.

39 Grim, p. 169.



40 Grim, p. 204.

41 Grim, p. 189.

42 Grim, p. 175.

43 Grim, p. 175.

44 Grim, p. 179.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Religious Meditation as a Method of Demobilizing Mental Egoic Structures

According to Washburn, a problem for virtually the whole of humanity is that contact with the power of the Dynamic Ground very rarely, if ever, takes place on a direct, conscious level. By the time adulthood is reached the Dynamic Ground seeps into the individual's being only unconsciously, and therefore in a clouded state. As a result, the full power of the Dynamic Ground cannot be appreciated. The person becomes exposed to only minute traces of its energy. Thus, it can be said that the average individual does not, and cannot, fully experience life.

This vast underexposure to the power of the Dynamic Ground results directly as a consequence of the existence of the mental ego. This structure is responsible for all inner, mental life, including operational cognitions and, ultimately, the sense of individuality/personality which every human being carries. As the basis for consciousness, the development of the mental ego is both beneficial and necessary to the growth and survival of the person. As a child matures physically, the mental ego also increases in strength. In time, however, it becomes too

powerful for the good of the person. The mental ego, with the bestowal of such power, gradually changes from a guardian into a guard. As defined by the New Collins Concise English Dictionary, a guardian is a protector or defender while a guard is that which controls.<sup>1</sup> Initially the mental ego is a guardian, protecting and maintaining consciousness, and therefore the person's very being. As its power increases, however, it begins to control experience, and thus becomes existence's guard. At that point, the mental ego dictates every action of the person rather than serving him/her.

As a result of such control, any part of the person which is perceived as being a possible threat to the mental ego's existence becomes pushed into the far reaches of unconsciousness. This is what happens to the power of the Dynamic Ground. The mental ego, as a purely mental entity, understands itself to be in complete contradistinction to the body and its processes. These are recognized as being more primitive, and therefore inferior.<sup>2</sup> As such, the mental ego understands the energies which flow through the body (energies which emanate directly from the power of the Dynamic Ground) as interfering with the higher forms of mental life. Because these energies, once fully activated, have the potential to override all other activities of the organism, they are perceived as a threat to the mental ego's power over the individual, and

are therefore restricted as much as possible, to the point of being driven out of consciousness. As a result, the energies exhibit themselves most directly only when the unconscious is allowed to surface. This restriction of the energies which emanate from the power of the Dynamic Ground is referred to as original repression by Washburn.<sup>3</sup> With such action, "layer upon layer of tension and constriction is laid down in order to create a hierarchy of resistances to the free circulation of the power of the [Dynamic] Ground".<sup>4</sup> Thus, in order for humans to fully experience the power of the Dynamic Ground they must first release these energies which become repressed. This is accomplished only with a complete submergence of the conscious mind (the mental ego) into the repressed materials of the unconscious.

The best and most established method for achieving this complete submergence is the practice of religious meditation. As Washburn asserts, meditation provides the individual with the straightest and truest course to the unconscious.<sup>5</sup> The reason for this is that meditation dissolves the barriers of the mental ego which separate the conscious and unconscious systems.<sup>6</sup> These barriers are set up by the mental ego in order to maintain its firm grip of control over the person. Once the barriers begin to come down, the individual is able to gain some direct access to the processes of the unconscious, and is

therefore allowed to experience the power of the Dynamic Ground.

While the mental ego employs many defense mechanisms in its erection of barriers, there are three primary mechanisms upon which all others factor. These are extraversion, identity construction and internal dialogue.<sup>7</sup> These and all other defense mechanisms perform a double purpose for the mental ego. They are activated not only to keep the power of the Dynamic Ground outside the conscious realm, but also to allow the mental ego to more effectively deal with its own intrinsic nothingness. As a construct, the mental ego has no substantiality of its own. It is hollow. Any true sense of substantiality which it has must necessarily come directly from the power of the Dynamic Ground. But having previously repressed such power in order to maintain control, the mental ego becomes empty. It must therefore fabricate its own sense of inner substance.

As one defense mechanism, extraversion is a projection by the mental ego of itself onto external objects. Such an exercise is performed "in order to provide diversion and regulated excitement".<sup>8</sup> With this continued external projection and fixation, the mental ego does not have to face the reality of its own nothingness. Instead, the external environment becomes its focal point. When one object no longer holds stimulation for the mental ego,

attention immediately shifts in order to fixate upon another object. This exercise continues ad infinitum throughout conscious life. The mental ego literally attempts to run away from its own emptiness. As a result, all focus is external and outward.

With identity construction, the mental ego attempts to create something in order to fill its inner void. The result is the self-concept. The seemingly innate personality characteristics which are generally understood to be who we are, are merely constructions of the mental ego which serve to substantiate and strengthen its own belief of having inner quality. Every activity which a person performs carries with it a sense of I-ness, and this inevitably serves to reinforce who that person thinks he/she is. Thus, with every thought and action the self-concept perpetuates itself and continuously enlarges its own perceived being. As Washburn states, the self-concept

is a cognitive construct, and an ever-unfinished one at that. Hence, the mental ego's fabricated substantiality is not something that could ever be encountered directly. Rather, it is something that can be apprehended only indirectly, namely, through inference, as it is implied in the mental ego's thoughts and deeds.<sup>9</sup>

The self-concept, then, serves the mental ego as a type of replacement body, substituting for the physical body which the mental ego had earlier rejected. In this way,

the self-concept provides the mental ego with the sense of solidity and substance needed to cover up the much-dreaded feeling of nothingness.

The third activity performed by the mental ego in order to substantiate itself is that of internal dialogue. This is exhibited with the mental ego continuously speaking to itself. According to Washburn, this exercise is performed for two purposes. First, internal dialogue helps to assure the mental ego of its own existence; and second, this is the actual activity by which the mental ego constructs its self-concept.<sup>10</sup> Similar to the function performed by extraversion, continuous internal dialogue gives the mental ego an opportunity to move away from its ontological emptiness by providing it with an ongoing focus. The mental ego "cannot see itself directly, but it can, it fancies, hear itself. Hence, it is assured of its existence so long as it continues to talk".<sup>11</sup> The subject of this talk, although seemingly trivial more often than not, is in fact very important. It is through internal dialogue that the mental ego creates its world, both internally and externally. With everything that is said, the mental ego is continuously drawing references about both itself and the environment. In this way, internal dialogue allows the mental ego to subtly shape perceptions of the individual (by reinforcing the self-concept) and the world in which he/she lives.

With the employment of all defense mechanisms, and especially with the three outlined above, the mental ego is able to safely construct barriers between itself and the power of the Dynamic Ground. Thus, it is able to keep such power from surfacing to consciousness and threatening its well-maintained control. In addition, the defense mechanisms allow the mental ego to fabricate its own sense of substantiality, and therefore give it a feeling of being complete in-itself. With the practice of religious meditation, however, the defense mechanisms become demobilized. The mental ego then becomes vulnerable, both to its own inner emptiness and to the previously repressed elements of the unconscious (which include the power of the Dynamic Ground). Religious meditation secures the demobilization of the defense mechanisms in two general ways. First, religious meditative practice dishabituates the mechanisms by drawing attention to them; and second, as the dishabituation process continues, the mechanisms concomitantly weaken, and therefore become less effective in keeping the unconscious materials submerged.<sup>12</sup>

Both concentrative and receptive meditation are able to effectively demobilize the mental ego. Before either practice can be performed to the benefit of the individual, however, the proper mental attitude must first be fostered. The Yoga Sūtras (as an example of concentra-



tive meditation) and the Ojibwa practices (receptive meditation) are very specific about this. Patañjali describes the means for achieving this with the first two limbs of yoga, yama (restraint) and niyama (observance). For the Ojibwa, proper attitude became manifest during the sweat lodge ceremony. In each case, the purpose is to bring about a state of humility within the individual. When such a state becomes substantially present, the result is ultimately an inner purification of the person. Thus, both cultures attempt to instill within the individual an understanding that he/she is not the most important creature in the world. For example, with the application of ahiṃsā and īśvara pranidhāna, as prescribed by Patañjali, the person begins to truly live in the service of other beings, putting them before him-/herself. Likewise, the Ojibwa child, upon entering the sweat lodge, is met with an appreciation of its sacredness. Recognizing it as a place which holds the power of the manito, the child understands him-/herself to be of little significance in relation to such incomparable forces.

Because of such an attitude, a tremendous amount of self-importance is lost by the individual. The mental ego, having previously built up its own feelings of self-worth and significance, is now forced to see itself as merely another living being, and one whose power is inconsequential in relation to the immense power which ema-

nates through the world. In essence, these preliminary practices serve to begin the process of weakening the grip of the mental ego. If such preparations are not performed, the mental ego's strength would continue to be enough to adequately resist the demobilization techniques later employed by religious meditative practice. As a result, religious meditation would have little effect upon the individual, and the materials of the unconscious could never be accessed. Such an explanation may help clarify, to some extent, why the practice of meditation does not hold any benefits for some individuals. Having neglected the proper initial preparations, their mental egos have not become sufficiently softened to allow for the period of suspension which usually occurs during religious meditative practice. Instead, the mental ego is able to successfully resist any attempt to quiet the mind, and the sustained mental attention characteristic of meditation will not become possible.

In addition to the moral preparations, other exercises are prescribed to help loosen the grip of the mental ego, thereby making subsequent religious meditative practice more effective. Within the system of the Yoga Sūtras these are known as the external disciplines. They consist of āsana (posture), prāṇāyāma (regulation of breath) and pratyāhāra (control of the sense organs).<sup>13</sup> Although not specifically named, the Ojibwa also employed

such exercises during the purification ritual of the sweat lodge. The child was required to assume a posture for long periods of time, while breathing was to be slow and regular. In addition, regulation of the sense organs was established with, among other procedures, fasting. While these disciplines begin (both for Patañjali and the Ojibwa) as preliminary exercises, all are also employed as necessary aids during the actual practice of religious meditation.

Collectively, the external disciplines have as their goal a gradual increase in the awareness of the various processes and activities of the physical body. As this awareness and knowledge increases, regulation of the same processes ultimately becomes more possible. The purpose for this gradually acquired regulation is to begin to put the mental ego back in touch with the physical body. Adult life, for most people, becomes a constant mind-body struggle. As Washburn states,

the mental ego does not believe that the body is in any way essential to what it, the mental ego, is. The body is a useful tool, indeed a necessary one for acting in the world, but it is an implement that, the mental ego believes, is dispensible . . . [The mental ego] disconnects itself from the body and from the dynamisms of bodily life, and it begins to look down upon the body as not-self, indeed as an alien and disposable integument. It desensitizes and devitalizes the body. In committing the act of original repression, the mental ego both constricts the body, thereby divesting it of its inner suppleness and sensitivity, and seals the Dynamic Ground, thereby

draining the body of energy. The body is in this fashion both hardened and deadened; it is deprived of feeling and life.<sup>14</sup>

What the external procedures of religious meditative practice do, therefore, is begin to form a link between mental ego and body. With such a connection, the mental ego gradually becomes more aware of the physical energies, and begins to manage and regulate rather than attempt to repress them. As a result, the resistances which the mental ego once constructed against the body begin to come down, and it, in turn, finds that the body is much more responsive and disciplined. As Coward notes, procedures such as āsana "bring the body to a physical condition in which consciousness is no longer troubled by the movement and stimulation of physical restlessness".<sup>15</sup>

Having begun to sufficiently weaken the mental egoic structures with preliminary exercises, the individual is now in a position to effectively perform religious meditation itself in a gradual attempt to completely demobilize the defenses of the mental ego. It is at this point that the two methodologies of concentrative and receptive meditation diverge. Because of this divergence, a detailed analysis of each will be made.

Concentrative meditation is performed by focusing the whole of consciousness upon a specific object or idea to the exclusion of all else. When this exercise becomes

accomplished, then the mental ego is unable to employ its various defense mechanisms (eg. extraversion, identity construction, internal dialogue) and they become shut down for that period. To use the terminology of Patañjali, concentrative meditation forces a restraint of the fluctuations of the mind (citta vṛtti nirodha). In the Yoga Sūtras, such practice is outlined particularly with the sixth and seventh limbs of yoga. These are dhāraṇā (concentration) and its progressive development into dhyāna (meditation).

The key to restraining all fluctuations of the mind appears to be the restraint of the internal dialogue. It is through the constant dialogue in which the mental ego engages itself that the individual's world is shaped. This incessant chatter continuously informs the person about him-/herself and his/her environment, based on previous experiences and memories. As such, the internal dialogue forces psychological preconceptions upon all that is encountered in the world. In this sense, internal dialogue is the instrument through which the mental ego maintains all of its other defenses. It is the constant barrage of internal dialogue, for example, which reinforces in the individual all that he/she is, and all that he/she is not. Thus, internal dialogue becomes the basis upon which identity construction (and therefore the self-concept) is founded. Internal dialogue also becomes

the means through which the mental ego constantly projects its attention to external objects (extraversion). When an individual normally perceives an object, he/she does not experience that object as it exists in-itself, but rather sees it in the cloud of preconceptions which have already been formed by internal dialogue. It becomes evident, then, that when a person suspends his/her internal dialogue for a period of time, all other mental egoic functions must also become suspended, and therefore ineffective in keeping the unconscious materials repressed. Thus, while concentrative meditation is characterized as a restraint of all mental fluctuations, it is the restraint of internal dialogue which appears to be the catalyst. Without this restraint, no others become possible.

When the individual first begins religious meditative practice, a prolonged state of attention cannot immediately be established. The reason for this is that although the defenses of the mental ego have become weakened somewhat through the preliminary procedures, they nevertheless remain quite active. As a result, mental fluctuations (citta vṛtti) are still evident. Because of this, the most a person can hope for upon initial attempts at concentrative meditation is a split-second of suspension of the mental egoic structures. Once this initial suspension is achieved, however, no matter how

brief it might be, it has an immediate and potentially profound effect upon the mental ego. With its defenses and barriers having become momentarily immobilized, the mental ego is no longer allowed to wander aimlessly through the external world. Instead, the world of the mental ego stops. There is no longer anything there to uphold and maintain its creations. At the same instant, the mental ego also becomes briefly exposed to traces of the unconscious processes which cease to be repressed. This exposure, however, lasts for only an instant before the the mental ego can once again reactivate its barriers. But with continued concentrative meditation, the momentary suspension of defenses begins to gradually lengthen temporally. As meditative practice becomes more proficient, the already weakening barriers are further reduced. The world of the mental ego becomes more easily stopped. As such, the individual's perception of the object of concentration, which is normally heavily influenced by the activity of the mental ego, begins to become clearer. As the defenses/fluctuations of the mental ego carry less and less influence over the concentrating mind, the person becomes more able to experience the object of concentration as it exists.

When concentration reaches such a state that the mind is able to meditate on an object to the exclusion of all else for sustained periods of time, then it can be

said that the defenses of the mental ego have become completely demobilized and the mental ego's world ceases to be a factor. The internal dialogue is able to be restrained at will. The devices of the mental ego are concomitantly seen through, and what were previously distractions to concentration become nonexistent. This ability of prolonged concentration is what the Yoga Sūtras call dhyāna. Having stripped the mental ego of its defenses, the person is able to concentrate much more fully upon the object of meditation.

Receptive meditation, as exemplified by the Ojibwa, brings about the complete demobilization of the mental egoic defense mechanisms in a slightly different way. While concentrative meditation requires the total focus of one's consciousness upon a particular object, receptive meditation calls for a state of complete mental openness, where the individual becomes acutely aware of every sensation which passes through consciousness, however minor it might be.

Although the Ojibwa did not formally analyze the techniques they employed to the same extent to which Patanjali did, their comprehension of such practices was no less sophisticated. An understanding of the religious meditative process was always at least intuitively expressed. It was no mistake, for example, that the Ojibwa undertook the vision quest at the onset of puberty. At



this point in a person's life the mental ego is not as firmly rooted as in adult life. During childhood the power of the Dynamic Ground can still be found flowing through the individual's consciousness, although its essence becomes increasingly clouded with each passing year of life, as the mental ego's defense mechanisms grow in power. Thus, the effects of religious meditation can be established more quickly in the child since the resistances of the mental ego will not be as substantial as in the adult. It must be remembered, however, that while the defenses of the mental ego are less established in the child, their very existence will, nevertheless, make initial attempts at religious meditation difficult. This would help explain why some children (although very few) were simply unable to obtain a vision during the quest period. Their mental egos had become sufficiently strong to block any attempt to quiet the internal dialogue. For these children, the usual ten-day period which was allocated for the vision quest was simply not long enough to adequately weaken the mental ego's growing defenses.

Like Patañjali, the Ojibwa also understood the sense of personality carried by each individual not to be something which was innate, but rather something which was constructed and reinforced throughout life. As such, the Ojibwa felt the need to de-structure that borrowed identity formed during childhood which interfered with direct

perception of the manito (the power of the Dynamic Ground) and later re-structure a different type of mental functioning which did not obstruct the experience of such power. Similar to concentrative meditation, the means for accomplishing this was shutting off the internal dialogue. The major difference in procedures is how the internal dialogue becomes stopped. With the sustained focus of concentrative meditation, the internal dialogue gradually ceases of its own accord because, quite simply, the mental ego becomes less able to talk. No longer allowed to wander from object to object, the mental ego's defenses begin to weaken because the multitude of external sensations which normally feed the internal dialogue eventually cease to impinge upon consciousness. With receptive meditation, however, the mental ego is still permitted to focus upon an unlimited number of external objects and their corresponding sensations. What differs from normal awareness is the manner in which these sensations become processed. Usually, only those sensations which are deemed necessary by the filters of the mental ego are permitted to enter consciousness. But with receptive meditation, the attempt is made to fully experience all possible sensations.

As with concentrative meditation, the initial attempts at receptive meditation are often met with little, if any, effective results. The processes of the mental

ego, still being powerfully activated, continue to influence all sensations as they reach consciousness. But paradoxically, it is these initial failures at receptive meditation which lead to later successes. As Washburn explains,

soon after the practice is begun, the meditator discovers that he cannot help but think or react in certain ways . . . . And it is just in making discoveries such as these that the meditator learns about particular embedded structures. What happens, then, is that in attempting and failing to "not-do" and to "let-go", the meditator discovers some of the myriad ways in which he is unconsciously programmed to do just the opposite.<sup>16</sup>

Having become aware of these mental egoic structures (which through habituation and time, are usually active only on a subconscious level) the individual is now in a position to respond directly to their existence. Direct awareness allows the person to see through the structures, and therefore weaken them. With continued meditative practice, the long-awaited momentary suspension of all structures becomes possible. At such an instant, with interference removed, every sensation can be experienced much more directly and fully. In addition, the materials of the unconscious are allowed to come forth in a direct fashion.

It was just such a combination of heightened experiential perceptions and the brief influx of unconscious materials which, for the Ojibwa, became culminated in a

vision. As Grim explains, "in the Ojibwa world the visionary experience is a contact with . . . the archetypal symbols of his unconscious. The contact with these symbols activates unique constellations of psychic energies for the Ojibwa".<sup>17</sup> Thus, in allowing the materials of the unconscious to momentarily surface, and experiencing them in a heightened state of awareness, the Ojibwa were able to relate the encounters to their own myths and world-view in order to extract a particular knowledge.

Having experienced the manifestation of such power of the unconscious, the vision quest was deemed successful and the Ojibwa child returned to the community with his/her knowledge. For most, this would be as far as they would venture in the religious meditative process. They might follow the same procedures throughout their lives in order to establish further contact with the manito, but each time it would be for only a brief instant. As such, the demobilization process would never move past a momentary suspension of the mental egoic functions. The very fact that some suspension had been achieved, however, would serve to keep the structures weakened somewhat, and allow for the possibility of future contacts with the materials of the unconscious. In this way, every Ojibwa was always at least minimally open to an encounter with the manito for the remainder of his/her life.

For the few Ojibwa who were able to greatly weaken

their mental egoic structures during the vision quest, they were destined to follow the religious meditative process to its natural conclusion, and thereby become recognized as shamans within their communities. These were the people who were able, during the vision quest, to suspend the defenses of the mental ego for longer than the usual brief instant. As a result of this greater suspension, more penetrating and profound contact with the unconscious was established, and correspondingly, the child would return to the community with more knowledge than was usually held.

In order to expand upon this knowledge, the would-be shaman would continue with his/her religious meditative practice, retreating into the wilderness for months at a time. Similar to the process of concentrative meditation, intensified receptive meditation would eventually bring about a lengthening of the time period in which the mental egoic structures could be suspended. Finally, all defenses would become completely demobilized, and the person would more fully experience the sensations of each and every substance.

Whether one chooses to employ the methodologies of receptive or concentrative religious meditation, the results are ultimately the same. With continued and intense practice, the meditator will gradually bring about a complete suspension of the internal dialogue, and con-

comitantly, a demobilization of all constructs of the mental ego which interfere with direct perception of the world. With concentrative religious meditation, this is accomplished with a complete focusing of consciousness upon a single object, thereby rendering the internal dialogue ineffectual in maintaining the mental ego's description of the world. Conversely, receptive religious meditation results in a conscious awareness of the usually subconscious structures of the mental ego, and brings about a suspension of the internal dialogue because of this direct exposure. In either case, direct contact with the previously repressed materials of the unconscious becomes possible, and the individual is subsequently able to display a knowledge of the world not usually characteristic of the human condition.

This complete demobilization of the defense mechanisms, however, should not be taken to be the final goal of religious meditative practice. The person at this stage, while having accomplished much, still has many more barriers to de-struct before a fulfilled state can be recognized as existing in him/her.

Notes to Chapter Three

1 W. McLeod, ed. (1982) The New Collins Concise Dictionary of the English Language, London: Collins, pp. 495-496.

2 M. Washburn (1988) The Ego and the Dynamic Ground, Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 89.

3 Washburn, p. 90.

4 Washburn, p. 90.

5 Washburn, p. 140.

6 Washburn, p. 141.

7 Washburn, p. 92.

8 Washburn, p. 93.

9 Washburn, p. 95.

10 Washburn, p. 97.

11 Washburn, p. 97.

12 Washburn, p. 47.

13 A detailed outline of each was previously discussed in Chapter One.

14 Washburn, p. 90.

15 H. Coward (1985) Jung and Eastern Thought, Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 150.

16 Washburn, p. 148.

17 J. Grim (1983) The Shaman: Patterns of Siberian and Ojibwa Healing, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, p. 140.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Final Stages of Religious Meditation

Having completely demobilized the various defense mechanisms of the mental ego with prolonged religious meditative practice, the person comes to a position where he/she can re-establish direct contact with the power of the Dynamic Ground. With the previous de-struction of all barriers between the conscious and unconscious systems of the psyche, both sides can now begin to be brought together as a unity. The means for establishing this re-connection is further and even more intensified religious meditation on the part of the individual. Such continued practice ultimately results in a regression of sorts on the part of the mental ego. As Washburn points out, since direct contact with the power of the Dynamic Ground was originally lost via repression, it can only be restored via regression.<sup>1</sup> The concept of regression as used here, however, should not be confused with the regression of psychoanalytical thought. It is not a regression in this sense because it is not merely a movement back to earlier modes of existence.<sup>2</sup> Instead, throughout the process the mental ego remains as a fully-existing entity (although it has been stripped of its defense mechanisms). This regression is simply a re-estab-



lishment of contact with the lost power of the Dynamic Ground. Or, to use Washburn's terms, it is a regression in the service of transcendence.<sup>3</sup>

When the practice of religious meditation reaches the point of completely demobilizing the defense mechanisms of the mental ego, as described in the previous chapter, a very stark change occurs in the person. By demobilizing these defenses, one also demobilizes the structures upon which the mental ego depends for the creation and maintenance of its world. This, combined with the mental ego's growing (forced) awareness of its own inner state of ontological emptiness, results in the mental ego beginning to lose touch with its worldly involvements. The mental ego, because of these factors, literally begins to suffer disillusionment with the world.<sup>4</sup> For the first time, the mental ego sees its world for what it really is -- an empty fabrication built upon its own weaknesses and defenses. With such a realization, the mental ego opens itself up to a terrible vulnerability. With no defense mechanisms upon which to build an immediate reaction, it becomes, as it were, naked in the face of existence. Under usual circumstances, whenever confronted with such a possible crisis, the mental ego instantaneously employs its defenses (such as internal dialogue or extraversion) and thus reinforces its own self-concept. With such action, its own inner sense of

substantiality ultimately becomes enhanced and its momentary anxiety is immediately alleviated. Its task complete, and the threat to its existence adequately handled, the mental ego then continues to engage itself in an endless display of worldly activities.

Once the mental ego's defenses have become inoperative, however, it cannot deal with the problem in the same way. As a result, the mental ego comes to realize that its most primordial need (to fill its ever-present feeling of emptiness) can never be satisfied by the goings-on of the external world. Hence, the mental ego becomes profoundly confused. Its usual mode of existence having been cut off at its very roots, the mental ego becomes lost to its world. Deprived of its previous sense of being and worth, it becomes less and less able to actively participate in the general structure of the world. As this disillusionment continues, it gradually turns into alienation.<sup>5</sup> In no longer finding any solace in the world, the mental ego begins to withdraw from it. But as Washburn explains the process,

there is nothing voluntary about alienation. Alienation follows upon disillusionment as an effect follows upon a cause, not as a decision follows upon an insight. It is therefore a process that the mental ego suffers and is powerless to reverse. Once the process is under way, the rift between the mental ego and the world widens, despite whatever efforts the mental ego might make to renew its interest and involvements in the world. Alienation is not renunciation. The mental ego does not

give up the world; rather, the world simply slips away, becoming distant and unreal.<sup>6</sup>

This point which Washburn makes is an important one. The alienated mental ego does not willingly remove itself from the world. Rather, it is as if it has no other choice. The world gradually loses its sense of realness for the mental ego, and the mental ego subsequently loses interest in the world. It is no longer seen as a place which sustains life, but rather becomes an inanimate surface upon which people's daily routines are played out. The breakdown of the mental egoic defense mechanisms, then, is a double-edged sword. In cutting through the illusions which the mental ego has fabricated for itself, it simultaneously severs all threads which keep the mental ego rooted in the world.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, at this stage of religious meditative practice, the individual becomes further and further removed from the world, and there is seemingly no way out. He/she can either continue with prolonged and intensified religious meditation amidst the confusion, doubts and fears, or he/she can stop the practice and be condemned to forever live in a place which is unreal for him/her. Both the Hindu and Ojibwa cultures are fraught with examples of individuals who have reached this stage in the religious meditation process. Thus, while there are many people throughout India who have willingly renounced

the world in order to practice intensified meditation, beyond these sannyasins there are many more who do not live in the world because that is where their religious meditation has taken them. Eyre has encountered one such person. As he describes him, he

represented the wisdom of loosening the grip on life (with a small 'l') in order, as he might claim, to open himself to Life. Why, I asked, did he find it necessary to separate himself from his former self and leave home? "To have peace of mind" . . . . "And the idea", I pursued, "is that this peace cannot be achieved while a man is in society?" "That", he proffered, not presuming to make up anyone else's mind, "is my experience".<sup>8</sup>

The formation period of the would-be Ojibwa shaman was also characterized by his/her aloofness from the affairs of the community. This would ultimately culminate in his/her wandering into the forest in order to meditate, usually for months at a time. As Grim points out, "this emotional deprivation state seems to be a cardinal aspect of the Ojibwa shaman's formation".<sup>9</sup>

Even at this point, however, if one chooses to persist with religious meditative practice, there are no guarantees of being successful. The outlook, in fact, usually becomes more dark as one continues the journey. Without any immediate relief in sight from its alienated condition, the mental ego eventually begins to feel as if it were permanently cut off, as if it could never again experience a moment of meaningful existence in a real

world.<sup>10</sup> In Washburn's terms, the mental ego begins to suffer from despair.<sup>11</sup> With all of its resources exhausted, it feels as if the world were irrevocably lost. Having reached what seems to be the very bottom of existence, the mental ego starts to lose its grip on life itself. It simply begins to give up and let-go.

It is in this final act of letting-go, however, that a real turn-around can happen for the mental ego. As Washburn explains,

despair is potentially a profound state of mind, as it has the power to make the unthinkable thinkable. It is a state of mind that, because it is unendurable and yet inescapable within the system of known possibilities, impels the sufferer to at last embrace what, for him, is impossible.<sup>12</sup>

For the despairing ego, the unthinkable thing which it embraces is its own nothingness. Having lost its world, the mental ego, for the first time, truly experiences the full reality of its own state of inner emptiness. Despair, therefore, pushes the mental ego to the very abyss of its own nothingness, into which the mental ego jumps.

At this point, it becomes painstakingly clear that religious meditation, contrary to what the pamphlets of weekend retreats might tell us, is not a practice which brings about immediate and lasting states of relaxation and bliss within the individual. On the contrary, religious meditation, from the very outset, involves a con-

stant, and at times unsettling, struggle. Initially, there is a struggle to destroy the fabricated world of the mental ego; and having accomplished this, there is a very critical struggle to ensure that the mental ego does not destroy its own being when it embraces its nothingness. Jung was aware of this dark side to the effects of religious meditative practice when, in his introduction to The Tibetan Book of the Dead, he cautioned Western readers that meditation, "might easily lead to a real psychosis . . . . which abolishes the normal checks imposed by the conscious mind and thus gives unlimited scope to the play of the unconscious 'dominants'".<sup>13</sup> Thus, religious meditation, while it bears great promise, is also fraught with many serious risks.<sup>14</sup> For every one individual who succeeds in bringing about the final stages of religious meditation, there are many more who fail in the attempt; and if that failure takes place at a critical juncture in the meditative process (such as the mental ego's embrace of its own nothingness) the person is doomed to forever be overcome with a constant barrage of unconscious materials, if indeed the mental ego does not immediately destroy itself.

One reason why some mental egos are able to maintain their stability, even in the face of their own ever-present nothingness, is that religious meditation, through its long and arduous process, gradually strengthens the

integrity of the mental ego. Even though, prior to meditative practice, the mental ego of the average person has great power and command over the individual, it is inherently a weak structure. Indeed, it is because of this inherent weakness that the mental ego builds such great defenses -- it needs to protect itself from the power of the Dynamic Ground if it is to survive. However, as these defense mechanisms become ever-so gradually demobilized with continuous and prolonged meditative practice, the mental ego conversely becomes increasingly stronger, in the sense of being much more open. Having to rely less and less on the defense mechanisms for self-preservation, the mental ego slowly learns that it must become free and fluid if it is to continue existing. Thus, what religious meditation does is transform the mental ego from a guard (that which controls) back into a guardian of the person's being (that which protects and oversees). It is only in this way that the mental ego can even begin to withstand the onslaught of unconscious materials which will later envelop it. That mental ego which, because of its own weakness, actively struggles against these forces is doomed to fail, and therefore destroy itself or live forever in a psychosis. But that mental ego which, through strength, becomes fluid, and learns to bend with the pressure of the oncoming unconscious forces, will ultimately survive unscathed, and exist as a complement to

such forces.

The Ojibwa were keenly aware of the possible dangers involved in meditative practice, and took the necessary precautions to protect their communities from the powers of such tormented individuals. As Grim explains,

shamanic formation is a precarious passage to inner stability. Often contact with the spirits overwhelms the shaman's psyche and results in destructive behaviour. Such aberrations are not infrequent, but they are discouraged by tribal traditions that guard against sorcery.<sup>15</sup>

Once the mental ego embraces its own nothingness, if it does not destroy itself (and if religious meditative practice is continued), then the despair which it suffered can begin to subside, although this too is usually a long and arduous process. Upon fully accepting its own inner emptiness, the mental ego ceases to look for ways to deny it, and thus cover it up (actions which were previously accomplished through the activation of the defense mechanisms). Nor, if it is sufficiently strong, does the mental ego attempt to fight against or resist the flow of previously repressed unconscious materials which are making their way toward consciousness. Instead, it opens itself to this steady influx of the unconscious, knowing that it is not necessarily a threat, but rather a complement to its own existence. There is still, however, a danger which besets the mental ego at this stage, and that is one of being completely swept



away by the unconscious. Thus, a very fine line must be walked by the mental ego. It must allow the unconscious materials the freedom to surface, but at the same time it cannot let its own existence become extinguished. That would be a fatal blow to the entire person. A complementary balance must therefore be achieved and maintained for any further development to take place; and both concentrative and receptive meditation allow this balance to be sustained as the person slowly progresses through more fulfilled states of existence.

With intensified practice of religious meditation, layer upon layer of previously repressed unconscious materials begin to come to the surface of consciousness. With a properly fortified mental ego, as religious meditation provides, each layer eventually becomes unscreened or derepressed, and is therefore allowed to re-enter the field of consciousness.<sup>16</sup> Thus, it is not a battle between the mental ego and the surfacing unconscious materials. That, as indicated, would only result in psychosis. Instead, it is more akin to a peaceful co-existence. Having accepted its own nothingness, the mental ego no longer has a need for defenses -- it no longer has anything to defend. As a result, nothing needs to be repressed any longer, and unconscious materials are openly permitted to re-establish themselves within the conscious realm. As Washburn states, "in this way the whole

of the unconscious . . . can be unveiled or unearthed".<sup>17</sup>

Having effectively shone light on each and every successive layer of unconscious structures, the meditator once again reaches a turning point in his/her practice. He/she has arrived at the most embedded structure of the psyche, that of original repression. In a long and often difficult process, continued religious meditation allows the person to begin to work his/her way through this most impressive barrier. In this respect, religious meditation is like drilling for oil.<sup>18</sup> With perseverance, original repression can eventually be penetrated, and the meditator, so to speak, "strikes it rich" -- the power of the Dynamic Ground begins to flow into the stream of consciousness.

In achieving such a state of awareness, the meditator is well on his/her way to fulfilling the task for which he/she set out. Indeed, the Ojibwa would recognize such a person to be in the latter stages of shamanic formation, while for Patañjali, he/she would be entering samādhi, the final limb of yoga.

At this point, with all defense mechanisms eliminated, the person is able to meditate uninterruptedly for extended periods of time. During these intervals, the power of the Dynamic Ground can be felt surging, both through the person engaged in meditation and through the object/sensation which is being experienced. The full

power of the Dynamic Ground, however, is not yet directly felt by the meditator. Even though all defense mechanisms and unconscious materials have been unearthed from the far reaches of the psyche, the mental ego has not yet become completely cleansed. There remain some subtle factors which still influence the mental ego's perception of the world, and therefore inhibit direct experience of the power of the Dynamic Ground. Most notably, these factors include such things as mental cognitions and memories. It is true that while engaged in religious meditation both the shaman and the yogi shut down all active thought-processes in order to make the mind quiet; but although there is no conscious deliberation during such time, there remain subtle cognitions of that which is experienced. The yogi, for example, does not say to himself, "I am meditating on a lamp". Nor does the shaman reflect on the sensations which he/she encounters. But the yogi knows that he/she is meditating on a lamp. Likewise, the shaman knows that he/she is experiencing the call of the raven. Even though there are no concrete thoughts, there are, nevertheless, inferential cognitions, and these will influence and cloud any and all experiences. The yogi, therefore, will not experience the lamp as it truly exists in its own essence, and neither can the shaman fully experience the call of the raven. As Grim points out, the Ojibwa shaman at this stage has

his/her perception of reality informed by his/her subtle mental attitude or posture.<sup>19</sup> Vyasa, the commentator of the Yoga Sūtras, reiterates this, stating that all verbal and/or inferential cognitions produced by the mind will ultimately become confused with direct perception of the object itself, and will therefore cloud all perceptions.<sup>20</sup> Recognizing such interference, Patañjali referred to this state as savitarka (indistinct perception), and understood it to be the lowest level of samādhi.<sup>21</sup>

Both systems profess, however, that these subtle but interfering cognitions can become dispelled with continued meditative practice. When the cognitions are dissolved completely, then the object (if the person is engaged in concentrative meditation) or the sensation (receptive meditation) is allowed to appear to the mind in its own distinct nature, envelopped by the power of the Dynamic Ground. As such, the mental ego reflects only the object/sensation, and does not add any mental configurations of its own to the experience. In giving up its own nature of conscious cognition, the mental ego brings forth only the nature of the object/sensation itself. The shaman, then, reflects completely the call of the raven. In terms of the Yoga Sūtras, the mental ego of the concentrative meditator reflects completely the object of meditation. As a consequence, the person experiences a direct perception (jñāna) of that object. This, accord-

ing to Patañjali, signifies an achievement of the second stage of samprajñata samādhi, which he called nirvitarka (distinct perception).<sup>22</sup>

But this stage, too, has its limitations, and these must also be overcome. The problem is that all experiences which the yogi/shaman has of the object/sensation are confined to the gross level of existence. That is, experience is dependent upon the gross light/sound waves which emanate from substances in the world. If the mind of the yogi does not connect with these wave patterns, then the object cannot be experienced. Likewise, if the consciousness of the shaman does not connect with the sound waves which are the call of the raven, then its power, too, cannot be felt.

With continued practice of religious meditation, however, the object/sensation is experienced on a different level. When this occurs, experience transcends the senses. Consciousness begins to encounter the object/sensation directly as numinous energy, and thus bypasses the need for sensual relay of phenomenal wave patterns. As such, the power of the Dynamic Ground is experienced much more fully. But the beginning stages of this ability, similar to the previous state, are also marked by limitations of consciousness within both space and time.<sup>23</sup> That is, the object/sensation must exist for the yogi/shaman to experience it. If the lamp is not present, the

yogi simply cannot experience the power of the Dynamic Ground (puruṣa) which exists through it. Patañjali termed this state of consciousness savichārā (meditative thought-transformation), and understood it to be the third stage of samprajñata samādhi.<sup>24</sup> Within the Ojibwa system, such a state was exhibited with the shaman needing the raven's call to be existentially present in order for him/her to be able to experience the power of the Dynamic Ground (manito).

As religious meditation progresses, however, the meditator finds that he/she is able to transcend even these limits of space and time. When this takes place, the yogi/shaman is able to experience the lamp/call of the raven as it truly exists, infused completely with the power of the Dynamic Ground. Such a mind has the ability to actually become the very object/sensation upon which it meditates. In doing this, it essentially strips itself of its own nature and identifies completely with the object/sensation. As Vasu states, the consciousness of a person who has achieved this level no longer depends upon the senses for its knowledge. Instead, consciousness "has become the all-sense itself".<sup>25</sup>

For the yogi who practices the concentrative meditation of the Yoga Sūtras, this means that the object of meditation need not be present for him/her to experience the power of the Dynamic Ground associated with that ob-

ject. With his/her mind knowing the object in its complete noumenal existence, it can faithfully and accurately reproduce the object and experience its essence through those means. This, according to Patañjali, is the fourth and highest stage of samprajñata samādhi. What happens during this final stage of object meditation is that the power of the Dynamic Ground (which is allowed to flow freely through the consciousness of the person) becomes, in a sense, linked up with the power of the Dynamic Ground which exists in the object of concentration. It is just such a connection, unimpeded by the products and limitations of the mental ego, which provides the yogi the opportunity to know the object as it exists in its own essence. Consciousness does not interpret or in any way become a part of this connection. It merely reflects it as it is, just as a mirror reflects light. To put this whole process in the language of Patañjali, it can be said that concentrative meditation, through a restraint of the mental fluctuations (citta vṛtti nirodha), begins to bring about an isolation (kāivalya) of puruṣa (the power of the Dynamic Ground) from the influence of fluctuations and limitations of the mind (citta; the mental ego), which exists in prākṛti (material nature). Having accomplished this, concentrative meditation thereby allows the mind to become pure (sattva) and transparent in the face of puruṣa.

This isolation of puruṣa (the power of the Dynamic Ground) becomes even more apparent and pronounced as concentrative meditation continues. With maintained practice, even the object of meditation becomes transcended. Patañjali recognized this state as asamprajñata samādhī, and understood it to be the final goal of yoga. In terms of transpersonal theory, what occurs here is that through continued exposure to the power of the Dynamic Ground which constitutes an object, the power of the Dynamic Ground within the person gradually becomes able to be linked to the power of anything upon which the meditator's focus turns. Similar to the results of dhāraṇā, once stability is reached in one object (as occurs with samprajñata samādhī) it can be achieved elsewhere as well. As this "connective ability" becomes even more profound, the power of the Dynamic Ground within the person becomes intricately linked to the power of the Dynamic Ground throughout the world (ie. every puruṣa simultaneously). As a result, objects are no longer necessary to establish a connection. In this respect, the objects used throughout concentrative meditation serve as pointers to the power of the Dynamic Ground. They show the person the way to such power, but once that power becomes fully grasped, the objects are no longer needed. As such, when the appropriate time comes, the objects simply fall away, and only the power of the Dynamic Ground remains for the per-



son. Having achieved such a connection, "consciousness turns in upon itself and becomes . . . pure knowing consciousness. There remains only the pristine existence of reality itself which is revealed to be nothing other than puruṣa [the power of the Dynamic Ground]".<sup>26</sup> Thus, the concentrative meditator has reached his/her goal.

With respect to the Ojibwa shaman, the process occurs in much the same way. As mentioned, in time his/her consciousness no longer depends upon the senses for its knowledge. Experience, and thus knowledge, become direct. The actual call of the raven need not be present for the shaman to experience the power of the Dynamic Ground associated with it. In modifying the mental ego, through receptive meditation, to become the call itself, the shaman is able to directly experience such power (which is understood to be the power of the Raven manito). Similar to the results obtained through concentrative meditation, the power of the Dynamic Ground which flows through the external environment becomes linked to the power which is allowed to flow uninhibited into the consciousness of the shaman. Such a link enables the shaman to experience a direct knowledge of the power of the Dynamic Ground, and the manito. As Grim states, the shaman "creates a mutual resonance between himself and the powers of those spirits present".<sup>27</sup> Like the yogi, the mind of the shaman becomes pure and transparent in the face of the power of

the Dynamic Ground. It reflects only that power, and does not add any extraneous mental configurations. Thus, the Ojibwa speak of the shaman as actually becoming the power of the manito. And like the yogi, once the shaman is able to become the power of one manito, he/she can, through continued use of meditative techniques, eventually extrapolate this knowledge to become "connected" to the power of all manito. When such an all-encompassing connection is achieved, then the pointers which indicated the power of the manito to the shaman (eg. the actual call of the raven) become transcended, and subsequently fall away. The shaman no longer needs to be shown where the power of the manito exists. He/she is that power. As Eliade explains, "the shaman has passed beyond the human condition and shares in the condition of 'spirits'".<sup>28</sup> Thus, with only the power of the manito remaining for the shaman, he/she, like the yogi, has achieved his/her goal.

Once such a state has been achieved by the meditator, he/she becomes capable of extraordinary deeds previously not thought possible. Concrete examples can be found within both Ojibwa shamanism and the Yoga Sūtras. The wabeno shaman, for example, in performing his/her healing ritual, would routinely handle burning coals. As Tanner describes it,

in the Waw-be-no, men and women dance and sing together, and there is much juggling and playing with fire. The initiated take coals of fire

and red hot stones in their hands, and sometimes in their mouths. Sometimes they put a [gun] powder on the insides of their hands; then by rubbing them with coals or red hot stone, they make the powder burn.<sup>29</sup>

The shaman would subsequently rub his/her heated hands over the affected part of the patient's body in order to cure the illness. It was the open display of this fire-handling ability which, among other things, served to bolster the patient's confidence in the shaman. Such activity demonstrated to the patient the shaman's authentic contact with the spirit world of the manito.<sup>30</sup>

Likewise, the Yoga Sūtras indicate many powers which come to the yogi who has achieved full concentrative abilities. Patañjali, in fact, devotes most of the third book of the Yoga Sūtras to the description of such powers (siddhi). These include knowing the past and future, being able to disappear from sight, the ability to see beyond closed doors, and having knowledge of death.<sup>31</sup> Within the Yoga philosophy, however, the performance of such powers was discouraged because they were felt to be distractions to the true purpose of religious meditation. As such, Patañjali warns in Sūtra III.36. that the siddhi prove to be obstacles when they appear in a mind which has reached the state of samādhi.<sup>32</sup> The person who consistently makes use of such powers usually turns into nothing more than a mere miracle-worker. Thus there is a real danger, recognized by the Yoga Sūtras, of the siddhi

becoming ends in-themselves. Consequently, while the yogi is capable of effortlessly making use of such powers, they are not usually exhibited to any significant degree.

With the above discussion, it becomes clear that both receptive and concentrative religious meditation can bring the person to a balanced state of fulfilled humanness. That is, both forms of religious meditation can bring the person to a position where he/she can genuinely and unobstructedly experience the power which exists in the world. The road to such a state is, however, long, arduous and fraught with many dangers. The person must submit him-/herself to a regression of sorts, and the mental ego can become completely overwhelmed by the unconscious if it is not sufficiently strong. Finally, original repression may be overcome, and contact with the power of the Dynamic Ground can be achieved. Through continued practice of religious meditation, such contact is gradually experienced to its full extent, free from the limitations of the mental ego, which becomes pure and transparent in the face of the ever-present power of the Dynamic Ground. For the person who reaches this state of existence, life itself becomes transformed.

Notes to Chapter Four

1 M. Washburn (1988) The Ego and the Dynamic Ground, Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 155.

2 Washburn, p. 155.

3 Washburn, p. 155.

4 Washburn, p. 158.

5 Washburn, p. 158.

6 Washburn, pp. 158-159.

7 Washburn, p. 163.

8 R. Eyre (1979) Ronald Eyre on the Long Search: His Own Account of a Three-Year Journey, New York: Collins, p. 57.

9 J. Grim (1983) The Shaman: Patterns of Siberian and Ojibway Healing, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, p. 124.

10 Washburn, p. 159.

11 Washburn, p. 159.

12 Washburn, p. 159.

13 C. Jung (1960) "Psychological Commentary", in W. Evans-Wentz, ed. The Tibetan Book of the Dead, New York: Oxford University Press, p. xlvii.

14 Washburn, p. 154.

15 Grim, p. 203.

16 Washburn, p. 150.

17 Washburn, p. 150.

18 Washburn, p. 153.

19 Grim, p. 139.

20 R. Prasāda, trans. (1974) Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras, New York: AMS Press, p. 70.

- 21 Prasāda, p. 69.
- 22 Prasāda, p. 71.
- 23 Prasāda, p. 76.
- 24 Prasāda, p. 76.
- 25 Prasāda, p. v.
- 26 H. Coward (1985) Jung and Eastern Thought, Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 139.
- 27 Grim, p. 154.
- 28 M. Eliade (1964) Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 325.
- 29 E. James, ed. (1956) Narrative of John Tanner's Thirty Years of Indian Captivity, Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, p. 78.
- 30 Grim, p. 145.
- 31 K. Bahadur (1977) The Wisdom of Yoga: A Study of Patañjali's Yoga Sūtra, New Delhi: Sterling, p. 48.
- 32 Prasāda, p. 236.

## CONCLUSION

The present thesis has been an attempt to analyze, from the transpersonal perspective of Washburn's dynamic-dialectical paradigm, the meditative process from beginning to conclusion. Recognizing religious meditation to be of two different forms (concentrative and receptive), examples from both Eastern and Western religious traditions were employed in order to better illustrate the effects which meditative practice has on the person. As such, the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali were used as an example of concentrative meditation, while the techniques of the Ojibwa shaman were understood to be representative of receptive meditation.

Washburn's theory of human development does appear to be applicable to the practice of religious meditation. In using Washburn's dynamic-dialectical paradigm, many insights were gained with regard to the meditative process and its effects on the mental ego of the individual meditator. Each of the stages of human development which Washburn had previously outlined are clearly exhibited by both the yogi who adheres to the Yoga Sūtras and the Ojibwa shaman. Thus, religious meditation is a procedure which, when practiced over a period of time, serves to upset and eventually demobilize the regular, socialized processes of the mental ego. The most notable of these

is internal dialogue. It is this activity which is responsible for maintaining all other mental egoic mechanisms, and consequently, the world of the mental ego. As a result, the internal dialogue is the prime target in the earliest stages of meditative practice.

Once the internal dialogue becomes restrained completely, thereby demobilizing mental egoic activity, religious meditation enables the person to access layer upon layer of the previously repressed materials of the unconscious, and allows them to flow freely into consciousness. Upon release of the final layer, religious meditation is able to secure release of the power of the Dynamic Ground as well. When this event occurs, the power of the Dynamic Ground is experienced fully within the realm of consciousness, and, with continued meditative practice, the person is able to enter into a state of fulfilled humanness.

Each form of religious meditation is similar in bringing about these developmental changes in the person. The only substantial difference between the two types is the way in which the suspension of the mental egoic activities is originally secured. In using receptive meditation, and thereby opening the mind to each and every physical sensation which impinges upon consciousness, the Ojibwa shaman is able to become consciously aware of the usually subconscious mental egoic activities, and suspen-



sion becomes possible because of this direct exposure. Conversely, for the yogi who practices concentrative meditation, suspension of mental egoic activity occurs with a focus of consciousness completely upon one object. In performing this task, the structures of the mental ego are no longer allowed to remain active, and, in time, they simply become quiet.

In examining the final goal of the meditative process, one is confronted with an apparent contradiction. Does religious meditation bring about an isolation of the mental ego from the power of the Dynamic Ground, as Patanjali would assert, or is it instead an integration of the two principles, as Washburn states in his work (with which the Ojibwa might be inclined to agree, since they speak of the shaman as becoming the power of the manito).<sup>1</sup> The answer appears to be that religious meditation, when taken to its natural conclusion, brings about both an isolation and an integration. The description one chooses to use will be entirely dependent upon one's perspective. For example, there is an integration because the mental ego and the power of the Dynamic Ground flow together in unison. There is no apparent distinction between the two entities here because one becomes a perfect reflection of the other. This, then, is not an integration in the sense of one becoming absorbed into the other. Rather, it is a case of two independent parts ex-

isting purely in-themselves and also aligning with each other to exist in a harmony. Throughout the process, both aspects remain as separate principles; and it because of this that one can also speak of an isolation. Since the two principles now exist completely in-themselves, one will no longer obstruct or cloud the appearance of the other. Only the principles, in their pristine existence, will remain. Thus, just as one can speak of the proverbial water glass as being simultaneously half-empty and half-full, one can also speak of religious meditation as simultaneously bringing about a state of isolation and integration. It merely depends upon which aspect of the process one wishes to direct attention.

While the present thesis generally agrees with Washburn's analysis of the developmental process with respect to the mental ego, there are some points of divergence which need to be recognized. Washburn, for instance, states that once the power of the Dynamic Ground begins to flow into consciousness, this "initiates the ego's dramatic regression into prepersonal [unconscious] spheres".<sup>2</sup> Contrary to this, the present thesis has argued that the movement of the power of the Dynamic Ground into consciousness marks the end of the regression stage, not the beginning. The power of the Dynamic Ground can only begin to be experienced consciously when the final layer of repressed, unconscious materials becomes pene-

trated. Thus, it is the position of the present thesis that conscious contact with the power of the Dynamic Ground is the result of a regression into the unconscious realm. It does not initiate such regression, as Washburn contends.

This difference points to an even more significant divergence with regard to religious meditation. Washburn maintains that meditation, as a technique, essentially becomes unnecessary once the power of the Dynamic Ground begins to flow into consciousness.<sup>3</sup> For him, when this initial event occurs, the power of the Dynamic Ground increasingly infiltrates consciousness due to its own inertia and eventually brings about a state of fulfilled humanness in this way. Thus, Washburn feels that religious meditation plays no substantial role in the latter stages of human development. The present thesis has argued, however, that meditation not only allows the power of the Dynamic Ground to initially surface to consciousness, it also gradually allows that power to become purely reflected by consciousness. When the power of the Dynamic Ground first begins to appear in consciousness, the mind is still influenced by the residue of past mental fluctuations. Although they are very subtle at this point, they will not disappear of their own volition. As a result, meditative practice is required in order to further quiet the mind. Religious meditation, then, must conti-

nue until all limitations of consciousness are removed. Only when this occurs can a person move into a state of fulfilled humanness. The Ojibwa and Patañjali appear to have also recognized this. Both the shaman and the yogi employed their respective meditative practices up to and including the time that the final goal (the full formation of shamanic knowledge or samādhi) had been achieved.

Although the present thesis has been an attempt to refine Washburn's analysis of religious meditation, it nevertheless recognizes the applicability of his overall theory. As such, his dynamic-dialectical paradigm is understood to be a valid instrument with which to study meditative practice. Having noted this, what needs to be accomplished in the future are further analyses into each of the stages of the meditative process, much more so than the present thesis has allowed. Such research may help clarify previous misunderstandings and faulty presuppositions with regard to the practice of religious meditation.

One such presupposition which needs to be studied more critically is that the practice of religious meditation brings about only positive results. As the present thesis has argued, meditative practice is also fraught with many dangers, and a real possibility exists for the meditator to enter into a psychosis from which he/she might never return. This darker side of religious medi-

tation must be explored further in order to be more fully understood.

The heuristic value of continued research into the area of religious meditation is clear. Despite the number of studies which have been published in recent years, very little is actually known about the meditative process from an academic perspective. Any substantial knowledge which can be gained from future research could be applied to a better understanding of religious meditation's effect upon consciousness (ie. religious experience), and subsequently, to a better understanding of human consciousness as a whole.

Notes to Conclusion

<sup>1</sup> When speaking of the descriptions found in the Yoga Sūtras, the concern is with the penultimate state, or the highest state of being while the person is in-the-world. Although the Yoga Sūtras recognize the ultimate state as one of passing beyond earthly life, the question of such existence is not relevant to the framework of the present thesis.

<sup>2</sup> M. Washburn (1988) The Ego and the Dynamic Ground, Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 156.

<sup>3</sup> Washburn, p. 153.

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Fig. 1

The Manifestations of Prākṛti  
According to the Sāṅkhya System

